THE HISTORY OF
CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
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General Editor: Alan D. Schrift

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   Edited by Thomas Nenon

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THE HISTORY OF
CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

General Editor: Alan D. Schrift

VOLUME 1

KANT, KANTIANISM, AND IDEALISM:
THE ORIGINS OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Edited by Thomas Nenon

The University of Chicago Press
Chicago
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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition’s complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern
Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Wild joined William Earle
and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental
philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle,
Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s
at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an
appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to
the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society
for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at
Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing
for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology,
respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well
as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today
SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United
States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl
Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate
programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of
the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s –
including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came
to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it
must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since
the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly
through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role
in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between
1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw
the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of
gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglo-
phone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these
years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical
works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased
tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from signifi-
cant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently
being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this
volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of
philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and
departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and
other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental
philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years –
the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France,
Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s *On Bentham and Coleridge* (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the *history* of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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Essays on G. W. F. Hegel (1993); and has translated several works, including Bruno Bauer’s 1841 work, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist* (1989). He has also written entries on various members of the Young Hegelian school in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, The Edinburgh Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy, Blackwell’s Compassion to Continental Philosophy*, and *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

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While the term “continental philosophy” as a name for a philosophical direction or tradition did not come into wide use until the second half of the twentieth century, there is nonetheless some justification for identifying Kant and those followers and critics who were influenced by his work in a substantial way as an origin for a tradition that would much later identify itself as “continental philosophy.” For it is indeed true that most of the philosophers who have accepted this description of themselves during the past half-century take seriously the philosophical contributions of Kant and those who were most strongly influenced by him in Germany and France in the nineteenth century. This has historically not been the case for philosophers in the analytic tradition, in contrast to which “continental philosophy” has defined itself. Over time, this has changed somewhat with respect to Kant himself. P. F. Strawson’s *The Bounds of Sense* opened the way for philosophical discussions within analytical philosophy that took seriously some of the epistemological and metaphysical arguments presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason* so that questions about “transcendental claims” and “transcendental arguments” are now an accepted part of the analytic discussions of theoretical philosophy. Moreover, John Rawls’s appropriation of Kant has proved to be so influential within analytic ethics and social and political philosophy that “Kantian” approaches and positions are not only discussed, but also widely held by many prominent analytic philosophers in those areas. However, this has not yet occurred with regard to the other figures who followed

Kant and whose work is described and analyzed in this volume.\(^3\) Within continental philosophy, by contrast, the direct or indirect influence of these figures can hardly be overstated. Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, for instance, have long belonged to the standard repertoire of discussions in continental philosophy. A course on “nineteenth-century philosophy” has commonly been offered in departments with an interest in continental philosophy or even the history of philosophy, usually taught by philosophers who think of themselves as experts in continental philosophy. Yet Hegel’s own work is unthinkable without the contributions of figures such as Herder, Fichte, and Schelling, as the following essays will document; it is well known how much Schopenhauer’s work had an influence on Nietzsche; Kierkegaard heard lectures by Schelling in Berlin that had a strong influence on his critical dialogue with Kant and Hegel; and the figures described in the last two chapters – Bauer, Strauss, and Stirner, on the one hand, and the “French utopian thinkers,” on the other – were sources of inspiration and critical analysis for the younger Marx as well.

To put it rather pointedly: one of the main differences between continental and analytic philosophy has been that Kant and the figures described in this volume have remained an important part of the continental philosophical tradition, but their work has not generally been regarded as philosophically significant and relevant for the analytic tradition of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.\(^4\) Even more importantly, Kant and the other figures whose work is analyzed in this volume have remained not just historical figures, but rather integral and living parts of the tradition of continental philosophy where their philosophical positions continue to be taken seriously and serve as a point of departure for current discussions of philosophical issues.\(^5\) This has always been the case for Kant and Hegel in particular, but increasingly in the past few years also for some of the less well-known figures such as Herder, Fichte, and Schelling. Part of the intent of this volume is to reinforce this trend and to introduce readers to other figures in the decades following Kant whose work was not only influential in its time, but also still deserves serious critical consideration today.

\(^3\) Although, as Terry Pinkard notes in his essay in this volume, this situation has recently been changing with respect to Hegel.

\(^4\) An exception would be the movement within American philosophy that came to be known as “process philosophy,” oriented on the work of Alfred North Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, and Paul Weiss, whose thought is in many ways reminiscent of Hegel’s. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, this was no longer part of the mainstream of American analytic philosophy, but more a movement of its own; and even this movement locates its historical roots less in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers who are included in this volume than on the history of philosophy as a whole.

\(^5\) Consider, for example, the importance of Kant in the oeuvre not only of Jürgen Habermas, but also of Michel Foucault.
The notion of an “origin” also conveys the sense of a new beginning. Certainly Kant’s own description of his critical turn in terms of a “Copernican revolution” suggests that he himself thought that his approach to traditional problems in metaphysics represented a completely new way to address those problems. And subsequent readers have tended to take him at his word on this point, seeing Kantian philosophy as the new point of departure from which they must begin or as a particularly new and unique threat to the insights attained by previous philosophers, religious traditions, or even common sense. At the same time, though, Kant clearly locates himself within the framework of the main directions in modern philosophy, namely rationalism and empiricism, and within the predominant intellectual movement of his age, the Enlightenment. Hence even Kant himself was aware that his new approach to traditional questions was not an absolute beginning, but was rather the culmination of a discussion that had begun with the advent of modern science and modern philosophy and in a certain sense can also be located within the arc of the history of philosophy as a whole that goes back for him to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.

In fact, one of the distinguishing marks of the tradition of philosophy that Kant establishes is a keen sense of the awareness of one’s own place within an overarching historical development. This is in some regards ironic in light of his claim to have solved the problems once and for all in a way that would make further philosophical progress on these issues superfluous, even though his political essays suggest that further political progress is not only possible, but also necessary and perhaps even inevitable. The essays of this volume show how this conception of thinking as essentially located within a specific historical context comes to take center stage in the philosophers who follow. Of course, Kant was not the first philosopher of his age whose work exhibits such an awareness. One hallmark of the Enlightenment movement as a whole was its emphasis on the notion of “progress” as the gradual unfolding of reason in history.

When the Prussian Academy of the Sciences posed the prize question “What is Enlightenment?” in 1783, part of the motivation for the question was the perception that the age of Enlightenment had already reached its zenith, so that when Kant characterizes his own age as the “age of Enlightenment,” he is locating himself and his thinking in terms of a movement and historical developments that had formed the background for his work, but was about to enter a new phase. Moreover, when Kant, in the essay that represents his response to that question, describes enlightenment as the process of liberating oneself from the self-imposed tutelage that results not from a lack of understanding, but from a

lack of resolve or courage to use one’s understanding without the guidance of another, he is also taking a position that goes beyond the previously predominant rationalist themes of the Enlightenment. The emphasis in Christian Wolff’s (1679–1754) variation of Leibnizian philosophy that had been Kant’s philosophical starting-point before the critical turn, had been on the primary task of enlightenment as the development of the intellect by making concepts clear and distinct in order to lead to correct beliefs that will then serve as inevitable catalysts to right action.\footnote{Werner Schneider’s work *Die wahre Aufklärung: Zum Selbstverständnis der deutschen Aufklärung* (Freiburg: Alber, 1974) provides an excellent summary and overview of this development along with several examples of lesser known figures whose languages and approaches remain strongly indebted to this rationalist legacy.} As we will see in Chapter 1 below, Kant will rather see the primary role of philosophical clarification in vindicating common sense by adopting some philosophical positions that are at first every bit as counter-intuitive as the view that the earth goes around the sun in order to justify our everyday beliefs about our ability to experience natural objects in the world. More importantly, though, in the moral realm he will see his philosophy of pure practical reason as combating false theories that could undermine our healthy natural instincts about right and wrong. In the essay “What is Enlightenment?” he is going even further by attributing a lack of enlightenment to false dispositions such as timidity and lack of resolve while acknowledging the barriers placed by social institutions such as the church and insecure rulers who fear that free-thinking individuals will threaten their power.

Of course, even before the appearance of this essay and Kant’s critical works, there had been other criticisms of certain one-sided tendencies within the Enlightenment movement. Two prime motivating factors for the Enlightenment were the development of modern natural science and the power of the new model that it offered, and the emergence of middle classes who, at least according to their own self-understanding, depended more on their individual initiatives, skills, and knowledge than on inherited privileges for their prosperity. Each of these trends will continue to play a role in the further intellectual and artistic developments at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, but with some important modifications.

The two names Kant mentions in conjunction with modern natural science are Copernicus and Newton; two centuries earlier, Descartes and Hobbes had cited Galileo as their model. What united all of them was that the mathematically oriented mechanistic model advanced by modern physics changed the general view of the world. Exceptionless laws that hold for all kinds of objects replace observations about general tendencies of different kinds of things, and blind causal explanations seem to make teleological explanations superfluous.
At the same time, this seems to raise problems about determinism and how to account for freedom, and therefore for moral and legal notions of individual accountability. It also seems to present a picture of nature as a complicated but ultimately blind, perhaps even lifeless machine. So we will see part of Kant’s interest and attractiveness for subsequent thinkers in his attempt to reconcile causal determinism within nature, on the one hand, with the idea of freedom and human moral agency, on the other. Others, for instance Herder, will try to reconcile mechanism and teleology along Leibnizian lines; and following him and Kant’s political writings, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel will try to show how mechanistic explanations at a micro-level do not preclude seeing history itself from an overall teleological perspective. All of the figures covered in this volume stand under the sway of the power of the model of modern natural science, but all of them seek alternatives to a simple mechanistic approach to traditional philosophical problems and to our everyday insights about the world and our place within it. Some of the key categories that will arise as alternatives to this model are concepts such as “life” and “spirit” that will continue to play an important role in response to the challenges posed by the natural scientific model well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Similarly, the concepts of “culture” and “history” that emerge as central philosophical themes during the period covered in this volume will remain crucial concepts that call for different ways of thinking and different scholarly and scientific approaches than those of modern natural science. It is therefore no accident that these concepts have played a particularly strong role in the continental philosophical tradition, which has defined itself since its inception as an attempt to avoid the reductionist tendencies of philosophies that are too one-sidedly under the sway of the model of the mathematically oriented natural sciences.

The notion of “freedom” in a somewhat different sense is connected with the second overall modern trend mentioned above, that is, the emergence of the new middle classes. “Freedom” here has a social and political connotation according to which individual human beings should have greater latitude in making their decisions and determining their own fates. As modern societies gradually began to shift from agrarian to commercial and then later eventually to manufacturing societies, new groups became predominant who would come to be called the “middle classes”: “middle” in the sense of something in between the hereditary aristocracies, on the one hand, and the powerless agricultural workers, that is, peasants and serfs, on the other. In Germany, the development took place somewhat later than, for instance, in England and France, but

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8. Herder’s work represents an important milestone in this regard as the notion of culture shifts from the Enlightenment notion of a set of skills to the shared habits and dispositions of a people. See the essay by Sonia Sikka in this volume.
By the eighteenth century it was well underway there as well. As opposed to England, where manufacturing began much earlier and the colonial enterprises gave rise to a very large number of rich merchants and traders, the commercial classes in Germany were represented primarily by independent handworkers and smaller merchants and traders. Even more predominant, especially as representatives for the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement, was the growing class of educated administrators and professionals – teachers and professors, pastors, lawyers, doctors – some of whom served the commercially independent classes, but most of whom were in the direct or indirect employment of the many German states still ruled by monarchs or other hereditary aristocracy.9

By the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, a completely new class had emerged. The new middle classes came to have the means and the desire to buy journals and books, attend concerts and plays, and buy sheet music to play at home. The reading public expanded significantly and came to include women as well. Lutheran clergy had a great deal more independence within the much looser organization of that Church than had traditionally been enjoyed by the Catholic clergy. With the increasing religious tolerance that followed the Peace of Westphalia that had ended the Thirty Years’ War in the previous century, educated Jews were coming to be included in intellectual life as well. In the wake of all these changes, the role of the artist changed from being an artisan or decorative artist employed by the Church or the aristocracy to that of an independent agent creating and producing art as a profession for consumption by these new middle classes, thereby also gaining an artistic freedom previously impossible for them and emblematic for the freedom in thinking and acting to which the rest of the middle classes aspired. In some ways, then, the artists became the symbols for the middle classes as productive, independent, and creative – at least in their aspirations and, to some extent, in their professional and personal lives as well. Consistent with this trend is the concept of the “genius,” given a conceptual and theoretical grounding in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, but at the heart of all of the subsequent philosophical reflections on art and artistic creation as well.

Of course, development in literature and music had not waited on the kind of philosophical justifications that Kant and his successors provided. The literary movement of *Empfindsamkeit* that had developed a new literary language of sentiments and emotions that connected this emerging circle of writers as friends and collaborators, was at its heights in the early 1770s. Arising out of personal relationships and the letters that these friends composed, circulated,

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and read together publicly, it popularized a new genre, the epistolary novel. Its better-known, unruly cousin that flourished at about the same time was the *Sturm und Drang* movement, which stressed the passions, strong natural drives and urges, and the right of subjectivity, first in plays, then later in Germany’s most famous epistolary novel, Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1774. Both of these movements were consciously directed against the one-sidedness of rationalistic description of human events in literature, the tendency toward conventional moralizing, and a rule-governed aesthetics that modeled artistic production on the technical craftsmanship of other productive enterprises – be they artistic or not. Art would come to be closely associated with, and often seen as an expression of the subjectivity of the author who creates it. During the period covered by this volume, these tendencies within literature would lead to classicism, which tried to strike a balance between subjectivity and rules, between reason and the emotions, on the one hand, and romanticism with its enthusiastic endorsement of the rights of subjectivity and the passions and emotions that motivate action, on the other.

In music there was a similar development at this time. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) served his entire professional career in the employment of the aristocracy and the Church, and Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) spent his career with the wealthy aristocratic Hungarian Esterházy family. Both of them are renowned as much for their craftsmanship as their originality, but Haydn’s case is an interesting one because he did leave an indelible mark on the history of musical composition through the key role he played in the establishment of specific forms of the symphony and of chamber music that seemed to exhibit the balance and rationality consistent with the demands of the intellect that led them to become canonical for at least the following century. Contrast this with the well-known career of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91), who constantly and vocally chafed at his dependency on his ecclesiastical and aristocratic sponsors as he increasingly took on the role of a musical entrepreneur, marketing his music at public concerts in the newly created symphony halls and public opera houses that were open to the well-to-do of all estates. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), too, began his career under the sponsorship of several prominent aristocrats, but even as he continues to accept their sponsorship, he sells himself

11. Public opera houses had been introduced in Italy in the seventeenth century. The first in German-speaking countries was in Hamburg in 1678, but by the end of the eighteenth century, they were open in several other German cities including Vienna and Munich, where Mozart’s opera were performed. The national theatre in Mannheim is the oldest dramatic theatre in Germany, opened in 1779. Schiller’s play *The Robbers* premiered there in 1782 in the presence of the author.
to them in market terms – going to the highest bidder, so to speak – while he reduces his dependency on them through public performances of his work and through the sale of the sheet music of his chamber compositions. Franz Schubert (1797–1828) never even had a professionally paid regular position, making what little money he did from publishing his music and giving private lessons. For each of them, “freedom” meant economic independence as well as the artistic independence that they associated with it. It meant the increasing ability to control one’s own destiny and to use art as an expression of one’s own views and sensibilities according to one’s own best instincts instead of subordinating oneself to someone else’s dictates and tastes.

At the same time, however, it remained true that most of the educated members of the groups from whom the leading representatives came – the professors, pastors, and teachers – continued to depend on the church or the state for their employment. Hence the German Enlightenment had always been more typically reformist than revolutionary in tone, assuring church hierarchy and the rulers that an enlightened public would more reliably recognize the truths of religion and the benefits that accrue from enlightened leadership within the bounds of the monarchic order than a people led by superstition and emotions such as fear, and that the other benefits that accrue to such a state would include the greater prosperity and success that follows from a better educated and enterprising populace. Against this backdrop, rationality and subjectivity were not seen as opposites but rather as complementary under the right circumstances. Autonomy, rightly understood, does not have to lead to instability and disorder.

This was particularly the case for religion. By the middle of the eighteenth century, reinterpretations of traditional religious doctrines were becoming quite common. Particularly in the Protestant states, it had long been acceptable to reinterpret or reject many traditional teachings and beliefs as “superstition” and to reinterpret them in line with what is acceptable to reason. The Reformation’s own shift of emphasis away from the authority of the institution of the Catholic Church and its traditional beliefs in favor of an emphasis on each individual subject’s ability to receive grace, understand the Scriptures, and follow his own lights had opened the way for a theology that could re-examine other traditional beliefs and reinterpret them according to the lights of reason as well. Stories from the Scriptures about miracles could be read as metaphorical accounts about the power of spiritual healing and not historically reliable accounts about natural events. The truths of historical religion could be understood as allegorical messages about one’s moral duties, stories that were taken at face value by the less educated and those at less advanced stages of human development, but that had become increasingly unnecessary for those who were capable of understanding and following the dictates of reason alone. The essay on “The Education of Humanity” (Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts) by the famous playwright
and author Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) is one of the clearest and most succinct examples of this general tendency. It describes different stages of the development of human societies along the model of the intellectual and moral development of an individual human being who in childhood follows moral rules not out of internal motivations, but out of fear of punishment and hopes for rewards. As development progresses, the individual increasingly comes to understand the inherent rationality of these rules, internalizes them, and acts simply out of insight into their rightness. So, too, at earlier stages of development, religion has all sorts of taboos, superstitions, and fantastic stories about vengeful gods, horrible punishments for evildoers, and direct interventions by the gods on the behalf of those who obey them. As human rationality progresses through the ages, these are replaced by ideas of a just God with laws that benefit humankind, then later by the image of God in the form of one perfect human being, Jesus Christ, who can serve as a model for all human beings, until finally, at the stage of complete maturity and enlightenment, we come to understand the divine principles in all of us through our ability to reason, act morally, and acknowledge the transcendent dignity of all of our fellow human beings. Even in the modern, enlightened age, however, not everyone will be capable of such rational insights and autonomous moral actions, so religion continues to serve as an appropriate moral compass for those individuals or classes who have not yet reached full intellectual and moral maturity.

Not just in his views about religion, but in Kant’s overall approach, his own thinking certainly fits within these parameters. His later work on religion is consistent with the reinterpretation of Christian doctrine in terms of the tenets of pure practical rationality, and his famous essay on Enlightenment also employs the language of human development and maturity. Moreover, he – along with Lessing and others – believes that Enlightenment, properly understood, leads not to social and moral disorder, but rather to free and rational assent to the overall social order in a more or less well-functioning and just state so that subjectivity and lawfulness are not only consistent with each other but can be mutually self-reinforcing principles.

As we have seen, however, there were others who were not as sanguine about the conformity between enlightened subjectivity and the established social order. The *Sturm und Drang* movement, for instance, reflected the impatience of many, especially young, people over the repressiveness of the established orders and conventional morality. It invokes the power of nature and the passions in asserting the rights of subjectivity even when they were not necessarily subordinated to the overall goals of the state and social order. At the opposite end of the spectrum, within the established order, especially with the transition from Frederick the Great to Frederick William II in Prussia and as part of the reaction to failed reforms in the Austrian Empire, there was a reassertion of the rights of

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tradition and the need for limits on what should be publicly discussed and propagated. Even some of those who advocated freedom of thought and religion for the educated, were not necessarily in favor of removing limits on public speech for fear of confusing the members of the lower orders who continued to obey out of habit and whose underdeveloped rational capacities did not render them susceptible to the constraints imposed by enlightened reason alone.

It is against this background that the monumental event of the age, the beginning of the French Revolution in summer 1789 decisively and irreversibly raised the stakes. It called into question two key assumptions that had guided the enlightenment movement, at least in Germany, until that time. As we have seen, the first is the view that increasing enlightenment does not necessarily lead to conflict with the established social and political order, but rather can strengthen it through gradual reform; the second is that progress in one area of human cultural development will be reflected in progress in other areas as well.

On the latter point, one can follow Kant who, in his lectures on “Anthropology in a Pragmatic Regard” (AA VII, 322), had distinguished three different dimensions of human development. The first he calls “technical.” It involves the development of our intellectual skills and techniques for dealing with nature and material objects. These range from our ability to understand causal relationships to our ability to produce objects that help us improve our lives through technologies such as construction of shelters and agricultural techniques, as well as the production of increasingly useful and productive technologies of goods that make life more pleasant. The second dimension he calls “pragmatic.” It concerns social skills, for example, the development of speech, manners, and social arrangements that allow us to deal with each other more skillfully and effectively. At an advanced stage, these might include development of wit, rhetorical skills, and proficiencies in the arts. Finally, he lists “moral cultivation” as the most important of them. These are not the same as pragmatic skills. For instance, the skilled rhetorician may not actually be concerned with the truth of his case or the good of the audience but is rather simply interested in manipulating the audience for his own ends, whereas the morally responsible speaker would speak honestly and with the best interest of the community in mind. Although each of these dimensions of cultural development is distinct, the overall optimism of the enlightenment project was that they would progress more or less in tandem. The advances in modern science were occurring at the same time that advances in trade, commerce, and production were contributing to a greater prosperity for the middle classes; advances in administration skills and public policy were seen to support this development and hopefully lead to greater prosperity and justice for all; refinements in the arts would not only make life more pleasant, but lead to refined sensibilities that would make human beings more receptive and responsive to others; advances in knowledge and understanding would lead
to greater social and religious tolerance that would remove a source of conflict and eliminate the previous destruction caused by religious wars and repression; increasingly enlightened rulers would see the benefits of free and open societies that make their states more prosperous and powerful and make their regimes more stable by reducing the tensions between the rulers and those they govern. Progress on one front implied progress on all of them. The French Revolution made clear that much of this progress depended on specific political conditions and assumptions about their continuous improvement that turned out to be questionable. So it became clear that questions about the actual progress of enlightenment would also be tied to the political circumstances in which it is pursued.

Of course, even before the French Revolution, important voices had called assumptions about the mutual reinforcement of progress in these different dimensions into question. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), above all and most notably, had claimed the opposite, namely that increasing civilization was leading to increasing moral degradation. Rousseau shared the Enlightenment’s optimism about the basic perfectibility of humanity and he endorsed its striving for freedom and call for the recognition of individuals based on their virtues and skills. Indeed, he was renowned for resenting his dependency on the beneficence and good graces of the wealthy and powerful of his age whose power rested not on merit but on inherited privilege, and whose exercise of their power was often arbitrary and even ruthless when it was threatened. For him, the means to human perfection was not through advances in civilization with its increasing material wealth and accomplishments in the arts, but rather through a return to nature in order to restore a natural harmony for which the technical, artistic, and administrative achievements of modernity are at best distractions, but have more often served as impediments to human flourishing and happiness. He thereby gives voice to the disappointments and frustrations of those who have become impatient with progress towards a better and more just society in which there will be a more direct relationship between achievements and rewards, in which individuals can have greater control over their own fates and be less dependent on the whims and favors of those who rule. For Rousseau, who found himself forced to flee both France and Geneva to avoid retaliations, the reactions of those whom he criticized or whose interests he threatened in his writings confirmed his view that their own interests were not aligned with those who were concerned with genuine human progress. The rising expectations of the citizens in the age of Enlightenment were not always met by the political institutions governing the societies in which they lived.

His writings struck a strong chord with many, not just those who were frustrated with the lack of social progress, but also among those who had come to see rationalism as too far removed from the needs and sentiments of concrete
human beings and who were dissatisfied with a view of the intellect that was set at odds with nature and who found constraints of universal and bloodless rules oppressive. Part of the problem, then, was a lack of progress in political institutions. Another part concerned the notion of progress itself and whether it was to be seen in overcoming nature or in finding a way to live more harmoniously with nature. This latter development should not necessarily be seen as a departure from the overall project of the Enlightenment, but as an internal corrective to its one-sided emphasis on the intellect. The goal remains the happiness of individual subjects not in a transcendent world, but in this life. However, this means that the intellect should no longer be seen as a completely independent source of motivation and guidance, but rather must be aligned with concrete human needs and emotions if it is to be effective.

We have already seen how this corrective pertained not just to French society prior to the Revolution, but was consistent as well with literary and artistic developments at the same time in Germany. Moreover, German society during the second half of the eighteenth century faced some of the same problems, and its states shared some of the same flaws as France. The states were still run by more or – in many cases – less enlightened monarchs. The death of a monarch could lead to a complete reversal by his successor of whatever progress had been made under his reign. Even in the city-states like Hamburg, powerful patrician families operated more like an aristocracy than as members of an open civil society. The Peace of Westphalia had ended the religious wars that had ravaged Europe in the previous century, but the European powers were all in a more or less constant state of tension that intermittently erupted into armed conflicts as each strove to increase its wealth and power at the expense of its neighbors. The great powers England, France, and Spain, and the Habsburg monarchy had been at odds for centuries and much of the drain on the French finances that increased the tensions that eventually led to the Revolution can be traced back to the escalation of those conflicts during the second half of the eighteenth century. But on a somewhat smaller scale, the same was true for the lesser German states as well. Prussia as an ascendant power had gained it at the expense of its neighbors in Denmark, Poland, and Saxony, and its plans for further expansion still put it in direct conflict with Austria. During Kant’s own lifetime, a Prussian setback had led his home city of Königsberg to fall under Russian rule. For even the most enlightened monarchs, among whom Kant and most of the Prussian intellectuals counted Frederick the Great, the need to support their wars led to repeated conscriptions, increased taxes, and the search for other new sources of revenue.

For Germany’s intellectuals, who were at the same time for the most part civil servants, the appropriate response was not to advocate sweeping new forms of government, but to continue to press for reforms within the bounds of the
existing social orders. The idea of radically different social orders or a social order that was not mediated through the institutions of the state seemed inconceivable to them. Even those who, like Kant, recognized that states often or usually act out of non-moral or immoral motives, believed that progress was nonetheless possible because the enlightened self-interest of the individual citizens and the rulers would force them to make the appropriate reforms in order to keep their states stable and prosperous. Up until the Revolution, the choice did not seem to be between enlightenment and the existing social order, but rather how to continue the process of enlightenment within that order.

The French Revolution changed everything. For those in the ancien régime who were always suspicious of reforms and the new freedoms that came with them, the French example served as a dramatic and irrefutable confirmation of the dangers of underestimating the consequences of allowing reforms to go too far or too quickly. Many of those who had initially welcomed the opportunity for a rapid expansion of freedoms for the bourgeoisie were appalled at the reign of terror that soon followed. Napoleon's later invasions served to unite the rival German states against the common enemy so that the idea of a German national culture, if not for a long time a German national state began to arise. Against this background, the idea of a German Kultur, in which the individual finds his or her place within an organically developing social network and through artworks that reflect both the individuality of their creators as well as the historical and social background in which they arise, took root. This was supposed to be an alternative to the French notion of a “civilization” that overemphasizes wealth and material objects and places an overemphasis on individuality at the expense of the common good and a common identity. And finally, the very notion of the state itself and its institutions now comes into play. In a well-functioning society made up of intellectually and morally enlightened individuals, is there any need for a state at all? Are state institutions by their very nature not repressive, or is there an essential role for institutions in guaranteeing that individual liberties are secure? On the one side, what one might call the “romantic view,” stands the idea that progress will eventually lead to the elimination of the need for a state. The idea of the Greek polis of independent individuals with very little organizational structure, acting according to a common consensus, becomes a popular notion standing for the first of these two alternatives. Fichte, the early Hegel, and Marx advocate this position. The most famous articulation of the opposite view, what one might call the “realist” position, is the later Hegel's Philosophy of Right from 1827, in which appropriate institutions are defended as the necessary realization of freedom itself. For Hegel in his mature thinking, institutions are not impediments to freedom, but rather appropriate institutions are necessary preconditions for the assurance of the rights and welfare of each individual and individuals necessarily find their identities not in their particularity, but rather
as contributing members of the comprehensive wholes (families, professions, states) of which they are members.

The essays in this volume then can be seen not just in terms of Kant and his influence, but in the way that all of the writers and theorists covered here can be located within the overall framework of the modern project as it had developed in the second half of the eighteenth century and the turns it took at the beginning of the nineteenth century. All of the authors discussed in this volume can be seen as heirs to the Enlightenment in the sense that all of them remained committed to the project and the prospect of the continued progress in human affairs. Where they differ is the accents they place on the role of reason alone to guide that process, how they strike the balance between tradition and change, what role they see for institutions in the process, and how art and philosophy should contribute to that change.
The year 1781 marks the beginning not only of a remarkably productive two decades in Kant’s own work, but in many ways also a decisive turning point in the history of philosophy. Up until that point, Kant\(^1\) was known as a gifted, but not very significant figure in the German philosophical scene. But 1781 marked the appearance of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant introduced a “critical” philosophy with a radical new approach to traditional questions in epistemology and metaphysics that completely reshaped the philosophical landscape. In the years that followed, he would produce equally significant and original contributions to philosophical ethics in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and in the second part of his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797); an influential new approach to theories of art and the production of artworks in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), novel ways of considering the philosophy of history in the *Critique of Judgment* and in his later political essays such as “Concerning Perpetual Peace” (1795); important reinterpretations of theological themes in all of these works and in his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793); and theories of the state and society in the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals* and in his later essays. The impact that this work had on the history of philosophy in general and on

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1. Immanuel Kant (April 22, 1724–February 12, 1804; born and died in Königsberg, East Prussia) studied philosophy, theology, mathematics, and science at the Albertina-University of Königsberg (1740–48). He became a tutor in private families near Königsberg (1748–54) before returning to the university to finish his dissertation and take up an appointment as Privatdocent (1755–69). He went on to be appointed Professor ordinarius for Logic and Metaphysics (1770–96).
what later, in the second half of the twentieth century, would come to be known as “continental philosophy” can hardly be overstated.

I. EARLY WORKS

The publications prior to 1781 are commonly referred to as Kant’s “precritical writings.” They give little hint of the scope, originality, and significance of the work that was to follow. Of relatively modest origins (his father was an independent harness-maker), Kant was raised and schooled in an atmosphere that was strongly influenced by Pietism.² As he began his university studies at the age of sixteen, however, he was also strongly influenced by the theology professor Franz Albert Schultz (1692–1763) and the philosophy professor Martin Knutzen (1713–51), both of whom took seriously the work of the Leibnizian Christian Wolff (1679–1754), who had been banished from Prussia at the urging of some orthodox Pietists, who saw his relatively enlightened adoption of Leibnizian philosophical positions such as pre-established harmony as a threat to traditional religious belief. Other prominent influences there were professors oriented on Aristotelian philosophy and on Christian Thomasius’s (1655–1728) eclecticism.

Kant’s earliest publications deal with questions at the intersection of natural science and philosophy and on methodological issues in philosophy and theology. His first book, Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Force, written in 1746 and published in 1749 when Kant was still a young student, and his 1755 dissertation Succinct Exposition of Some Meditations on Fire and his General History of Nature and Theory of the Heavens from the same year are examples of the former; prime examples of the latter are his 1755 essay A New Exposition of the First Principles of Metaphysical Knowledge, which he defended as part of the requirements for his appointment as private docent, his essay on The Only Possible Basis of a Demonstration of the Existence of God (1763), his Investigations of the Clarity of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morals (1764), and the inaugural dissertation On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World, which he defended in conjunction with his appointment to the rank of professor in 1770. The underlying issues throughout all of these works is the attempt to reconcile the empirical and rational grounds

². A succinct and helpful overview of Kant’s earlier years can be found in Otfried Höffe, Immanuel Kant (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 9–15. For a more extensive and thorough description of Kant’s biography and intellectual development, see Manfred Kühn, Kant: A Biography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). His publications from this period are all published in Gesammelte Schriften, begonnen von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900– ) (known as the Akademie-Ausgabe), vols I and II; hereafter cited as AA followed by the volume and page numbers.
of knowledge and the question of the possibility and limits of metaphysical reasoning in resolving disputes regarding natural phenomena such as comets, tides, and fire as well as debates in theology, morals, and rational psychology. They also show how he began to move beyond the framework of rationalist metaphysics in the Leibniz–Wolfian mode and to incorporate the critical stance of thinkers such as Rousseau and Hume into his own work.

During his years as private docent, Kant’s sole source of income was the fees paid by the students who attended his lectures. Nonetheless, it is also during this period that Kant gained a reputation for sociability and a kind of urbane cosmopolitanism in spite of the fact that he had not ventured (and never would travel) more than about a hundred miles from Königsberg. His appointment to a professorship in 1770 alleviated his financial concerns considerably, but during the following ten years prior to 1781, Kant’s publication output was so scant that this period of his career has become known as “the silent decade.”

One way to introduce the problems that occupied Kant’s thinking during that decade is in terms of the positions he defended in his inaugural dissertation about how knowledge in general is possible, and more specifically rational metaphysical knowledge of what he calls the “sensible and intelligible worlds.” He notes there, for instance, that there are certain “forms” that seem to be invariant features of every object even within the sensible world, namely space and time, but that these forms are not “rational forms or nexus of objective ideas” but rather “phenomena” that “attest to some principle of universal conjunction but do not exhibit it.” Moreover, with regard to the “matter” or

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4. During this period, Kant did not publish any philosophical works at all. He did publish a very brief book review and two essays: one “Concerning the Different Races of Mankind”; the other, very brief essay entitled (in German) “Aufsätze, das Philanthropin betreffend” in support of a progressive educational institution. All three of these publications are contained in the *Akademie-Ausgabe*, vol. II.


6. I will render Kant’s term “Erkenntnis” as “knowledge” in this essay even though that usage departs in some ways from common interpretations (especially in epistemology) that take knowledge to be belief that is certainly true. For Kant, metaphysical knowledge aims at a kind of certainty that is not possible for empirical “Erkenntnisse.” For Kant, then, empirical “knowledge” aspires to truth but is in principle always subject to refutation or revision.

7. Inaugural Dissertation, in *Akademie-Ausgabe*, vol. II, 391; hereafter cited as ID followed by the volume and page numbers in *Akademie-Ausgabe*. With the exception of quotes from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, citations within the text identify Kant’s other works using abbreviations as follows: *Critique of Practical Reason* (CprR); *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (GMM); *The Metaphysics of Morals* (MM); *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (Prol).
“contents” as opposed to the form of objects within the sensible world, metaphysical knowledge cannot say anything, since from the standpoint of metaphysics these appear as “accidents” or “contingencies” that cannot be derived from the concepts of those things. Knowledge of these properties or determinations of objects in the “sensible world” is given to us through sensibility, not through the intellect (commonly translated into English as “understanding” as a result of Kant’s own translation of the Latin term “intellectus” into the German “Verstand”). This “sense knowledge” provides us, he says there, “merely representations of things as they appear; intellectual knowledge by contrast are representations of things as they are” (ID, II, 392). He traces back the form of these objects to a kind of image that results from laws innate to the subject and its mind. Since these images, space and time, are the forms of all appearances, Kant says, they are nonetheless “true” because they are necessary components of the appearance of any sense object.

Insight into the “intellectual world” that provides access to the “things themselves” is for Kant still seen as possible through the employment of concepts that are accessible to the intellect (at this stage Kant does not distinguish between what will later be seen as the two different faculties of the understanding and of reason). Hence, methodological reflection must restrict the use of the principles of the sensible world to appearances; however, Kant still maintains that proper employment of intellectual concepts such as “cause,” “substance,” and “necessity” can be employed to attain knowledge of the things in themselves in a manner similar to the analyses conducted in Leibnizian–Wolffian metaphysics. The guarantee for the possibility of such knowledge is the fact that, “The human mind is only affected by external things and the world is only infinitely accessible to human intuition to the extent that it, together with everything else, is sustained by one and the same infinite power of a single entity” (ID, II, 409), a view that, he admits, puts him in close company with Malebranche, “namely that we intuit everything through God” (ibid.). In spite of the similarities of several of these doctrines with the positions later expounded in the Critique of Pure Reason, for instance the conception of space and time as forms of the sensible world that have their origin in the subject and hold only for appearances, the dominant idea here is still that traditional metaphysical knowledge of things in themselves is possible through the proper employment of intellectual concepts.

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Specific passages are identified by reference to the Akademie-Ausgabe by volume and page numbers. Those page numbers are listed in the margins of other editions and translations, so the reader can easily identify the passage without needing to consult the Akademie-Ausgabe itself. Quotes from the Critique of Pure Reason will follow the standard convention of listing the page numbers in the first edition (A) from 1781 and second (B) edition from 1787, which are also normally listed in all scholarly editions and translations of that work.
II. THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON

The basic question that Kant wrestles with during the following ten years can be summarized most succinctly through a famous quote from a letter to his friend and student Marcus Herz dated February 21, 1772. In his reflections on a “general phenomenology” that would introduce a theoretical metaphysics that could provide the basis for practical philosophy, he notes that:

As I thought through the theoretical part, considering its whole scope and the reciprocal relations of all of its parts, I noticed that I still lacked something essential that I had failed to pay attention to and that, in fact, constitutes the key to the whole secret of hitherto still obscure metaphysics. I asked myself: What is the ground of the relations of that in us which we call “representation” to the object?

(AA X, 129–35)

If the sensibility simply gives us representations of the objects and not the objects, then one finds oneself trapped in the problem that has vexed modern philosophers from Descartes to Hume, namely, how do we know that these representations are “true,” that is, correspond to the objects they purport to give us? If the reply falls out along the lines of the inaugural dissertation, and we count truth as agreement with the representations, then it seems we abandon any claims to genuine objectivity except by recourse to the creator God who governs the order of nature and the order of the human mind accordingly. Moreover, the entire edifice rests on the ability of the intellect’s concepts to grasp the true nature of the things themselves, that is, the universe, the mind, and God without any reliance on the senses – and if the guarantee for the ability of the mind’s ability to do so is supposed to be a benevolent and all-powerful creator God who is the source of the universe and the mind’s order, then this seems to fall prey to the same sort of circularity that befell Descartes. When Kant later famously attributes Hume with having awakened him from his “dogmatic slumbers” (Prol, IV, 260), it is precisely these kinds of questions that he recognizes his previous position could not answer.

Kant famously describes the radicality and originality of his solution to the problem in the Critique of Pure Reason through a comparison with Copernicus’s “revolution in the way we think” (B XXII n.). Instead of assuming that the objects have a pregiven structure in themselves and then asking how human cognition can come to know it, Kant says that we should pursue the hypothesis that there are structures of knowledge that are necessary for the very experience of any object so that any object we can ever possibly experience must conform to and hence exhibit those structures. Although he makes clear that he begins
with this assumption as a hypothesis, he believes that the results of the analyses he presents in the Critique confirm that he has taken the right approach. Just as Copernicus begins with a counterintuitive assumption that ends up providing a better and more elegant solution that still explains the facts we observe about planetary movement in our daily lives, Kant believes that by adopting several counterintuitive philosophical assumptions, he can explain and vindicate our everyday beliefs about things that are otherwise difficult to explain.

The general structure of the Critique still exhibits traces of the overall organization of Wolff’s metaphysical system that began with a “metaphysica generalis vel ontologia,” followed by a “metaphysica specialis” that is subdivided into a rational psychology, a rational cosmology, and a rational theology. The former corresponds roughly to Kant’s “Transcendental Aesthetic” and “Transcendental Analytic,” which represents the first section of the “Transcendental Logic”; the latter to the “Transcendental Dialectic,” which makes up the second section of the “Transcendental Logic.” Together, the “Transcendental Aesthetic” and the “Transcendental Logic” are grouped together under the heading of a “Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements,” which constitutes about 80 per cent of the book. They are preceded by a brief “Preface” and a longer “Introduction,” which outline his general approach, and the book closes with a “Transcendental Doctrine of Method,” which provides some general reflections on the method of Kant’s transcendental philosophy, and an architectonic that outlines the systematic place of various philosophical topics that may be treated with the framework of transcendental philosophy.

The “Transcendental Analytic” shares with traditional ontology the claim that it can show the formal principles of any object whatsoever, with the important caveat, however, that these principles apply only to the extent that these objects can be objects of experience for us. This means that it must remain mute about the possibility that there can be objects that may exist but lie beyond the range of possible experience for us. The “Transcendental Dialectic” then turns explicitly to such objects, namely the soul, the world as a whole, and God, showing why human reason inevitably gives rise to such ideas, but demonstrating that and why experience can neither confirm nor refute the existence of those objects.

Much of the Critique hinges on Kant’s analysis of the very notion of “experience” (Erfahrung) itself. In fact, in several places Kant explicitly describes the project as a “Zergliederung” – literally a “dissection,” or, to use a Greek term that provides the basis for the common English translation of the term, the “analysis” (“breaking up” or “taking apart”) – of knowledge and the appearances that are given to us in experience. Kant tries to show that experience involves more than just having sense impressions – or even having them against the backdrop of a formal backdrop of space and time as he had described in the inaugural dissertation. Rather, it must be organized in terms of concepts that bring
these impressions into some sort of unity. And, of course, from the very outset, Kant had believed that, at least for objects in the sensible world, concepts alone are not sufficient without some input from the senses. Hence Kant’s famous dictum: “Thoughts without concepts are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (A 51/B 75). The general view is that positive knowledge is possible only on the basis of experience, which necessarily involves both sense experience (intuitions) and the operations of the intellect (concepts). In the Critique, Kant further distinguishes between those functions of the mind that are involved in the organization and unification of intuitions into knowledge from the functions that involve the higher-order unifying operations of seeking overarching unities or ultimate grounds for knowledge in objects that lie outside the realm of sense experience. The former he calls “Verstand” or “understanding”; for the latter, he reserves the term “Vernunft” or “reason” in the strict sense. He concedes, though, that the term “reason” is often used ambiguously, sometimes as a name for the “higher faculties” encompassing both the intellect and reason and sometimes just for reason in the narrower sense.

In the Critique, Kant’s primary focus is on reason only in its theoretical function, that is, in its claims to knowledge. He believes that a proper comprehension of the possibilities and limits of theoretical reason is crucial for an adequate understanding of the role and possibilities of practical reason as well, but the latter are not the primary focus of the “first Critique” from 1781. His conclusion is that the intellect in conjunction with the senses can provide us with more or less reliable, empirical knowledge of sense objects, but that reason alone cannot yield theoretical knowledge – with the sole exception of philosophical knowledge that can be gained through reflection about the necessary conditions for the possible objects of experience, that is, the empirical knowledge of natural objects that can be given to us through the senses. The former kind of knowledge follows from sense experience and hence – using the Latinate term – is called a posteriori; the latter, because it does not derive from the senses, is by contrast a priori. If the latter could tell us something new that is not just a repetition of what is contained in a concept, but rather in this case a demonstration of the necessary conditions for experience itself, it would not only be a priori – at least with regard to experience and the objects of experience – but it would also be “synthetic.” Hence, for Kant, “transcendental” (as opposed to “empirical”) knowledge, which had been the traditional goal of metaphysics, is no longer seen as pure rational knowledge about unchanging non-natural objects such as God or the immortal soul, but rather as synthetic a priori knowledge about the conditions for the possibility of the experience, and therefore of empirical knowledge of natural objects or “appearances.” The critique of pure reason is then a first step toward a system of pure reason because it would show the sources and limits of pure reason. Because the emphasis within the realm of theoretical reason is on
the limits of reason alone, philosophy as “transcendental knowledge” no longer claims speculative insight into eternal or necessary objects, but rather takes a completely different form: “I call all knowledge transcendental that does not concern itself so much with objects, but rather with our way of knowing objects in general, in as far as the latter is possible a priori. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy” (B 25).

The pure forms of intuition: space and time

The term “concepts” as employed in the previous quote turns out to be fairly broad, because the first section of the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements,” namely the “Transcendental Aesthetic,” identifies two such a priori elements of experience that are not derived from the intellect, but as “forms of intuition” are necessary preconditions for the perception of sense objects. Space and time, Kant says, are not things we directly perceive, but are necessary elements of our perceiving, “intuiting” (Anschauung) the objects of sense perception. The general ability to have impressions of objects given to us, Kant calls “receptivity”; “sensibility” is the act of being affected (affiziert) by the objects (A 19/B 33); and he follows the modern philosophical tradition in calling the effects of this process “impressions” (A 19–20/B 34). The latter correspond to the “matter” (Materie) or “manifold” (Mannigfaltige) of sense objects as given in perception. In our intuition of sense objects, Kant notes, in addition to the matter, in each case predicates that are of a different kind, namely spatial predicates related to their location such as “above/below,” “next to,” “in front of/behind,” “right/left,” and so on, and temporal predicates such as “before,” “at the same time,” or “after.” These “formal” predicates are of a different kind than the material ones. They are not tied to one of the specific senses as are color, smell, and sound; nor can we imagine a natural object that does not have spatial or temporal location, in contrast to material predicates that may or may not apply to specific objects (for instance, a sound without a color, much less a specific color, taste, or sound). One helpful way to think of the difference is the way that the material predicates apply to properties that are clearly adjectival in nature, for example, “blue” or “loud,” whereas the temporal and spatial predicates are in a certain sense adverbial – they tell us the “when” or the “where” of the experienced object. Hence, Kant argues, these forms or “modes” of the way objects are intuited are “a priori” because they are universal and necessary predicates – as opposed to the particular and contingent properties given to us as the appearance’s “matter.” Moreover, he argues, they cannot come to us “from the object” – his term is that they are not “of objective origin” – because then they would share those features of particularity and contingency that are shared by all of the predicates that come to us through sensibility as our only access to natural objects. Here he is building
on Hume’s insight into the lack of strict predictability based on past experience. With regard to empirical properties, Kant agrees with Hume, but he thinks that the spatiality and temporality of sense experience are different. They cannot “come from” the object precisely because they do not share that feature of experiences derived from the senses; and since everything is either a subject or an object and they do not come from the objects, they must then be “of subjective origin.” Nonetheless, Kant claims they hold for and apply to all possible objects of experience (i.e. possess “objective validity” or “objective reality”) since any experiences of natural objects will necessary be in terms of these a priori dimensions of sense experience (A 326–9/B 42–4).

Their a priori and formal character is what makes it possible to describe them in a priori sciences that investigate these formal systems as such, namely in geometry, which examines the formal characteristics of space as such, and in arithmetic, which is based on a system of ordered succession, and all of the other formal systems of mathematics that are derived from these two.

The pure forms of thinking: the categories

As mentioned above, intuition alone is not sufficient for experience. In order to experience objects, Kant says that the material provided by intuition must be organized according to concepts before we can recognize any object as this or that thing of this or that kind. Not only the “receptivity of impressions” but also the “spontaneity of concepts” (A 50/B 74) is required for knowledge. Concepts, he says, are “functions” or “activities” that bring together the material that is presented in spatial and temporal arrangements and organizes it into knowledge. In our daily lives, these are specific concepts such as “boat,” “house,” “dog,” or “lantern,” to use just a few of the examples that Kant employs. However, what is common to all of them is that they are “forms” of unity, general ways of distinguishing differences and drawing things together in terms of similarities. Kant builds here on what he sees as Aristotle’s insight that there are a finite number of logically relevant “forms of judgment,” formal distinctions in the ways that concepts are combined into judgments, and he argues that these different ways of unifying concepts parallel the ways that these functions organize the material provided by intuition into concepts. According to Kant’s own slight revision of a table of judgments as developed with the logics of the Leibniz–Wolffian school, the table of judgments can be organized into four headings, each with three specific forms within them: quantity – universal, particular, or individual; quality – positive, negative, or infinite (a mixed mode of positing a non-negative such as “that is not-white”); relation – categorical, hypothetical, or disjunctive; and modality – problematic, assertive, or apodictic. Accordingly, the pure forms of thinking when applied to the manifold given in perception, what he calls the
“categories,” are also twelve in number, with three under each of four different headings that correspond to the forms of judgment, namely quantity (unity, plurality, or universality); quality (reality, negation, limitation); relation (inheritence and substance, cause and effect, mutual interaction); and modality (possibility, actuality, necessity).

The argument that these are the twelve categories, Kant calls the “metaphysical deduction” of the categories. In addition to that argument, Kant thinks that he also needs to show that and how they are related to objects, how they have “objective validity.” The strategy he employs parallels the “transcendental deduction” of the pure forms of intuition. Once again, he tries to show that, even though they do not originate from experience, they are nonetheless “necessary conditions for the possibilities of experience” and hence for any object of experience for us. He tries to show that without such forms of unity, the objects of sense intuition would not be “objects for us” (A 90/B 123). More specifically, in the two versions of the section entitled “Transcendental Deduction of the Categories” – one from the first edition of the Critique in 1781 (usually referred to as the “A” edition) and another, almost completely revised version in the second edition of 1787 (the “B” edition) – he argues that experience, the objects of experience, and even the consciousness of the subjects who experience objects are unities, not just aggregates of data that come and go over time. Each of them has a fundamental unity across time in spite of the specific changes in the state of experience, in objects, and in the subjects of experience over time. Kant asserts that intuition provides us with a series of impressions that are arranged into temporal and spatial constellations, but that without some other forms of unity to actively group them together and organize them, neither the world nor the objects within it would ever exhibit the unity that is an essential feature of nature as a whole and the objects it comprises. Knowledge involves recognition of patterns and the a priori assumption that there are patterns within experience. The fact that we must assume that we can and do organize our intuitions according to these patterns for knowledge to be possible is the core insight that Kant advances in these sections. At the same time, this “justification” exhibits the limits of the categories. As forms of unity, they depend on and are essentially related to the material presented by intuition, which is why they represent essential conditions for the recognition of objects of experience and hence for the objects presented in experience as appearances “for us,” but we have no basis for extending their validity any further than that.

Kant’s famous summary of his argument in terms of the relationship to possible experience as the supreme principle of every synthetic judgment states: “the conditions for the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions for the possibility of the objects of experience and thus possess objective validity” (A 158/B 197). This explains why he also concludes that the categories
have validity for objects of possible experience, but not for things in general – that is, not for objects that may or may not exist “in themselves” but that, by their very nature, would be outside the parameters of any possible experience.

These general arguments about the nature and necessity of the categories leave open the question how specifically they apply to objects. Based simply on the arguments articulated in the two versions of the “Transcendental Deduction of the Categories,” it is not clear what guidance – if any – intuition provides to the understanding. The deductions make clear that intuition is required for knowledge, but it might seem that the intuitions simply provide a kind of raw material that can be formed in whatever way the subject may choose in thinking. The section that follows the deductions, called the “Analytic of the Principles” attempts to show how concepts apply to objects as appearances according to a priori principles that ultimately can be traced to the universal form of all intuitions, namely time. Since all intuitions are given with a temporal dimension, Kant argues, the formal characteristics of their temporal givenness can be used to provide guides, or “schemata” for the application of the pure categories of the understanding.

For instance, Kant says that the pure schema of quantity is number, which is nothing other than the successive (a temporal term, in Kant’s view) addition of one and one. The categories of quality all have the formal character of an intensity that can also be expressed in terms of a number or quantity. Most famously and clearly, the categories of “relation” such as substance and causality have temporal schemata, namely simultaneity according to a rule for substance and succession according to a rule for causality. Finally, the categories of modality can also be characterized in terms of their relationship to the conditions of experience. “Possibility” means that something “could” appear since it is not inconsistent with the conditions of experience (intuition and concepts). “Actuality” means that it has a relationship to what he calls a “material condition” of experience (to an impression given in some “now”). Necessity involves a connection to what is actual according to a universal condition of experience (“always”) (A 218ff./B 265ff.).

Attaining knowledge involves organizing the material provided by the senses according to the general rules of what things are “always” given together (e.g. the properties of a substance) or “always” succeed each other (according to a causal law). Hence, intuition provides not only the “raw material” for knowledge, but a guide for how to arrange them in terms of their formal temporal relationships and the measure and the corrective of empirical knowledge through what Kant calls the “further course of experience.” Empirical knowledge is always open to revision because the rules that we are attempting to discern through the course of the specific experiences given to us are intended as holding “always,” but our specific experiences can tell us only what orders of concurrence and succession have proved to be the case “up until now,” so that further experiences can
confirm or refute those patterns that we take to be to the objective rules of what Kant calls “time itself” (A 200/B 245).

The general picture that emerges is one of nature as a rule-governed whole of individual objects (substances) that causally interact with one another. We gain knowledge of nature and natural objects by recognizing the regularities in the constellations of impressions provided to us by the senses. The examples Kant cites in the Critique are everyday objects – lanterns, houses, and boats. For instance, in the “Analogies of Experience” he describes how I recognize that the house I am seeing remains the same even though what presents itself to me in perception changes as my gaze focuses first on one part of it, for example, the bottom floor, then on another, for instance, the top floor. I recognize that the changes in what I perceive are not due to changes in the object, but to changes in my perceiving of it. It is very clear that Kant does not think that time and space or the categories are relevant only for knowledge within the natural sciences. However, this general picture of nature is certainly consistent with that of modern natural science along Galilien/Newtonian lines, and his schematization of even the qualities of the impressions presented to us by the senses in terms of their quantifiable intensity suggests that he follows the view underlying much of natural science at the time that sees true properties of natural objects as those “primary qualities” that can be measured (such as wavelength and weight) instead of secondary qualities, such as “blue” or “sweet,” that depend on the specific nature of individual human sensibilities. In fact, Kant himself claims that the consistency of his philosophical theory with modern natural science is an indication of its truth and even tries to provide an explanation and justification of his positions for a broader audience in the Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics from 1787 by showing that his work can answer the questions “How is pure mathematics possible?” and “How is pure natural science possible?” in a way that none of his predecessors or contemporaries could.

Throughout the history of the reception of Kant’s philosophy, this close tie to modern natural science has been seen as a virtue, for instance, in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century neo-Kantianism that took this to be an indication of Kant’s genius. However, even in the late nineteenth century, other philosophers such as Dilthey\(^\text{10}\) began to criticize Kant’s approach not as

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8. For a much more detailed discussion of this point, see my Objektivität und endliche Erkenntnis: Kants transzendentalphilosophische Korrespondenztheorie der Wahrheit (Freiburg: Alber, 1986), esp. 106–86. See also Günter Zöller, Theoretische Gegenstandsbeziehung bei Kant (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).


false, but as limited because it may indeed have correctly identified the “categories of nature,” but completely overlooked the “categories of life” and history that provide the basis for the cultural and human sciences.\textsuperscript{11} Along the same lines, Husserl\textsuperscript{12} will fault him for having overlooked the possibility of other “regions” in addition to nature as the correlate of natural science and hence of completely different sets of categories that would govern them. In short, they fault him for following modern science too uncritically in its orientation on “objectivity” and for adopting a much too narrow notion of human cognition. Moreover, subsequent developments in mathematics and natural science raise the question whether Kant’s orientation on Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics as the paradigms of knowledge is not evidence that what he took to be universal and unchangeable \textit{a priori} principles are actually assumptions that hold only relative to these specific systems that are no longer taken to be the only or even the best mathematical and scientific theories.

\textit{The “Transcendental Dialectic”}

As mentioned above, the primary purpose of the “Transcendental Analytic” was to show that it is indeed possible to identify certain \textit{a priori} principles for experience and for the objects of experience. Most contemporary work on Kant’s theoretical philosophy focuses primarily on the validity of this claim. In his own age, however, Kant’s work was seen as significant and controversial just as much for the obverse side of this claim, namely that knowledge of the traditional objects of metaphysics is impossible so that claims about the nature and existence of the immortal soul (or even the self as a substance), about God, or about the world as a whole from a nonempirical perspective can be neither proved nor disproved – they simply transcend the abilities of finite knowers such as human beings. Compared to the aspiration and claims of the metaphysical tradition before him, Kant then appeared as the “\textit{alles zermalmender}” (the one who shatters everything), as his friend Moses Mendelssohn famously formulated.

In the “Transcendental Analytic” Kant had repeatedly stressed that time, space, and the categories apply only to the objects of experience and that “thinking without intuitions” is empty, but it is only in the “Transcendental Dialectic” that Kant identifies the origin of the inherent tendency of human reason to overreach and offers a detailed refutation of the arguments that had traditionally been advanced in defense of the claims to possess reliable knowledge of the entities


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{*12} Husserl is discussed in detail in the essay by Thomas Nenon in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}, as well as in several other essays in that volume.}
it posits as a result. He begins by characterizing dialectic as a “logic of illusions” (*Logik des Scheins*) (A 393/B 349) and asserting that these illusions arise from the nature of reason itself and its search for first principles or grounds. Kant distinguishes between thinking in its function of synthesizing intuitions into concepts and articulating that experience in judgments, which he calls “understanding,” from thinking in its search to bring unity to knowledge by grounding these judgments in first principles, which he calls “reason” in the narrower, strict sense of the term as employed in the “Transcendental Dialectic.” He follows Plato in calling these first principles that, by their very definition, cannot be sense-objects and hence lie beyond the possibility of being given through intuition “Ideen” (Ideas; usually capitalized in English to distinguish them from “ideas” in the sense of mental states).

Kant claims to show that three, and only three, such ideas are conceivable: the absolute unity of the thinking subject (i.e. the self or the soul), the absolute unity of the series of the conditions of experience (i.e. the world as a whole), and the absolute unity of the condition for all objects of thinking at all (i.e. God) – corresponding precisely to the objects of rational psychology, rational cosmology, and rational theology in the Liebnizian–Wolffian metaphysics that had preceded him.

He addresses each of them separately and shows how the illusions of knowledge of such objects can arise by applying the categories (and in the case of rational cosmology, the pure forms of intuition) to the entities. Having established in the “Transcendental Analytic,” however, that the pure forms of intuition and thinking have their proper application only to the objects of possible experience, Kant then concludes that these claims lie outside the bounds of human knowledge. In the “Paralogisms,” for example, Kant shows how the idea of a self arises when one posits a ground of thinking that is a substance. Although, as Kant noted already in the “Deduction of the Categories” in the 1787 edition, the “I think” must be able to accompany any of my thoughts (B 131–2) because to deny that would be to deny the thought or deny that I am the one having that thought, this does not mean that I am aware of myself as a unified substance. It simply means that thinking and the object of thought are not identical, and that, in an act of reflection, I can always turn my attention from the object of the thought to the thinking of the thought as something that I am aware of. However, that does not mean that we are given to ourselves as an object of experience, and it certainly does not mean that I am ever aware of myself as an ego independently of the acts of thinking that are what I am aware of when I am aware of myself. One of Kant’s most important legacies in the history of German idealism and in continental philosophy is the shift from thinking of the self or ego as a “what” to an activity, from a thing within the realm of experience to the site of experience or to experiencing itself – beginning with Fichte’s notion of
the ego as a “Tathandlung” (active deed) through Heidegger’s notion of Dasein to current French phenomenological thinkers such as Marion and Henry, who call into question Cartesian notions of subjectivity that are inadequate to the actual experience we have of our lives.

Best known among these refutations of traditional metaphysical speculations are Kant’s analyses of the various dilemmas that arise around questions concerning the world as a whole. In the section entitled “The Antinomy of Pure Reason,” Kant deals with questions such as whether the world as a whole has temporal limits (a beginning and an end) or spatial limits (infinite extension or a finite size); whether it is a unified whole whose parts are dependent for their nature and existence on the whole, or whether it is an aggregate of independently existing units; whether every event in nature is determined or whether it is possible for events to occur that initiate new causal chains within the world; and whether nature has necessary beings within it that serve as the explanation for other contingent beings or whether it is necessary to seek an explanation for nature in a necessary being outside nature. In each case, Kant shows that the antinomies are irresolvable because arguments can be provided for each of the two alternatives that seem to be equally valid. This is because each of them rests on false assumptions about the application of the pure forms of intuition or of the categories such as causality, substance, and necessity that have their proper function within the realm of experience, but cannot be applied to things that by definition are beyond sense experience. For instance, we experience individual material objects that do have specific temporal and spatial locations, but the world as a whole is never an object of experience. So it makes no sense to say that it has a specific spatial or temporal location. To solve the dilemma, Kant introduces the notion of an indefinite progression according to which it is always possible to think of a distance or a time further removed from the present one than another one that is slightly closer, but he says we can never actually experience the infinite series of all of the possible points further removed, nor can we think of a specific object or a point that is located at a limit that cannot be exceeded. Empirical objects are necessarily located in time and space, but the world as a whole neither is nor is not located in time and space.

Kant’s approach to this issue is still considered relevant to discussions in philosophy and theory of science about space, time, and cosmology. However, the greatest historical significance and, according to Kant’s own estimation, the most crucial issue addressed in the antinomies is the conceivability of events that are not subject to the laws of natural causality, that is, the question about

*13. For further discussion of Fichte, see the essay by Robert R. Williams in this volume.
*14. For a discussion of Marion and Henry, see the essay by Bruce Ellis Benson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
whether freedom is or is not possible. For us to make sense of a natural event, he says, we must conceive of it as following from other natural events according to causal laws. Exactly what Kant's solution to the dilemma entails is still a matter of scholarly debate, but this much is clear: if there is to be some such “absolute beginning” for a causal chain of subsequent events in the world, it would have to originate in a source outside nature. Causality as a category applies to every natural event within the world, but that does not mean that freedom is impossible if some other non-natural factors or agents would exist outside the sensible realm whose actions would follow different laws than those of natural causality. Whether such entities actually exist is a question that lies outside the bounds of theoretical knowledge.

Finally, in the third main section of the “Transcendental Dialectic,” entitled “The Ideal of Pure Reason,” Kant explicitly addresses the question whether a theoretical proof for the existence of God is possible, and he comes to a negative conclusion. While theoretical reason cannot prove that God exists, the fact that such a God cannot possibly be an object for sense experience and cannot be proved by theoretical reason alone does not definitively establish that God does not exist. It simply means that the existence of God is a matter of faith, not knowledge. Here once again, the general strategy is to show that concepts whose proper application lies within the domain of experience, such as actuality (genuine existence), have no application to entities outside the realm of possible experience.

The term Kant uses for such entities in the *Critique* is “noumena” because they are possible objects for thought, but not experience, whose proper objects are appearances or “phenomenal objects” (see the section “Concerning the Grounds for the Distinction of All Objects in General into Phaenomena and Noumena” [A 235ff./B 294ff.]). The soul, the world as a whole, and God are clearly such noumenal objects. Another way of expressing this same point is that they can never be “appearances” and so, if they do exist, they exist as “things in themselves.” An additional controversial point among Kant’s readers from the very beginning has been the question of whether it makes any sense to talk of “things in themselves” in addition to those three, objects to which we do not have access but that underlie or somehow cause the appearances to which we do have access. Does it make sense to think of a “table in itself” that is the cause of the appearance “table”? The notion of appearances as formulated in the inaugural dissertation suggests that at that stage, Kant might have thought the answer was yes, and many commentators and critics have assumed that this is still Kant’s position in the *Critique*. However, it is hard to reconcile Kant’s repeated assertions that notions such as “actuality,” “cause,” and “substance” have objective validity only for objects of possible experience and the relationships between them with the idea of positing the “existence” of things in themselves that are
the “causes” of the “appearances” that are not themselves natural objects but part of experience itself.15

What is beyond dispute is that the Critique opens up a space to posit the existence of the traditional “things in themselves” as a matter of faith or for other possible reasons not related to theoretical knowledge. In fact, as we shall see, the limitations of the claims of knowledge within the practical sphere are crucial elements in Kant’s own development of a moral theory that he will see as consistent with the claims of knowledge and with modern natural science, but still leaves room for freedom and hence moral agency and for a unique reinterpretation of the traditional role of notions such as souls, an afterlife, and a divine order to the universe in a practical regard.16

III. KANT’S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

According to Kant’s own self-understanding, the clear distinction between the realm of experience and the intelligible realm that he sketches out and defends in the Critique of Pure Reason opens the way for a critique of pure practical reason that will provide a philosophical foundation for a theory of morality that he believes is the only one that can guarantee the binding character of moral obligation. He introduces the basic outlines of this theory for the first time in the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals in 1785; follows up with a comprehensive Critique of Practical Reason in 1788, which provides a much more comprehensive presentation of the relationship between Kant’s moral theory and traditional metaphysical issues such as freedom, immortality, and God; and then elucidates the normative application of this theory in “The Metaphysical Grounds of a Doctrine of Virtue,” which is the second part of his Metaphysics of Morals from 1797. Kant does not claim that his theory advances a new moral code, but rather that his theory provides a philosophical foundation for the everyday common-sense morality of which every rational human being has an implicit awareness.

15. For an attempt to provide a reading of the Critique that does not involve the need to posit these kinds of “things in themselves” as the grounds for appearances, either on textual or systematic grounds, see my Objektivität und endliche Erkenntnis, esp. 171–4.

16. Wilhelm Windelband (in “Ueber die verschiedenen Phasen der Kantischen Lehre von Ding-an-sich,” Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie 1 [1876]) is the first to have correctly observed that the concept of “things in themselves” plays a much more prominent role in the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason than it did in the first. He attributes this increased interest to Kant’s development of an entirely new approach to moral philosophy between the first edition in 1781 and the appearance of the second edition in 1787, two years after the publication of his Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals in 1785, and the crucial, positive role that this concept plays in his practical philosophy.
Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

The very title of the *Groundwork* signals that Kant has not given up on the claim that philosophy can identify *a priori*, nonempirical or “metaphysical” principles for practical reason. The starting-point for his moral theory is an analysis of what he takes to be our common intuitions about the nature of moral obligation. He begins with the assertion that “There is nothing in the world, indeed nothing at all that one can imagine outside of it, that could be considered good without any qualification except for a *good will*” (GMM IV, 393). He continues by comparing the goodness of a good will with that of other things commonly taken to be goods such as character traits, talents, material goods, and even happiness, but concludes that the first three cannot be said to be good if they are misused, and that happiness itself cannot be considered good without reservation, for instance in the case of an immoral person who has everything she wants in spite of the harm she causes other people. Happiness, he claims, is only considered a good by an “impartial observer” (*ibid.*) if the happy person is morally deserving of happiness.

What makes the good will good is not what it achieves, but rather the very fact that its sole aim is the good, and for Kant this means the will that acts based on its awareness of its obligation or its duty (*Pflicht*). It is not enough for the will merely to be in line with duty, for example, that I do what I should do for a non-moral reason such as fear of retribution or desire for recognition, but rather the awareness that this or that act is one’s duty must be the reason for willing that action if the will is properly to be considered a good or moral will. What then is “duty” and where does it come from? Kant defines it as “the necessity of an action done out of respect for the law” (GMM IV, 400). How can this be squared with everyday common sense? Kant’s answer is that all of us experience cases where what we want to do (our inclinations) conflict with what we know we ought to do (our duty). Moreover, we are also aware that what we ought to do in that situation is what any practically rational or moral person ought to do. Our private interests and inclinations may vary: some people like sweet, others sour; some people prefer power to money, others friendship or the praise of others; some people might even prefer helping other people and the feeling that gives them to monetary rewards. Sometimes what these preferences incline us to do might even coincide with what we know is the right thing to do, for instance when we feel inclined to help a friend or family member. However, according to Kant, the particularities of our preferences and inclinations cannot provide a firm and stable basis for moral obligations. We become aware of our moral

17. For instance: “the concept of a … good will as it is already present in natural healthy understanding does not need to be as much taught as rather just illuminated” (GMM IV, 397).
obligations when we ask not what we are inclined to do and what we want (and the best way to accomplish that), but rather when we ask what any reasonable person must admit is the right thing to do in this situation. That is why he defines duty in terms of the notion of a “law.” A law is a rule of conduct that holds generally and, at least in principle, for everyone. In fact, one might say that, for Kant, it is our very ability to look at our actions in general terms and not just from the perspective of our individual inclinations and desires, that is, to look at them in terms of laws, that makes us truly rational in a practical regard. “Pure” practical rationality would be willing that is motivated strictly by this awareness of the moral law. Kant believes that all persons act on some sorts of general principles or priorities such as seeking their own advantage whenever possible or trying to look good in the eyes of other people if they can. What distinguishes pure practical rationality is that its general principles or maxims can be traced back not to some specific inclination or desire, but rather to one’s awareness of one’s duty as such. In this regard, the will of the moral individual is not determined by something outside itself such as a pre given desire for money, fame, or recognition – it is not, as Kant says, “heteronomous” – but rather by one’s own rational awareness of one’s duty. The will of the moral person is therefore “autonomous.” Since the good will is not determined by anything outside itself, it is therefore also in the fullest sense “free.” In fact, it is the only will that is truly free since all other non-moral willings are determined by something else even if the action that follows from them is not inconsistent with an action that would be demanded by the moral law. Since these maxims or principles tell us what we must do, Kant calls them “imperatives.” Those that tell us what we need to do in order to achieve something we desire such as fame, health, or pleasure would be hypothetical imperatives because they tell us what to do if we want to achieve this or that end. A command that would tell us simply what we must do independently of what we want to do would be a categorical imperative, so the moral law is the only maxim that expresses a categorical imperative.

Because of the necessary relationship between the notion of a categorical imperative and the idea of universality, Kant formulates the categorical imperative as follows: “Act only according to that maxim that you can at the same time thereby will that it become a universal law” (GMM IV, 421). He stresses that there is but one categorical imperative, but he offers four alternative formulations. The first, a minor variation on the initial definition, namely “act as if the maxim of your action should become through your will a natural law” (ibid.), clearly expresses the lawfulness and universality of the good will as pure practical reason. The second formulation, however, is quite different, but Kant claims that it amounts to the same thing. It states: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, both in your own person as in the person of every other, as an end and never merely as a means” (GMM IV, 429). The autonomy and freedom of
human beings as persons that follow from their awareness of the moral law endow human beings with a dignity (Würde) that is inconsistent with treatment that would deny or manipulate their freedom, a point that will also become crucial for his political philosophy, which will be discussed later in this essay. The third formulation explicitly draws on this notion of autonomy: “Act in such a way that the will can view itself in its maxim as at the same making a universal law” (GMM IV, 432). Finally, the fourth formulation brings together the notions of universality and the notion of human beings as ends in themselves as follows: “Therefore, every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends” (GMM IV, 433).

For each of these formulations, Kant provides four examples that follow the same formal principles. He divides our duties into duties toward ourselves and duties toward others, on the one hand, and into perfect and imperfect duties, on the other. Duties to ourselves demand, for instance, that we may not end our own lives and that we take steps to maintain our health and develop our talents; duties to others demand that we not kill them or lie to them, and that we help other deserving persons in need. The perfect, or determinate, duties are unequivocal and do not admit of more or less: we should never commit suicide, according to Kant, and we should not just avoid telling lies too often or too maliciously; rather, we must avoid them altogether. The imperfect duties, by contrast, involve a great deal of indeterminacy because it is not always clear, for example, which talents one needs to develop, how best to maintain one’s health, and who most deserves one’s help and how much they may lay claim to it.

He closes his observations about the nature of moral obligation in the *Groundwork* with the following summary remark:

> The absolutely good will, whose principle must be the categorical imperative, as indeterminate with regard to any object, will thus include the form of willing in general, and specifically as autonomy; that means that the suitability of the maxim of any good will to become a general law is the only law that the will of every rational being imposes upon itself without basing it on any other motivation or interest. (GMM IV, 444)

The third section of the *Groundwork* indicates how this new theory of morality has important implications for what he calls a “critique of practical reason” that would address questions about the ontological implications of this theory. In the *Groundwork*, Kant focuses simply on the question of freedom and how it can be reconciled with the idea of natural causality. The idea of freedom implies a certain kind of causality, he says, but a causality according to laws that do not have their origin in nature. The ability of insights into moral obligation
to serve as sufficient motivation for actions, which we as moral agents recognize as something we presuppose in all of our moral deliberations and actions, means that the actions of moral agents, at least in some cases, follow from different laws than those of natural causality. Hence freedom as an Idee, an ideal that is a necessary presupposition for the moral sphere of pure practical reasons, means that we are also aware of ourselves as citizens of what he calls a “kingdom of ends,” an “intellectual world” (Verstandeswelt), whose laws are different from those that explain and govern nature. The Critique of Pure Reason had shown that causality necessarily applies to everything in so far as it is an object of experience for us, but since the moral law and our awareness of ourselves as subject to it are not the kinds of things that can be presented in sense experience, they simply fall outside the limits of the necessary conditions for appearances as objects of experience in the sense that Kant uses the term. If one wants to call such objects that fall outside the bounds of sense experience “things in themselves,” then the realm of pure practical reason is a domain populated by just such entities when we see ourselves and others as “ends in themselves” subject to the obligations of the moral law. This “positive sense” of the notion of “things in themselves” is reflected not only in changes to the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason in 1787, but also developed more extensively and systematically in the 1788 publication of the Critique of Practical Reason.

Critique of Practical Reason

The “second Critique” builds on the same insights that had been articulated in the Groundwork:

The concept of freedom, in as far as its reality is proven by an apodictic law of practical reason, represents the cornerstone of the entire edifice of a system of pure, even of speculative reason, and all other concepts (those of God and immortality) that in the latter [i.e. in a system of pure “speculative” or theoretical reason] remain without any basis, follow from it [i.e. the concept of freedom] and receive through it content and objective reality, i.e., the possibility of them is thereby proven because freedom is actual; for this Idea [Idee] reveals itself through the moral law. (CprR V, 4–5)

The Critique of Pure Reason had left open the question whether such entities outside the realm of possible experience can exist and, if so, how. Theoretical reason can neither confirm nor refute the existence of such objects, but here Kant asserts that out of the three ideas that theoretical reason necessarily thinks but can never experience – freedom as the ability to initiate a chain of causality
outside the strictures of natural causality, the soul as a substance, and God – there is one that is the direct object of pure practical reason: “Freedom, however, is also the only one among all of these Ideas of speculative reason of which we know the possibility a priori, without being able to explain it, because it is the condition for the moral law, which we do know” (CprR V, 5). The proof of freedom, then, is provided not by theoretical reason, but by the activity (Tat) of reason as practical (CprR V, 3).¹⁸ So Kant's famous dictum about awareness of freedom as a “Faktum” of reason (e.g. CprR V, 56, 72) implies not just that it is a starting-point for analysis instead of a conclusion, but more importantly that it exists not on its own, but that it is an accomplishment, an activity of pure practical reason itself. So the analysis of freedom, although much more extensive than in the *Groundwork*, is consistent with the moral theory advanced in the earlier work, even though it is also articulated in more detail in the “second Critique.”

What is new is Kant's treatment of the other two ideas, God and the soul. They follow not from Kant's moral theory per se, but from his views about the necessary conflicts that arise for finite beings who cannot reasonably help but wish that happiness would somehow follow from moral actions, but who are at the same time aware that there is no necessary relationship between the worthiness of happiness from a moral standpoint and the actual prospects of happiness in this world. In fact, the two might and often do stand in direct conflict with each other, according to Kant. Kant thinks the Stoics fail to appreciate actual human psychology if they believe that we can (or should) extinguish any hopes for material happiness and well-being in this life. We all know as rational beings that we are obliged to follow the moral law, but we cannot help but wish and hope that we would somehow be rewarded for doing so. The action would not be moral if it were done strictly or even primarily for the sake of the reward, so in a sense it is appropriate that we cannot know about such a reward as a matter of theoretical certainty. Kant's doctrine of the “highest good” states that, even though the only thing that can be said to be good without qualification is a good will, so that it is the supreme good, we can envisage a more comprehensive good that would entail a coincidence between happiness and moral worth. If we were to imagine how this highest good would be possible, and it clearly cannot happen in this life, then it seems that one would have to postulate the existence of the person in a life after this one, that is, an immortal soul, and an all-knowing, omnipotent, and just God who would assure that the rewards one has earned in this life are provided in the next. Hence Kant calls freedom, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of a perfect God “postulates” of

¹⁸. See Kant’s definition of a “Tat” in the *Metaphysics of Morals*: “We call an action a deed (Tat) in as far as it is subject to laws of obligation, consequently also in as far as the subject is viewed in it according to the freedom of its will” (MM VI, 223).
practical reason: things we can never know or count on, but things that a moral person must in some sense hope for; things that a moral person cannot help but implicitly want when he or she is acting in conformity with the moral law.

“The Metaphysical Grounds of a Doctrine of Virtue”

Most discussions of Kant’s moral theory have historically focused almost exclusively on the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In those works, Kant stresses the ability of the moral agent at any point to decide in favor of actions that the moral law demands. The notion of moral personhood refers to the unique status of human beings as moral agents, but Kant makes clear (i) that the struggle to act morally for finite beings always remains a struggle because the awareness of one’s moral obligations never completely extinguishes the pull of other inclinations, and (ii) the moral responsibility of every human being capable of thinking in general terms means that even the most morally corrupt person could in principle at any point choose to follow the dictates of the moral law that he or she is implicitly aware of. So the notion of character or virtue is mentioned only infrequently and does not seem to play a significant role in Kant’s moral theory in those works. Recently, however, there has been renewed attention to Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals* in general and to the doctrine of virtue that Kant advances there in an attempt to show that a Kantian theory of morality can also accommodate some of the basic insights from virtue ethics and avoid some of the problems that the standard readings of Kant’s ethics seem to face.19 Prominent among those problems is the fact that Kant’s descriptions of “pure” practical reason seem to suggest that the person who, because of good training or good habits, has learned to do her duty gladly seems to be less moral than the person whose actions consistent with the moral law are most clearly moral because she has no inclinations to do so otherwise. So the acquisition of virtue, it seems, could actually be a hindrance to truly moral action because it makes them too easy for the virtuous person.

The “Doctrine of Virtue” makes it clear that this is not the case for Kant. In an important remark, he both recognizes and qualifies traditional definitions of virtue:

Virtue is also not merely to be esteemed and explained as the skill and … as a lasting habit that is acquired through morally good actions.

For if this is not the result of considered and solid principles that are continually refined, then it is just like every other mechanism that arises from technical-practical reason and is not sufficiently secured in every case, nor is it secure in the face of changes that new temptations might bring about. (MM VI, 383–4)

Note that Kant does not deny that virtue is acquired nor that it can become habitual. He also does not deny that it is to be esteemed. His reservations concern the source and motivation of virtue. Unless it is the result of what he calls “lasting and solid principles,” namely the resolve to allow the demands of the moral law to serve as the guiding principles for one’s actions, then it is not reliable, in his view. Moreover, from Kant’s overall position, one can add that the moral value of virtue derives not from its results (namely conduct consistent with the demands of the moral law), but from the fact that it is acquired and maintained out of respect for the moral law. As long as this is the case, then the virtue is indeed something to be esteemed and cultivated.

That is why the notion of Gesinnungen or “dispositions” plays a much more central role in this work than in the Groundwork and in the Critique of Practical Reason. Instead of stressing the decision in favor of moral action in each specific act, the “Doctrine of Virtue” (along with many passages from Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason) focuses more on a person’s abiding commitment to make the moral law the guiding principle of all of one’s actions and one’s life as a whole. So Kant recognizes that the moral person will find moral actions easier and learn to take satisfaction in fulfilling one’s moral obligations, but the moral worth of virtue derives from the fact that the original decision and the concomitant change in attitude are based on that person’s recognition of the binding character of the moral law and the desire to respond to it consistently. Kant explicitly recognizes that the virtuous person can learn to take satisfaction in acting virtuously and that this is laudable, but he stresses that such satisfaction follows from that person’s moral disposition and that it is not the reason for becoming moral. However, throughout this work (and in his work on religion), Kant makes it clear that this resolve is always in danger and must be constantly and consistently renewed because of the fact that human motivation never eliminates heteronomous inclinations that even the firmest moral resolve never completely extinguish.

20. Henry Allison’s study of Kant’s moral philosophy stresses the centrality of Gesinnung and the lasting choice of the moral law as one’s supreme maxim as the keys to understanding that theory. See Allison, Kant’s Theory of Freedom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

21. “The thinking human being, when she has conquered the temptations of vice and is aware that she has performed her often unpleasant duty, finds herself in a state of quietude in one’s soul and satisfaction, in which virtue is its own reward” (MM VI, 214).
Kant himself abjures the term “aesthetics” for his philosophical reflections on the *a priori* foundations for judgments of taste that have far-reaching implications for theories of art and artistic creativity and for philosophical determinations of concepts such as beauty and sublimity. For Kant, the “aesthetic” refers to questions about sensibility; its opposite is the “logical,” which has to do with thinking. Hence the “transcendental aesthetics” concerns the *a priori* forms of sensibility, and there is an aesthetics of the way that various things arouse desire or aversion in us, an aesthetics of pleasure, but because of the variability of individual human sensibilities, this would be an empirical study. Nonetheless, the importance of Kant’s analysis of judgments of taste and related topics in the *Critique of Judgment* from 1790 for the philosophical area that has now come to be known as “aesthetics” justifies the use of this term for his theories about these topics.

The *Critique of Judgment* consists of two main parts. In the first, Kant examines the nature of what he calls “judgments of taste”; in the second, he considers the validity of various teleological claims, both the inherent role of teleology in nature and of nature as teleologically ordered in such a way as to be conducive to the aims of systematic knowledge. For Kant’s aesthetic, the relevant considerations are therefore contained in the first section. We will return to the second section below in the discussion of Kant’s philosophy of history.

Judgments of taste, Kant points out, have a different character both from judgments about what is pleasant and from judgments about good and evil. Aesthetic judgments about what is pleasant to one person do not legitimately lay claim to assent from others. There may be empirical generalizations about what is normally pleasant or painful, pleasurable or not, for most people, but Kant says that because all of these claims are in a strict sense “subjective,” that is, they depend on our specific sensibilities and preferences, they can never claim strict universal validity. Moral claims, by contrast, do legitimately claim universal assent because they are based on the nature of pure practical reason itself and the absolute obligation that derives from the moral law. The interesting point about judgments of taste, specifically judgments about what is and is not beautiful, is that they do resemble moral claims (and theoretical claims about truth) in that they lay claim to universal assent even though they do not have an objective basis, as legitimate moral and theoretical claims do. They also share with moral judgments the characteristic that they seem to be made from the standpoint of the impartial observer because one can judge an object beautiful without necessarily having an interest in possessing that object (as would be the case in judgments about pleasurable objects). In fact, Kant says, the observer of the beautiful does not necessarily have any interest at all in the existence of this kind of object.
Judgments that this or that object is beautiful are based in a feeling of pleasure (Lust) that the experience of the beautiful object arouses in the person who experiences, so what makes it beautiful in the strict sense is something subjective (namely the feeling it awakens), but nonetheless one expects general assent to that judgment. So Kant concludes that it must be something about the experiencing of the object that gives rise to the judgment and Kant surmises that this has to do with an optimal proportion between the imagination and the understanding that gives rise to this feeling of pleasure. Hence even though there is no specific external purpose that gives rise to the feeling of beauty aroused by the object, it exhibits a kind of purposiveness through its ability to produce just this feeling of pleasure in the observer. The fact that we do make these claims suggests for Kant that we have a “common sense” that is awakened by these objects, that is, that each of us has some basic commonality in our cognitive faculties and that each of us is capable of registering this feeling of pleasure in the experience of the beautiful object based on this commonality. One of the indirect benefits of our awareness of beauty is that it fosters dialogue and sociability among human beings, especially in light of the fact that the proof of the validity of these judgments cannot be found in a specific observable feature of the object, but rather in the actual intersubjective agreement that the judgments posit as both necessary and possible for them.

Following the analysis of the beautiful, Kant turns to the question of the sublime. He asserts that the basic features of their claims to universal assent remain the same. However, the proportionality for judgments of taste regarding the sublime rests on the proportionality between the imagination and concepts of reason, that is, the unconditioned Ideas described in the “Transcendental Dialectic”, rather than the concepts of the understanding that are involved in judgments about beauty. In this regard, experiences of the sublime serve as symbols of the transcendent objects that lie beyond the grasp of the intellect. As such, they can help foster an appropriate sensitivity to the special status of non-natural objects such as duty and human beings as persons. The prime examples of the sublime are overwhelming natural phenomena such as the vastness of the sea, the majesty of mountains, or the ferocity of a storm whose expansiveness and sheer power overwhelm us and our ability to comprehend them. They serve as examples of powers beyond our reach.

Although natural phenomena can also be beautiful, prime examples of the beautiful are also successful works of art. In his analysis of such works and their creation, Kant also develops a theory of genius in the *Critique of Judgment* that has been extremely influential not just in philosophical aesthetics, but every bit as much in the self-understanding of many artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because beauty is not simply a matter of the intellect, there are no rules for what makes an article beautiful or not, and because it is not a concept,
in each case what is beautiful is something unique and individual. Nonetheless, because of its exemplary character, the beautiful seems to establish a rule in the sense of a paradigm for future works of art.

The genius is the one who is able to create art works without having any rules to follow and who is able to create works that serve as exemplary for others who will follow. The creator of such works produces original objects that evoke appropriate feelings in the audience that experiences them, without being able explicitly or adequately to explain how the creative process occurs. Such creativity is unique and inexplicable; it seems to be a gift of nature that even the artist cannot account for. That is why Kant restricts the notion of genius to the fine arts as truly creative activities, whereas even the most innovative scientist or mathematician is not a genius in this sense because the scientist or mathematician can point to objective regularities or laws that he or she might have been the first to discover, but did not truly create.

V. KANT’S PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION

In the second division of the Critique of Judgment, Kant examines the utility and validity of the notion of purposiveness (Zweckmäßigkeit) that arises through the activity of reflective judgment and leads one to search for connections among natural phenomena that go beyond what is presented in the regularities that the intellect alone is able to recognize. Most concretely, he considers certain kinds of natural phenomena, namely organisms, which he defines as those entities that are characterized as self-sustaining because they exhibit what he calls “mutual causality.” We can understand how one part of the organism, for instance the digestive system, can serve to provide nutrients and how the blood pumped from the heart can serve to make it possible for the digestive system to be maintained and work as it should. In a broader sense, however, we can come to see nature as a whole as a kind of organism, as something whose various parts sustain one another, and ask how it came to be crafted as it is. We can also develop an appreciation for the fact that it seems to be organized so that we can always proceed from specific regularities to ever broader laws that allow us to understand it as a system. The ideas serve a heuristic function in leading us to search continually for new connections and ever more encompassing laws to explain natural phenomena.

If we pursue these questions and seek answers in terms of something outside nature that can serve as an explanation for nature’s internal purposiveness and its suitability for the human pursuit of comprehensive scientific explanation, this leads us to the idea of an all-knowing creator who is the author of the order we seek and believe that we discover in nature. Kant contends that, even though
the notion of purposiveness does indeed lead us to continue to seek ever new connections and ever-higher generalities, what we actually discover are specific causal connections, not the purposiveness of nature as a whole and certainly not a non-natural agent that is the source of such purposiveness. So the treatment of teleology in the second division confirms the results of the “Transcendental Dialectic” that knowledge of such non-natural objects (God and nature as a purposive whole) is not possible or, as he puts it in the third Critique, that the “constitutive” use of these concepts is not justified, but that they nevertheless fulfill an important “regulative” function for human knowledge. Once again, Kant limits the claims of knowledge but leaves room for other important functions for the Ideas that arise through reason and reflective judgment.

In a work that appears between the publications of the last two Critiques, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* from 1793, Kant elaborates his views about the relationship between revealed religion and the truths that reason alone can provide us. His basic thesis is that something of which we can be absolutely certain, namely the moral law and the obligations that follow from it, can provide a rational basis for us to evaluate the tenets of revealed religions. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had said that theoretical reason can neither confirm nor refute claims about God, the immortal soul, or the nature of human beings as non-natural objects that figure prominently in most revealed religions. However, he believes that the *Critique of Practical Reason* provides an apodictic basis for evaluating claims that cannot be true. Anything that a revealed religion purports to tell us that is not consistent with what we know about morality solely through pure practical reason must be false. Moreover, many of the doctrines of revealed religion can be seen as historical and metaphorical expressions of fundamental truths about moral life and moral obligation. For instance, questions about the inherent goodness or evil of human nature are interpreted in terms of the ineradicably heteronomous nature of the human will. The rational justification for the doctrine of original sin is what he calls the “radical evil” of human nature, namely the ineradicable tendency of each person to seek ways to avoid the demands of the moral law by adopting maxims contrary to the obligations that pure practical reason dictates to each finite rational agent. Christian doctrines about life after death and the eternal reward for moral conduct in this world are read in light of the postulates of pure practical reason, but the doctrine of eternal damnation is rejected as inconsistent with a beneficent moral order. Against the backdrop of his moral philosophy, Kant believes that there is a rational standard for the evaluation of all religions and suggests that Christianity, especially modern Protestant Christianity, is closest to the truths that in principle could be known without necessarily relying on the historical accounts of revealed religions.

This general approach of reducing the truths of revealed religion to moral truths is not uncommon in a whole range of Enlightenment figures, for instance
by Lessing in his essay on “The Education of Humanity,” and it is consistent with Hegel’s later characterization of religion as a form of figurative “representation” (Vorstellung) that finds its ultimate truth in the conceptual knowledge advanced in philosophy. It is also an approach that will be decisively rejected by Schelling in the Philosophy of Revelation and by Kierkegaard in Fear and Trembling.

VI. KANT’S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND HIS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In the third Critique, Kant looks at nature as a whole and asks if we can find anything there that can be seen not merely as a means, but as an end in itself. Whatever that would be, would have to be seen as the end or goal of nature and hence of history as a whole. Consistent with his moral philosophy, Kant identifies this as the idea of humanity as an end in itself. What makes human beings special is none of their natural properties, but rather their status as subjects of the kingdom of ends because of their awareness of the moral law. If one is to conceive of history as having a purpose, then, it would have to be in terms of the moral progress of humanity.

Kant’s famous essay “Concerning Perpetual Peace,” which was published in 1795, provides an outline of how he sees this ideal not only as a measure for evaluating historical progress or lack of it, but also as a driving force in history itself. Kant does not claim that individual human beings or governments consciously always or even usually dedicate themselves to the goal of advancing human freedom, dignity, and moral progress. Rather, the opposite is the case: he assumes that most individuals and most governments will pursue what they see as their own self-interest. However, he also believes that the overall outcome of their interactions will be positive because the mechanisms that govern history make it in people’s self-interest to join civil societies that secure the rights of all of their citizens and eventually even to form an international confederation that will end the constant state of warfare among states that has characterized history until now. Such a historical order would be consistent with progress toward a “kingdom of God on earth” not just as a normative measure for evaluating different societies and different historical epochs, but also consistent with the idea of history as a process that was created and overseen by a benevolent author. The influence of this general approach can be seen in Fichte’s conception of the ultimate resolution of dichotomies through the practical process of history and in Hegel’s famous concept of the “cunning of reason” in history. It finds its concrete historical expression, among other things, in the formation of a “League of Nations” after the First World War and the “United Nations” after the Second World War as attempts to institutionalize the ideals and the
mechanisms for their enforcement that Kant had articulated at the end of the eighteenth century.

Another historically influential doctrine in this essay – one that recently has received significant attention from Jacques Derrida, among others – is his explicit adoption of the notion of “cosmopolitan” rights for individuals and nations that sees all human beings as “citizens of the earth” and not just citizens of specific nations or states.

Although Kant’s political philosophy also exerted a strong influence on subsequent thinkers in legal theory and politics during the decades immediately following the publication of the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, in which he articulates his theory of political order based on fundamental principles of morality, Kant’s political theory did not attract the attention during the second half of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century that the other main topics in his philosophical work received. Kant takes philosophical and legal positions from a range of predecessors, from Hobbes and Locke to Grotius and Achenwall, and assesses and modifies them in light of what he takes as the guiding principle for the philosophy of any domain of practical activity that should be guided by the principles of morality, including politics. A philosophical treatment of right must ask not only what the positive laws of a given political order prescribe, but also whether they can be legitimized in terms of the normal ideal of justice (*Recht*) that they purport to instantiate.

The purpose of the state, according to Kant, is to secure external human freedom. By “external” Kant means that the state is intended to secure the right of each individual to exercise free choice except where that exercise conflicts with the rights of others to the exercise of their free choice. The purpose of the state is not to enforce morality in the strict sense because the latter concerns the agent’s motivation and the state is neither able to nor entitled to regulate motivations, but only the actions of its citizens. Hence the general principle of the law states: “Act externally in such a way that the free enactment of your free will can coexist with the freedom of everyone else according to a general law” (MM VI, 231). The only justification for the use of coercion is to prevent

23. For instance in Fichte’s *Foundations of Natural Right* and Hegel’s *Outlines of a Philosophy of Right*.
24. This has recently begun to change significantly as the *Metaphysics of Morals* has begun to attract more scholarly attention. For example, see Sharon Byrd and Joachim Hruschka, *Kant’s Doctrine of Right: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sharon Byrd *et al.* (eds), special issue on the 200th anniversary of Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals*, *Annual Review of Law and Ethics* 5 (1997); and Timmons (ed.), *Kant’s Metaphysics of Morals*.
25. See Byrd and Hruschka, *Kant’s Doctrine of Right*. 
others from doing something that restricts other persons' freedom. “Persons” are those entities who possess practical reason that makes them morally accountable and endows them with rights. Since everything else is a mere object that has neither responsibilities nor rights, there are no inherent restrictions on a person's entitlement to possess and use things as property except insofar as those things are already the property of others. In a state of nature, the only things that are secure are those things that one is physically able to acquire and protect. Hence, all physical goods, including one's own bodily well-being, can be reliably secured only if there is an enforcement mechanism that makes it in everyone's self-interest to observe the rights of others, namely a civil society with recognized laws and institutions that enforce them. In a civil society, property is acquired through commonly recognized means and property is exchanged on the basis of mutual agreement through contracts. It is the responsibility of the state to prevent violations of the rights of others or failures to fulfill contracts through regulations that clearly establish rightful ownership and punish those who fail to honor them. The state is entitled to restrict or violate the freedom of those who violate the freedom of others in order to discourage such violations and thereby secure the freedom of all.

Kant's orientation on the notion of a civil society based on contracts and property rights extends beyond the realm of what one typically thinks of in terms of contracts to the realm of personal rights such as relationships between parent and child, husband and wife; and it relegates peoples whose institutions do not resemble those of European states to the status of primitives whose rights can be neglected or ignored by “civilized” societies as they are gradually brought into the community of civil societies. Many of Hegel's critiques of Kant in his *Outlines of a Philosophy of Right* pertain to just this attempt to see right strictly in terms of property and contracts; recent critics of European colonialism and racism have criticized Kant as a witting or unwitting accomplice to Western violations of the rights of others over the past few centuries because of what now seem apparent as the obvious flaws of the latter tendencies. Apologists for Kant will point out that he was hardly alone in those views and that he was in many ways ahead of his time in stressing that the sole justification for the authority of the parents is the responsibility and concern they have for their children's well-being, in seeing the duties of husband and wife toward each other as symmetrical instead of one-sided, and in his unequivocal condemnation of slavery as

an institution and the recognition that at least in principle every human being is endowed with reason and moral rights.

VII. CLOSING REMARKS

There are a number of other topics that Kant addressed after his critical turn, for instance, the philosophical foundations of modern natural science, philosophical anthropology, and a philosophy of education, that we do not have sufficient space to cover in this essay, but that have also been influential in those fields. What is most impressive about Kant’s overall achievement, though, is not the extraordinary range of problems he addressed, but the originality and importance of the positions he advances as philosophical solutions to those problems. Also impressive is the way that he addresses them as part of an overall philosophical system that he believes reflects the unity of reason itself. This notion of system was perhaps most influential in the major figures of German idealism who all saw themselves as building on and more truly systematically developing the insights originally derived from Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Yet even after the notion of comprehensive and definitive philosophical systems had fallen out of favor during the second half of the nineteenth century, Kant’s transcendental philosophy served as a fundamental point of orientation and in many ways as a point of departure for almost all of twentieth-century continental philosophy and for influential philosophers such as John Rawls and Wilfrid Sellars within the analytical tradition as well.

MAJOR WORKS


Translations


The publication of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason) in 1781 marks a watershed in modern philosophy. It appeared at a time when almost no one but a few Humean skeptics questioned belief in the isomorphism between *reason* and *being*. The Newtonian physicist believed that this isomorphism enabled knowledge of laws of nature, just as the rationalist metaphysician believed that it enabled knowledge of God. Yet, whereas Newtonian physics seemed a genuine “science,” metaphysics remained nothing but a “battle-field of endless controversies.” Kant explains why this is the case and in so doing prescribes how metaphysics may become “scientific.” Yet, for many, he did so at great cost. For Kant reveals that the isomorphism between *reason* and *being* is only valid of experience and outside of that cannot be legitimately assumed. When Moses Mendelssohn referred to “the all destroying Kant,” therefore, he was referring to Kant’s conclusion that the rationalist metaphysician’s endeavor to provide knowledge of God could never be realized. Kant’s *Kritik* thus seemed to mark the “destruction” of the Leibnizian–Wolffian metaphysics that Mendelssohn perpetuated. Without such metaphysics, it would, Mendelssohn

2. Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), a philosopher of Jewish heritage based in Berlin, was a leading representative of the German Enlightenment and a disciple of the Leibnizian–Wolffian school of rationalist metaphysics. His principal works include the *Philosophische Schriften* (1761), *Phädon* (1767), *Jerusalem* (1783), and *Morgenstunden* (1785).
feared, prove impossible to rationally justify religion and morality, thus opening
the door for fideism and irrationalism.

However, Mendelssohn was wrong to think that Kant’s delimitation of
knowledge precluded rational justification of religion and morality and that
Leibnizian–Wolffian metaphysics was damaged beyond repair. When Friedrich
Heinrich Jacobi⁴ challenged Enlightenment faith in reason by arguing that,
rather than acknowledging Kant’s delimitation of knowledge, we should acknowl-
dge that reason itself must be delimited, it was Kant’s philosophy that seemed
best able to demonstrate that religion is not incompatible with reason. Thus, far
from viewing Kant as an “all-destroyer,” Karl Leonhard Reinhold⁵ saw him as a
“restorer of Christianity.”⁶ Yet thinkers, such as Reinhold, who were convinced
by Kant’s conclusions, became increasingly dissatisfied with the arguments
employed to establish them. And it was the resources of Leibnizian–Wolffian
metaphysics that they drew on to resolve tensions within Kant’s philosophy.
Thus, Reinhold argued for the necessity of a synthetic-deductive methodology,
in which Kant’s results are deduced from an indubitable foundation. However,
the most explicit advocate of a return to Leibnizian–Wolffian metaphysics was
Salomon Maimon,⁷ who argued that Kant’s philosophy could only satisfactorily
explain the isomorphism between reason and being in experience by incorpo-
rating Leibnizian–Wolffian resources within itself. These moves toward founda-
tionalism and monism would decisively shape the tradition of German idealism.

I. THE PANTHEISM CONTROVERSY

Jacobi’s challenge to the Enlightenment’s confidence in reason attained no-
toriety in the 1780s as a result of the “pantheism controversy,” which began within
correspondence between Jacobi and Mendelssohn concerning Jacobi’s claim
that Lessing⁸ was a Spinozist. Like Mendelssohn, Lessing had been a significant

⁴. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (January 25, 1743–March 10, 1819; born in Düsseldorf, Germany;
died in Munich) was educated in Frankfurt am Main and Geneva. His influences included
Hume, Pascal, Rousseau, and Spinoza.
⁵. Karl Leonhard Reinhold (October 26, 1757–April 10, 1823; born in Vienna, Austria; died in
Kiel, Germany) was educated in Vienna. His influences included Kant and he held appoint-
ments at the University of Jena (1787–94) and the University of Kiel (1794–1823).
⁶. Karl Leonhard Reinhold, Letters on the Kantian Philosophy, Karl Ameriks (ed.), James
⁷. Salomon Maimon (Salomon ben Josua) (1752–54–November 22, 1800; born in Sukowiborg,
Polish Lithuania; died in Nieder-Siegersdorf, Lower Silesia) was educated in Mirz and Iwenez.
His influences included Hume, Kant, Leibniz, Maimonides, and Spinoza.
⁸. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1821) was a dramatist, art critic, and theologian, who, just
as much as his close friend, Moses Mendelssohn, is regarded as a leading representative of
proponent of the Enlightenment confidence in reason and, as such, Mendelssohn was alarmed at the notion that his “co-worker” could have held views incompatible with religion and morality. For Jacobi, Lessing’s Spinozism suggested that rigorous ratiocination would, contra Mendelssohn, always contradict religion and morality. The controversy became public in 1785 when Jacobi heard that Mendelssohn was planning to publish an interpretation of Lessing’s Spinozism that would render it innocuous. To prevent Mendelssohn from taking the wind out of his sails, Jacobi hastily compiled his Briefe über die Lehre von Spinoza an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn, through which the controversy first entered the public domain.

In his Briefe, Jacobi argues that Spinoza reveals the ultimate consequences of the principle on which ratiocination is based, the principle that “a nihilo nihil fit [out of nothing comes nothing].” It is rigorous application of this principle that leads Spinoza to claim that the nexus of efficient causality is infinite in both directions, since one cannot suppose an absolute beginning of an action without supposing that nothingness produces something. The Spinozistic universe has therefore existed from all eternity and will continue to exist throughout eternity, and cannot be the creation of a transcendent God, since such a conception effectively maintains that the universe is produced from nothing. Spinoza thus claims that individual things immediately originate from “an immanent [infinite substance], an indwelling cause of the universe eternally unalterable within itself.” Spinoza’s universe thus subsists in itself, as the immediate expression of an infinite substance, which he calls “God.” The whole of Reality is exhausted by this one substance, which immediately expresses itself as the universe of finite things. The two presuppose one another: the infinite substance cannot exist without manifesting itself as the universe of finite things, and this universe only exists insofar as it is the immediate expression of this infinite substance. Although the universe may logically depend on the one infinite substance, nothing can precede it in a temporal sense, so that it cannot be described as “created.” Any philosophy that posits substance as temporally preceding the universe of finite things presupposes “a coming-to-be from nothingness.” And, according to Jacobi, Spinoza resisted such assumptions insofar as they contravened the principle that a nihilo nihil fit.

the classical German Enlightenment. His principal works include Nathan der Weise (1778) and Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts (1780).


10. See ibid, 217.
11. Ibid., 188.
12. Ibid., 217.
Jacobi argues that Spinozism is the most consistent rationalist metaphysics, and yet nonetheless finds its consequences deeply unappealing. The unappealing consequences of Spinozism – to which Jacobi sees all rationalist metaphysics as ultimately leading – are “fatalism” and “atheism.”

Jacobi clearly sees “fatalism” as the product of Spinoza’s denial of free will. In Spinoza’s system, the rejection of free will ultimately follows from the parallelism between thought and extension, which renders thought a reflection of interactions between extended things. Thought thus cannot influence the determinations of individual extended things; only other extended things possess such a capacity. Furthermore, will can influence neither the determinations of individual things nor the mechanism of efficient causes since “the will is posterior to thought.” For the will is a “modification” of thought that expresses the relationship between oneself and other finite things, all of which are necessarily determined by the mechanism of efficient causes. Therefore, the will “is only a remote effect of relations, and can never be an original source, or a pure cause.”

Free will is thus flatly denied. Indeed, any actions that were the product of free will would, _qua_ spontaneous action, not be the product of any prior condition and would literally have _come-to-be from nothing_. For Jacobi, acceptance of Spinozism is thus tantamount to fatalism.

Jacobi’s equation of Spinozism and atheism is hardly original, but more original is his claim that all consistent rationalist metaphysics leads to atheism. Before the publication of the _Kritik_, Jacobi himself embarked on a refutation of the ontological argument. Remembering Leibniz’s claim “that Spinozism is exaggerated Cartesianism,” Jacobi turned to Spinoza to understand Descartes’s ontological argument. Jacobi says, “it’s here [in the _Ethica_] that the Cartesian proof shone forth for me in its full light.” Yet, far from uncovering the fallacy that Kant identified, Jacobi discovered a valid version of the argument. He writes:

> if the concept of God is formed in the manner of Spinoza (in such a way that the highest Being is nothing but Reality itself, and his works nothing but the compositions of this Reality), then the Cartesian demonstration of God’s existence is right enough: the concept of

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13. See _ibid._, 187.
15. _Ibid._
17. See _ibid._, 187, 234.
18. _Ibid._, 282. Leibniz makes this claim in _Theodicy_ §393.
19. Jacobi, _The Main Philosophical Writings_, 282.
God is at the same time the unshakeable proof of his necessary existence.\textsuperscript{20}

The ontological argument is valid on the Spinozistic assumption that God is “Reality itself.” For, from the existence of “determinate finite being,” we can justifiably infer the necessary existence of an “indeterminate infinite being,” of which determinate beings are modifications. Kant’s objection that the ontological argument fallaciously treats “\textit{Being}” as “a real predicate”\textsuperscript{21} fails to undermine this version of the argument, since the “unique and infinite being of all beings … is not a separate, individual, different, thing [to which] any of the determinations that distinguish individual things pertain.”\textsuperscript{22} Rather, God is “primal material, \textit{pure matter, universal substance},”\textsuperscript{23} which precedes determinate things and thus all predication. For Jacobi, therefore, the ontological argument \textit{does} prove the necessary existence of an infinite substance. However, \textit{this} necessarily existing substance cannot be equated with the God of religion: “if the concept of God is construed [as] a \textit{Being external} to all beings, then neither can the intrinsic truth of his concept be made out from the concept itself, nor can the connection of the concept with the necessary Being ever be realized.”\textsuperscript{24} A God who is “an intelligent personal cause of the world”\textsuperscript{25} thus cannot be proved to exist through the ontological argument. If the rationalist metaphysician attempts to use this argument to prove the existence of the God of religion, what he in fact proves is more consistent with atheism than theism.

As, for Jacobi, Spinozism is the most consistent rationalist metaphysics, he does not try to refute the unappealing consequences of Spinozism by means of rationalist metaphysics itself.\textsuperscript{26} Jacobi thus extricates himself from Spinozism “through a \textit{salto mortale},”\textsuperscript{27} by which one recognizes convictions that defy rational explanation. Jacobi thus says that “from fatalism I immediately conclude against fatalism.”\textsuperscript{28} Although, for a consistent rationalist metaphysician, free will must be rejected for contravening the principle that \textit{a nihilo nihil fit}, the fatalism this engenders simply cannot be accepted, with the result that we must retain our conviction in the reality of free will and declare it incapable of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, 283.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, A 598/B 626.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Jacobi, \textit{The Main Philosophical Writings}, 219.
\item \textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, 219.
\item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, 283.
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, 189.
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{See ibid.}, 214–15.
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 189.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
rational justification. Jacobi thus sets himself the task of defining an already established “boundary” between convictions that require rational justification and convictions that resist it. Within the latter category, he places conviction in the following:

1. A God who is an intelligent personal cause of the world;
2. The human soul;
3. Free will;
4. An external world; and
5. Other minds.

All human beings are – at least potentially – immediately certain of the reality of these objects, as a result of “feeling” (Gefühl). As these convictions resist rational justification, their immediate certainty is a matter of “faith,” and the condition in which it is disclosed is one of “revelation.” That there are convictions of which we are immediately certain is something that everyone, not least the rationalist metaphysician, should accept. For (i) we would never strive for certainty through rational justification unless we were already acquainted with certainty that precedes rational justification, and (ii) the certainty that we award a proposition through rational justification, that is, through connecting it with prior conditions of which we are already certain, implies that there are convictions of which we are immediately certain, from which rationally justified propositions derive their certainty. Jacobi thus posits a distinction between two kinds of convictions: (i) convictions of which we are immediately certain, in which we have “faith,” and (ii) convictions that rest on rational demonstration, which derive their certainty from prior grounds. The latter are logically dependent on the former. Rationalist metaphysics must therefore recognize that its method of deriving truths from prior grounds is only possible insofar as there are convictions of which we are immediately certain and which resist rational demonstration. Failure to respect this, however, leads to rationalist metaphysics illegitimately breaching the boundary between the explicable and inexplicable, to illegitimately endeavor to rationally justify convictions in which we can only

29. See *ibid.*, 193.
30. See *ibid.*, 189, 195.
31. See *ibid.*, 195.
32. See *ibid.*, 189, 193.
33. See *ibid.*, 231.
34. See *ibid*.
35. See *ibid.*, 214.
37. See *ibid.*, 230.
have faith. And it is this illegitimate endeavor to explain the inexplicable that ultimately leads to fatalism and atheism. Therefore, Jacobi proposes that the use of reason should be limited and that it should not be used to justify the presuppositions of religion and morality.

Jacobi’s writings thus set in motion a seemingly irresolvable conflict between Enlightenment rationalists, who claimed that religious belief should be rationally justified rather than based on irrational articles of faith, and theological enthusiasts, who claimed that religious belief is grounded by a “blind faith,” “feeling,” or “revelation” that cannot be justified by reason, which in fact has no jurisdiction within this sphere. An indirect result of the considerable interest this controversy generated, however, was that Kant’s critical philosophy began increasingly to attract attention, in part as a result of the publication – within installments in Der Teutsche Merkur – of Reinhold’s Briefe über die kantische Philosophie (1786/7), which claimed that the Kritik decisively resolves the antagonism between reason and faith that had come to a head within the pantheism controversy. Indeed, Reinhold’s Briefe argue that the pantheism controversy presents a dialectical conflict akin to an antinomy that the Kritik possesses the resources to resolve.

Reinhold argues that Kant is the “restorer of Christianity” by means of an argumentative strategy that describes how a primordial union has given way to pernicious divisions that can be reconciled only by means of a new higher union. The primordial union is the reconciliation between religion and morality established by Christ “by means of the heart”; the division denotes the separation of religion and morality that occurred “when the free and scientific cultivation of reason collapsed with the Roman Empire.” Many recent Enlightenment thinkers have sought to end the division, but they have done so in vain. Kant does so by means of a new higher union, through which he reconciles religion and morality “by means of reason.” Reinhold essentially sees Christianity as a “Platonism for the people”:

38. I am here alluding to Nietzsche’s description of Christianity as “Platonism for the people” in the Preface to Beyond Good and Evil. The allusion seems appropriate insofar as, just like Nietzsche, Reinhold argues that the values espoused by Christianity have their origin within the philosophical speculations of the ancients; it should be stressed, however, that, unlike Nietzsche, Reinhold is in no way making a case for the essential historicity or relativity of these values.

historical or hyperphysical religion, in which religion is divorced from reason and turns into an incomprehensible dogma, to which one must subscribe through blind faith. Religion thus becomes thoroughly immoral. With the Reformation, reason “regained the free use of its powers”\(^{40}\) to produce the epoch of philosophical or metaphysical religion, characterized by the Enlightenment confidence that religious convictions can be demonstrated by speculative reason. In this second epoch, however, religion remains divorced from morality. The grounds justifying religious belief are declared to be theoretical, and they therefore have a tenuous relationship with morality. At the same time, it is believed that there can be morality without religion. Whereas Christ discovered a world of religion without morality, Reinhold believes that the modern age is characterized by a world with morality in which religion is in retreat. The “restoration” of Christianity thus requires a reunification of religion and morality, which, rather than showing how morality depends on religion, will instead show how religion depends on morality. It is this reunification that Reinhold discerns within Kant’s Kritik, a work that exposes the inadequacies of both hyperphysical and metaphysical religion, in order to ground “religion on morality … to complete thereby the unification of both by means of reason.”\(^{41}\) Reinhold thus sees Kant’s Kritik as the product of an unfolding historical process. The medieval world was dominated by hyperphysical religion, which, to the detriment of morality, demanded blind faith. It thus grounded its claims upon “feeling.” The modern world, on the other hand, has been dominated by metaphysical religion. This religion, wholly indifferent to morality, endeavors to ground its claims through the unrestricted use of reason. Kant’s Kritik, Reinhold believes, heralds the birth of a new era, the epoch of “moral religion,” in which, to ground religion on morality, feeling and reason are unified. In producing this unification, the Kritik nullifies the claims of both the proponents of hyperphysical and metaphysical religion, even if the “moral faith” prescribed by the Kritik emerges as the result of the “overcoming” of a previous dialectical conflict between religious claims.

The pantheism controversy is indicative of this “dialectical ambiguity,”\(^{42}\) which may deceive us in religious matters. Reinhold describes how the factions of both Mendelssohn and Jacobi, just like the opposed parties of Kant’s “Antinomies,” threaten to “wear one another out,” insofar as “the more keenly they insist on their claims, the more the weakness of the arguments on both sides come to light.”\(^{43}\) Their conflict can only be resolved by a critical investigation which asks, “what is possible through reason proper?”\(^{44}\) That the Kritik can resolve

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 32.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 38.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 8.
\(^{44}\) Ibid., 11.
this conflict proves, for Reinhold, that Kant’s endeavor to ground religion on morality reveals the true grounds of religious belief, which were not previously fully disclosed. Reinhold describes the “dialectical conflict” exposed by the pantheism controversy in the following passage:

“Only through reason is the true cognition of God possible” and “Through reason true cognition of God is impossible” are the slogans of the disputing factions, and the actual and alleged proofs for these two claims are the most common weapons with which one takes the field against the other.45

The first slogan represents the faction of the rationalist metaphysicians or proponents of metaphysical religion, who we can understand as asserting the “thesis” of this dialectical conflict. Just as, in the history of Christianity, the epoch of metaphysical religion emerged after the epoch of hyperphysical religion, Reinhold understands the thesis as a reaction to the claims of hyperphysical religion. The rationalist metaphysician attempts to refute the hyperphysician’s claims that religion can only be grounded on “feeling” by endeavoring to demonstrate that speculative reason can provide certain knowledge of God’s existence. The dialectically opposed counter-claim constituting the “antithesis” represents Jacobi’s faction, which argues, in the name of hyperphysical revelation, that any rational justification of religious belief is impossible. The proponents of the antithesis attempt to subvert the claims of metaphysical religion, to prove that reason is incapable of demonstrating the existence of a personal God.

Assessing these dialectically opposed claims through the lens of Kant’s critical philosophy, Reinhold concludes that “each one, considered on its own, was neither completely true nor completely false.”46 The proponents of the thesis are correct to argue that religion can be grounded on reason, and yet err in expecting “too much” from reason by dogmatically presuming that we can know God’s existence in a manner that would make faith superfluous.47 The proponents of the antithesis are correct to expose the rationalist metaphysician’s overconfidence in reason, but err in expecting “too little from reason”48 by dogmatically presuming that religious belief cannot be rationally justified. The errors of both parties occur “as a result of [a] universal misunderstanding of reason,”49 which conceives it too narrowly as only speculative or theoretical. Kant resolves the dialectical conflict by providing a critical investigation concerning “what

45. Ibid., 12.
46. Ibid., 40.
47. See ibid., 14.
48. Ibid., 14.
49. Ibid., 16.
is possible through pure reason.”50 In so doing, he both grounds our cognition of reason anew and uncovers a new domain of reason from which a “new” and “better” metaphysics may emerge. The critical philosophy concludes that speculative or theoretical reason cannot prove either the existence or nonexistence of God, but demonstrates from the essence of practical reason the necessity of moral faith in his existence.51 For the philosopher needs to assume “a principle that is wise and powerful enough to determine and bring about the happiness of rational beings as a necessary consequence of moral laws” just as much as the common man “feels compelled to accept a future rewarder and punisher of the actions that his conscience approves and condemns.”52 Common-sense religious beliefs have, Reinhold says, always been derived from practical reason, even if the essential role of morality in the formation of religious belief was only discovered by Kant. In this way, Reinhold sees Kant’s *Kritik* as having already provided a resolution to the pantheism controversy before its actual outbreak.53

II. JACOBI’S ATTACK ON KANT

Rather than conceding that the *Kritik* had annulled his objections to the Enlightenment’s confidence in reason, Jacobi responded by attacking the critical philosophy itself. Jacobi claims that the critical philosophy leads to solipsism or, as he calls it, “speculative egoism,”54 which undermines common-sense convictions as much as any consistent rationalist metaphysics. He therefore believes that Kant’s idealism robs the world of any “deeper meaning,”55 by declaring that “the substantiality of the human spirit, … a free Author of this universe [and] a Providence conscious of its rule [are] merely logical phantoms.”56 Rather than “restoring Christianity,” Jacobi thus argues that the *Kritik* in fact “leads to nihilism [with] an all-devastating power.”57

In his *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus* of 1787, Jacobi argues that Kant’s claims that experience is “occasioned” by sensible impressions, received insofar as “we are affected by objects,”58 cannot be reconciled with his claims that all cognition of objects is the product of a “synthetic

50. Ibid., 21.
51. See ibid., 20.
52. Ibid., 23.
53. See ibid., 24.
55. Ibid., 515.
56. Ibid., 583.
57. Ibid., 544.
unity in the manifold of intuition.” In Jacobi’s words, the claim that “objects produce impressions on the senses through which they arouse sensations [and] bring about representations” contradicts the claim that any cognizable object “is always only appearance” and “cannot exist outside us and be something more than a representation.” According to Jacobi, the objects Kant describes as “affecting us” are transcendent objects or things in themselves, which are not cognizable by us. Kant thus seems to want to claim that all cognition begins insofar as we are affected by things in themselves, only to subsequently declare that the existence of such objects is “problematic.”

Jacobi thus claims “that without that presupposition [that we are affected by things in themselves] I could not enter into the [Kantian] system, but with it I could not stay within it.” The “contradiction” between the claim that things in themselves affect us and the transcendental idealist denial of any cognition of things in themselves does indeed have the further pernicious consequence of threatening to undermine the strict dichotomy between sensibility and understanding, on which so much of Kant’s reform of metaphysics is grounded. For Jacobi believes that Kant’s claims that we possess a “passive” faculty of sensibility necessarily presuppose that we are affected by things in themselves. He writes that “to feel passive and to suffer is only one half of a condition that cannot be thought on the basis of this half alone.” Any claim that we passively receive impressions necessarily presupposes that there exists “a thing . . . outside us in a transcendental sense” that affects us and is the “cause” of impressions. He continues: “even the word ‘sensibility’ . . . would be meaningless . . . if the concepts of ‘outside one another’ and ‘being combined,’ of ‘action’ and ‘passion,’ of ‘causality’ and ‘dependence,’ were not already contained in the concept of it as real and objective determinations.” Jacobi therefore believes that Kant’s claims that a passive faculty of sensibility is a necessary constituent of experience necessarily presuppose the existence of both things in themselves outside us and ourselves qua things in themselves, as well as necessarily presupposing that the latter causally act on the former. Jacobi thus finds it problematic that Kant explicitly denies that we can know the validity of these presuppositions by rendering the existence of things in themselves problematic and claiming that the concept of causality can only meaningfully connect representations. For Jacobi, therefore, Kant’s system is erected on a foundation that is subsequently

59. Ibid., A 105.
60. Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings, 335.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 336.
63. Ibid., 338.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 336.
undermined by the very system erected on it. The foundation is the presupposition that we “have a sensation of cause and effect understood transcendentally and [are] able to infer [the existence of] things outside us in a transcendental sense in virtue of it”;66 and this presupposition is undermined by the transcendental idealist claim that “objects (as well as their relations) are merely subjective beings, mere determinations of our own self, with absolutely no existence outside us.”67

Reflecting on Kant’s claim that all causally efficacious objects are merely the product of a synthesis of the manifold of representations, Jacobi concludes:

…it must not even be probable to [the transcendental idealist] that there be things present outside us in a transcendental sense …. If he were ever to find this even just probable, if he were to believe it at a distance, then he would have to go out of transcendental idealism, and land himself in truly unspeakable contradictions. The transcendental idealist must have the courage, therefore, to … not be afraid of the objection of speculative egoism, for it is impossible for him to pretend to stay within his system if he tries to repel from himself even just this last objection.68

Furthermore, Jacobi argues that Kant cannot object to the charge of egoism without renouncing “what [he] alleges to be [the doctrine’s] main advantage [namely] that it sets reason at rest.”69 Regarding this professed “transcendental ignorance”70 of things in themselves, however, Jacobi objects that it is “unqualified”; so that it “would lose all of its power if even a single conjecture were to rise above it and win from it even the slightest advantage.”71

How successful are Jacobi’s criticisms of Kant? In regard to Jacobi’s criticisms that Kant’s claims that objects affect us contradict his claims that objects are the product of the synthesis of a manifold of intuition, it may be objected that this apparent contradiction can be annulled by reading Kant as simply referring to how empirical objects (as opposed to things in themselves) affect the empirical subject (which is itself just as much an appearance as an empirical object). Kant’s references to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities in the Transcendental Aesthetic does indeed make it clear that, throughout experience, we are persistently affected by objects, insofar as secondary qualities are merely

66. Ibid., 338.
67. Ibid., 336.
68. Ibid., 338.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
determinations of a temporally determined consciousness caused by the affection of spatially determined objects. Kant's claims that our “faculty of knowledge [is] awakened into action [by] objects affecting our senses”72 may therefore, contra Jacobi, simply refer to how, throughout experience, a temporally determined subject receives sensible impressions from spatially determined objects, which are, just like the temporally determined subject, simply appearances; a claim that would not contradict the critical strictures of transcendental idealism.

We might also object that Jacobi’s equation of “transcendental idealism” with solipsism (“speculative egoism”) cannot be squared with Kant’s argument in the 1787 “Refutation of Idealism” that self-cognition is only possible as a result of our immediate awareness of bodies in space. In a “Preface” appended to the 1815 edition of David Hume, however, Jacobi accepts that Kant’s “Refutation” successfully refutes the “empirical idealism” of Descartes, Malebranche, and Berkeley, which Jacobi refers to as “incomplete or half-way idealism.”73 Such idealism is “incomplete,” insofar as it claims that we are immediately conscious of the existence of the temporally determined subject qua thing in itself, while only declaring that the existence of actual objects in space is either problematic or impossible. Kant does indeed turn the tables on this form of idealism by showing that our cognition of own temporally determined consciousness is possible only insofar as there are spatially determined objects outside us, to thus turn “the Cartesian cogito ergo sum” into “a similarly constituted ‘cogito ergo es.’”74 Kant’s argument functions, however, only insofar as it is accepted that our own temporally determined consciousness is just as much an appearance as objects in space outside us. In claiming that, contra the empirical idealist, we are no more immediately aware of the self in itself than we are of things in themselves, Kant instigates what Jacobi calls an “entire and complete … Universal-Idealism,” which dissolves “both the world of spirits and that of bodies equally into nothingness,”75 and replaces “all previous half-hearted, and hence inconsistent idealism.”76 Therefore, although Kant can legitimately claim that I am conscious of myself and my reception of sensations only insofar as there are causally efficacious objects in space outside me, such a claim must also be accompanied by the caveat that both these spatially determined objects and the temporally determined subject that receives sensation are not things in themselves, but appearances and are thus – in Jacobi’s terms – mere “phantoms.”77

73. Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings, 553.
74. Ibid., 555.
75. Ibid., 553.
76. Ibid., 555.
77. Ibid., 524.
We may also wish to object that Kant by no means intended to produce “a system of absolute subjectivity” and that he introduces transcendental idealism, not to deny knowledge of actual things, but rather as a new methodological “point of view” better able to explain cognition of actual things. But Jacobi’s criticisms cannot be dispensed with so easily. For it cannot be denied that Kant’s claims that we must think of things in themselves and that our problematic concepts of such entities may possess an actually existing referent do suggest that there is a more fundamental reality into which our cognition cannot penetrate. Freeing transcendental philosophy from Jacobi’s criticisms would therefore require either (i) proving the existence of things in themselves, or (ii) proving their nonexistence, so that appearances become the only actual objects. Both these options were pursued by Kant’s successors.

III. REINHOLD’S ELEMENTARPHILOSOPHIE

The aim of decisively proving the existence of things in themselves was pursued by Reinhold. On the strength of his Briefe, Reinhold was appointed to the University of Jena to promulgate the Kantian philosophy. Once there, however, he embarked on a project of his own, which would push Kantian philosophy in directions that Kant himself was not willing to sanction. While Reinhold still professed allegiance to transcendental idealism, he became critical of the arguments Kant employed to establish this position. He thus argued that Kant’s conclusions had to be re-established on a new foundation. For, while Kant’s “results” were universally valid (allgemeingültig), the arguments he employed to establish them rested on so many controversial presuppositions that they were not universally binding (allgemeingeltend), and thus were unable to adduce the acceptance of those of opposed philosophical persuasions. Reinhold took it upon himself to re-establish the validity of – what he saw as – Kant’s position, with arguments to which supposedly everyone should assent. A case in point is precisely Kant’s doctrine that we cognize only appearances and not things in themselves. A realist like Jacobi will find little within the Kritik to decisively sway him in favor of transcendental idealism. It is to just such a stubborn dogmatist that Reinhold’s project – which he eventually titled the Philosophy of the Elements (Elementarphilosophie) – is directed. Reinhold thus attempts to decisively prove the validity of transcendental idealism from grounds about which absolutely everyone should be convinced. He grants Jacobi’s point that rational demonstration must be preceded by immediate conviction, to argue

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78. Ibid., 555.
For the validity of transcendental idealism *from* an immediate conviction that everyone shares.

For Reinhold, a major problem is Kant’s analytic-inductive method. This leads to Kant endeavoring to justify fundamental doctrines by transcendental arguments that begin by assuming the validity of their *explicandum*. Reinhold admits that the process of “discovery” must necessarily proceed in this analytical manner from “consequence” to “ground,” but argues that the truths that Kant discovered in this manner can be satisfactorily justified only by the employment of a synthetic-deductive method of deriving consequences from grounds.

A case in point is Kant’s Transcendental Analytic. According to Reinhold, problems are generated insofar as “experience” constitutes the “basis of the Kantian system.” Kant thereby assumes that we possess *sensible perceptions of objects* that are *necessarily connected* within law-governed relations and, on the basis of this assumption, attempts to discover the conditions of possibility of such experience. But this procedure is problematic insofar as the precise meaning of the “concepts of … sensible perception, objects, connection and necessity,” which are presupposed by Kant’s “concept of experience,” can, insofar as the latter is “the basis of the Kantian system,” in no way “be explained by it without circularity.” Furthermore, the procedure is also question-begging, insofar as a Humean skeptic could deny the Analytic’s conclusions on the grounds that he denies the validity of the basis from which they are derived. The most Kant can do (as Maimon was later to point out) is provide a “hypothetical answer” to the skeptic, to claim that necessary connection within experience could, *contra* Hume, be rationally justified; but he cannot *prove* to such a skeptic that there actually *is* necessary connection within experience. For Reinhold, however, this is not good enough; he therefore wishes to construct an argument so forceful that it will compel the Humean skeptic to accept the validity of such necessary connection.

Problematic transcendental arguments also bedevil Kant’s Transcendental Aesthetic. One of Kant’s fundamental arguments for the transcendental ideality

81. Reinhold’s objection is succinctly outlined by Alexander von Schönborn in the following passage: “if, as Kant puts it, experience is possible only ‘through a representation of necessary connection of perceptions,’ then not only can experience not be explained, in Kant’s terms, without circularity, but anyone not already committed to the presence of ‘necessary connection’ in perception will be free to deny the entire edifice built on this foundation” (Alexander von Schönborn, “Karl Leonhard Reinhold: ‘Endeavoring to keep up the pace mit unserem zeitalter,’” in *The Emergence of German Idealism*, Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom [eds] [Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 2000], 55–6).
of space and time is that, qua forms of intuition, they are conditions of possibility for the a priori synthetic judgments constituting mathematics. But Reinhold objects that Kant has not decisively proved that mathematical judgments actually are a priori synthetic, meaning that anyone who disagrees about this will be under no obligation to accept the consequences Kant derives from it. This is particularly worrying insofar as the bulk of Kant’s readers do not accept that mathematical judgments are a priori synthetic. Reinhold mentions that “many mathematicians” consider such judgments to be merely “hypothetical” and so deny their apriority, but devotes most of his attention to the claims of the Leibnizian rationalist, who, together with the Humean skeptic, claims that such judgments are analytic. The Kritik does not possess the resources to convince the latter that mathematical judgments do not simply explicate concepts, since the distinction between intuition and concept, sensibility and understanding, requisite for any such discussion, is derived in the Kritik from the very assumption that mathematical judgments are a priori synthetic judgments.82 Just as with the question concerning necessary connection within experience, Reinhold believes that Kant has once again failed to realize that the regressive analytic direction one should take in discovering truth does not likewise serve as the direction one should follow in justifying it. For Reinhold, therefore, the fundamental distinction between intuition and concept and the transcendental ideality of space and time should not have been derived from the a priori synthetic nature of mathematical judgments because this assumption is so controversial; rather, the a priori synthetic nature of mathematical judgments should be proved by the distinction between intuition and concept83 and the transcendental ideality of space and time, and the distinction between intuition and concept and the transcendental ideality of space and time should be derived from something about which both the rationalist and skeptic agree.

If one accepts Reinhold’s criticisms, it follows that, unless Kant’s arguments for necessary connection within experience and the a priori synthetic nature of mathematical judgments are reformulated, the transcendental philosopher cannot convince the Humean skeptic that there do actually exist any true a priori synthetic cognitions. Likewise, unless Kant’s arguments for the transcendental ideality of space and time are re-established, the transcendental philosopher has no means of swaying the Jacobian from his belief that spatiotemporal objects are things in themselves. However, another one of Reinhold’s many concerns is that a philosopher could in fact accept all of Kant’s claims concerning necessary connection within experience, the a priori synthetic nature of mathematical judgments and the transcendental ideality of space and time, and yet still deny

82. See Reinhold, Beiträge zur Berichtigung, 199.
83. See ibid., 203.
the critical limitations Kant placed on cognition. One could, in other words, claim that, although understanding can only cognize appearances, reason can still cognize things in themselves. Reinhold is thus concerned that Kant did not adequately demonstrate that the faculty of reason cannot be employed to cognize things in themselves that transcend our experience. His concern is understandable when one considers how some of his contemporaries maintained that reason’s ideas could in fact be employed to cognize transcendent things in themselves. It was thus believed that the claims of rationalist metaphysics could be reconciled with Kantian criticism by means of an “Akkomodationsphilosophie,” which maintained that, while sensibility and understanding are unable to cognize things in themselves, reason can still cognize them. While Reinhold sees that this reconciliation is completely contrary to the spirit of Kantian criticism, he still believes that the Kritik cannot rule out the “possibility” that our ideas do correspond to things in themselves. He thus concludes that Kant’s arguments for the unknowability of things in themselves should be reconstructed in such a way that even the Akkomodationsphilosoph would be compelled to accept them.

In response to these problems, Reinhold proposes reconfiguring the critical philosophy in such a way that its results will be shown to emerge through a synthetic-deductive derivation. Such a method should, Reinhold believes, be able to compel everyone to accept the universally valid results of the critical

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84. Ibid., 220. Faustino Fabbianelli convincingly argues that Reinhold employs the appellation “Akkomodationsphilosophie” in order to refer to the position defended by J. A. Eberhard and the contributors to his Philosophisches Magazin, as well as the interpretation of the critical philosophy promulgated by the Kantian, L. H. Jakob (see ibid., xxviii–xxxii, 390–92). Johann August Eberhard (1739–1809) founded his Philosophisches Magazin in 1788 in order to attempt to defend the classical Leibnizian–Wolfian tradition of rationalist metaphysics against Kantian criticism. A common strategy employed by Eberhard, as well as many of the other contributors to the Magazin, was to argue that Kant’s doctrine that sensibility and understanding only affords cognition of appearances leads to a pernicious solipsism that is most adequately avoided by maintaining the Leibnizian claim that reason affords cognition of the supersensible (see Frederick Beiser, The Fate of Reason [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987], 193–5). In contrast, Ludwig Heinrich Jakob (1759–1827) saw himself as one of Kant’s disciples and yet, nonetheless, within his Grundriss der allgemeinen Logik und kritische Anfanggründe zu einer allgemeinen Metaphysik (1788), interpreted Kant’s critical philosophy as maintaining that – by means of reason – we do in fact possess cognition (Erkenntnis) – albeit an indeterminate one – of things in themselves and God. Reinhold criticized Jakob for this misinterpretation of Kant’s concept of cognition within a review of his Grundriss that appeared within the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung in 1790. Jakobi’s letter to Kant of May 4, 1790, written in the wake of Reinhold’s review, expresses doubts concerning the correctness of such a broad application of the concept “cognition,” but also suggests that such a reading could have the merit of reconciling Eberhard’s rationalist faction to the critical project (see Kant, Gesammelte Schriften, begonnen von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900–], vol. 11, 168–70).

85. Reinhold, Beiträge zur Berichtigung, 223.
philosophy if the synthetic-deduction begins from a point that “binds universally.” The adoption of a synthetic-deductive method should also be able to resolve problems that are internal to the critical philosophy itself. A famous example is Kant’s table of categories. As far as Reinhold is concerned, Kant’s metaphysical deduction from forms of judgment can in no way convince us that just these twelve, and no other, are the fundamental a priori concepts by which we cognize objects of experience, and thus the completeness and correctness of this twelfold inventory will only be satisfactory once this is demonstrated from premises that rest on a foundation that binds universally.86

Reinhold’s *Elementarphilosophie* thus endeavors to synthetically deduce the results of Kant’s *Kritik* from a truth that is immediately obvious and accepted by everyone, that is, “a universally binding first principle [allgemeingeltenden Grundsatz].”87 Reinhold follows Descartes in believing that “consciousness as such” – or, what Reinhold calls, “mere representation” – is a truth that is absolutely self-evident and cannot be denied; the ultimate first-principle of the *Elementarphilosophie* – and thus of all philosophy – therefore expresses the existence of that consciousness. Reinhold also follows Jacobi in claiming that all rational demonstration must be preceded by an immediate certainty. If consciousness itself – and the proposition expressing it – is to be the ground of all demonstration, then it itself cannot be rationally demonstrated; it is therefore a fact that simply cannot be proved, but of which we are immediately certain.88 This self-evident “fact” is expressed as a first principle, which he calls the “proposition of consciousness,” which states that “in consciousness, the representation is distinguished by the subject from subject and object and is referred to both.”89 This proposition “immediately expresses nothing other than the fact that occurs in consciousness.”90

It may appear that Reinhold has in fact supplied us with a proposition riddled with ambiguity, liable to all manner of conflicting interpretations. However, Reinhold is careful to point out that all three terms should be understood as divested of metaphysical connotations: the “object” referred to thus simply denotes the “intentional object” of every conscious state (even self-consciousness). Insofar as, in being conscious, there is something I am conscious of, or, in other words, in every representation something is represented, one can quite easily accept that such “objects” necessarily occur in consciousness without

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86. See *ibid.*, 215. Reinhold’s discussion is clearly the basis for Fichte’s later castigation of Kant for having merely inductively derived the categories from experience (see Johann Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke* [Berlin: Veit, 1845–46], I, 53, 57).
88. See *ibid.*, 98–9.
addressing any metaphysical questions concerning the ontological status of their referents. The “subject” denotes the “action” of representing, by means of which I am aware of representations as mine. The “object” and “subject” should thus in no way be read as referring to either things in themselves or a soul-substance, both of which must be derived from the proposition of consciousness before they may be admitted into the Elementarphilosophie. Clearly, therefore, the proposition of consciousness, if correctly understood, expresses nothing more than the fact of consciousness itself, and therefore expresses something about which there should be consensus among thinkers of all philosophical persuasions, the transcendental realist, the empirical idealist, no less than the Humean skeptic.

Reinhold is, however, quick to grant the terms “object” and “subject” an ontological interpretation. As such, the consensus that the proposition of consciousness was supposed to establish quickly dissipates. Reinhold thus argues that “the mere representation” described within his first-principle “must consist of two distinct moments.” If a representation both belongs to a subject and represents an object, then it must consist of two distinct elements, one referring to the subject and the other referring to the object; the fact that the subject and object are distinguished in consciousness demonstrates that whatever “within the representation … is referred to the object must also be distinguished from that through which it is referred to the subject.” These two “moments” are described as “content” and “form.” The content, which refers to the object, is that which distinguishes different representations. On the other hand, the form, which refers to the subject, is that which supplies distinct particular representations with a commonality that makes them into my representations. Reinhold continues to argue that the object, insofar as it is no longer considered as the represented to which the representation refers, must be thought of as a “thing in itself,” to which the “mere content” of representation belongs. The object described within the proposition of consciousness thus receives an ontological interpretation, as that which, abstracted from the form of representation, exists in itself, supplying content to our representations. For Reinhold, this “thing in itself” certainly exists, as that “to which a content in a representation corresponds, or can correspond, upon which the same representation in regard to its content certainly depends.” He therefore writes:

91. See *ibid.*, 99–101.
94. See *ibid.*, 125.
96. *Ibid.*, 127. Reinhold makes it clear that not every representation requires an objective content given from a thing in itself. We can possess pure representations, derived from the mind’s
The things in themselves can be as little denied as the representable objects themselves. They are these objects themselves insofar as they are not representable. They are that something which must ground the mere content of a representation outside of the representation. The thing in itself and its properties, distinguished from the form of representation, are not only nothing impossible, but even something indispensable to mere representation, for no mere representation is thinkable without content and no content is thinkable without something outside of the representation that does not have the form of the representation, i.e., the thing in itself.\textsuperscript{97}

Despite the fact of their existence, however, the things in themselves are proved to be unknowable on account of the fact that they are, by definition, unrepresentable. For, to represent anything I must supply it with form, meaning that I cannot represent that which precedes the form and therefore cannot represent things in themselves. Reinhold thus writes that “the representation of the so-called thing in itself contradicts the concept of a representation as such.”\textsuperscript{98} In this way, Reinhold takes himself to have proved Kant’s mere “assumption” – the validity of which was denied by the Akkomadationsphilosophen among others – that we are incapable of cognizing things in themselves. We can also see that Reinhold has at least succeeded in providing a response to Jacobi’s criticisms of the role of things in themselves within Kantian philosophy. Reinhold’s reconfigured transcendental philosophy cannot be described as a system of “speculative egoism,” since it concludes that there must exist things in themselves on which the content of all representations depend.

**IV. MAIMON’S EMPIRICAL SKEPTICISM**

Rather than following Reinhold in proving their existence, one could also respond to Jacobi’s criticisms concerning Kant’s things in themselves by abolishing them from transcendental philosophy, to thus deny the objective reality of these things in themselves.
of any transcendent entities and effectively render our appearances the only real objects. This latter strategy was adopted by Salomon Maimon. Maimon’s engagement with Kant yielded a series of reflections that were published in 1790 as the _Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie_. Prior to publication, Maimon sent Kant the manuscript (together with covering letters from himself and Marcus Herz⁹⁹), hoping that he would grant it a written commendation. Maimon presents himself as Kant’s loyal follower, but Kant obviously found this declaration disingenuous. He therefore refused to publicly commend the work on the grounds that “for the most part it is directed against me.”¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, in his reply to Herz, Kant proclaimed that “none of my critics has understood me … so well.”¹⁰¹

Maimon nevertheless admitted in his letter to Kant that his manuscript contained “some observations” concerning lacunae within the first _Kritik_. The first of these lacunae concerns Kant’s answer to the question “Quid juris?,” that is, the question concerning how we can legitimately apply _a priori_ concepts to something _a posteriori_. Maimon claims that Kant has not sufficiently answered this question, but suggests that he himself has provided new resources for its answer, by means of his conception of “ideas of understanding.”¹⁰² The second lacuna concerns “the question _Quid facti?_,” that is, the question concerning whether that which is _a posteriori_ is actually subsumable under _a priori_ concepts. Maimon suggests that Humean skepticism necessitates an answer to this question, and criticizes Kant for leaving it unanswered.

Within the _Versuch_, Maimon wrestles with both these questions. His endeavor to sufficiently respond to them leads him to promulgate a reconfigured transcendental philosophy that evidently proved too innovative for Kant to sanction. Maimon describes his position as one of _rational dogmatism_ and _empirical skepticism_.¹⁰³ He is a _rational dogmatist_ insofar as, in endeavoring to satisfactorily answer the question _quid juris_, he explicitly advocates returning to the Leibnizian conception that the _a posteriori_ is itself the product of understanding. He is an empirical skeptic insofar as his reflections on the question _quid facti_ lead him to doubt whether that which is _a posteriori_ actually is subsumable under _a

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⁹⁹. Marcus Herz (1794–1803) was, prior to matriculating in 1766, a student of Kant who went on to participate in the public defense of Kant’s _Inaugural Dissertation_. In fall 1770 he moved to Berlin (where he met Maimon). His extensive correspondence with Kant is one of the most useful sources of information concerning the _Kritik der reinen Vernunft_’s genesis during Kant’s “silent decade.” He became a Professor of Philosophy in 1786.


¹⁰¹. _Ibid._, 49.

¹⁰². _Ibid._

priori concepts. To this extent, Maimon not only denies that Humean skepticism has been refuted by Kant, but also denies that such skepticism will ever admit of refutation.

Like Reinhold, Maimon argues that Kant’s failure to adequately respond to Humean skepticism results from his analytic-inductive methodology. According to Maimon, Kant simply “presupposes as indubitable” a fact that the Humean skeptic doubts, namely, “the fact that we possess propositions of experience.” Kant thus simply assumes that we cognize objects that exist in accordance with the *a priori* principles of a *physica pura*. Thus, despite the fact that the Humean skeptic doubts such an assumption, Kant simply assumes that the principle that, for example, “every alteration must have a cause,” is necessarily and universally valid of experience. Having presupposed that we possess such an experience, he then attempts to show how such an experience is possible. Crucially, Kant argues that *a priori* concepts are conditions of possibility of experience; they are objectively valid insofar as, without them, we would possess merely a “rhapsody of perceptions.” However, Maimon doubts the very presupposition of Kant’s argument, that is, his initial assumption concerning the nature of experience. It is certainly possible, Maimon concedes, that we do possess the “experience” Kant describes, but he denies that this is indubitable, and entertains the prospect that we actually only possess a “rhapsody of perceptions.” Maimon thus highlights how Kant’s “answer” to Humean skepticism is essentially hypothetical, arguing that if we possess “experience,” then cognition of causality must be derived from an *a priori* concept; this “answer” therefore cannot decisively silence the skeptic’s counter-claim that we possess merely a “rhapsody of perceptions” from constant conjunctions, among which the concept of causality is inductively derived. If we do possess “experience,” then Kant has at least provided resources for explaining how it is possible. However, Kant leaves the question *quid facti*, that is, the question concerning whether we do in fact possess such an experience, without a sufficient answer.

Maimon’s skepticism concerning the subsumption of the *a posteriori* under *a priori* categories is demonstrated by his discussion of our (supposedly) necessary application of the category of causality. Within the “Second Analogy,” Kant questions how we can distinguish between a merely subjective succession of representations (e.g. in the apprehension of a house from basement to roof) and an objective succession (e.g. in the apprehension of a ship moving downstream). Kant concedes to the Humean skeptic that there is no “impression” that legitimates our (supposed) cognition that some perceptions are necessarily

104. Ibid., 105.
106. Ibid., A 156/B 195.
He therefore argues that our ability to distinguish between subjective and objective successions must be grounded by the category of causality. Without this category, Kant says, we would possess merely a “play of representations,” but, insofar as we apply it, we understand that certain successively apprehended representations represent necessarily connected and irreversible events undergone by empirically real objects. Kant thus concludes that the “recognition of the rule [that everything which happens has a cause] has been the ground of experience itself, and has therefore preceded it a priori.” But of course, Kant’s whole discussion presupposes that we do possess experience of a world in which necessarily connected and irreversible events occur. Maimon, however, doubts this presupposition. He thus believes that we cannot (i) distinguish between subjective and objective successions with absolute certainty, and thus cannot (ii) legitimately apply the category of causality.

Maimon uses against Kant his own claims that there is no “impression” that distinguishes objective and subjective successions. He maintains that if, within the successive apprehension of our perceptions, we cannot find anything enabling us to determine which of them are to be necessarily connected, we can still legitimately deny that we possess an adequate ground to distinguish between a subjective and objective succession. The criterion of “irreversibility” is of no use insofar as, during my perception of a subjective succession from C to D, it is just as impossible that I may perceive from D to C as it is that, in regard to a (supposedly) objective succession from A to B, I could perceive from B to A. Maimon therefore alludes to Kant’s examples of the house and ship, and concludes that “considered in themselves, these two kinds of succession are not at all distinguished from one another.” Maimon thus questions the very applicability of the category of causality. For in doubting that we adequately distinguish between a subjective and objective succession, he is forced to question whether the distinction is evidence of an a priori concept of causality. For, one can still consistently object to Kant that we actually possess no experience of objective succession, and that everything is a dream in which the category of causality has no objective reality. However, one does not necessarily have to embrace such hyperbolic doubt to question the applicability of this category. Kant maintained that “I render my subjective synthesis of apprehension objective only by reference to a rule,” made possible by the application of the category of causality; but Maimon asks how we are justified in subsuming this initial apprehension under the category of causality, to thus attach to it the necessity

107. See ibid., B 234.
108. Ibid., A 196/B 241.
110. See ibid., 201.
111. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A 195/B 240.
according to a rule. The problem is again generated by Kant’s concession to the Humean skeptic that there is nothing within the perceptions themselves that serves to distinguish an objective and subjective succession. Taking up Kant’s example of the heated stove, Maimon shows how previous sense experience provides a more adequate explanation for our inclination to distinguish an objective and subjective succession than the category of causality. He writes:

How do we cognize that the succession from $b$ to $a$, but not that from $c$ to $a$ is objective? E.g., the stove in the room was heated, we notice that after that the air in the room became warm, and that outside snow has fallen …. What kind of ground have we, therefore, for considering the warming of the air in the room as an objective consequence and the snowfall as a subjective consequence? We certainly possess a propensity to believe that the heating of the stove and warmth in the room stand necessarily connected within an irreversible causal relationship, whereas the heating of the stove and the snowfall do not. But this propensity, Maimon argues, can only be based on the fact that we have frequently observed the warming of the room to follow the heating of the stove and have never observed the heating of the stove to follow the warming of the room, whereas, in contrast, we have observed a snowfall to sometimes follow the heating of the stove and sometimes to precede it. That the heating of the stove and the warming of the room seem to be necessarily connected (unlike the relation between the heating of the stove and the snowfall) is therefore something that only sense experience can teach us. But if the application of the concept of causality can be justified only by the observation of such constant conjunctions, we are forced to return to Humean skepticism. Therefore, according to Maimon, although the concept of causality may be an a priori concept supplied by the understanding, it does not possess the power, attributed to it by Kant, of explaining our capacity to distinguish between objective and subjective successions, since only previous sense experience decides what seems to constitute an objective succession.

It may be objected that this argument does not undermine Kant’s claims concerning the applicability of the category of causality to experience in general, with the result that the objective validity of the principle that “every alteration must have a cause” remains unscathed. We can thus still maintain that the category of causality has a useful role in justifying the axiomatic principles of a physica pura. Maimon’s argument does, however, still pose a serious

112. See Maimon, Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie, 200–201.
113. Ibid., 201.
problem insofar as it questions the extent to which the category of causality can legitimately be applied to particular representations. For, if we must appeal to previous sense experience to cognize particular causal relations, we are not employing the category of causality at all, for, as Kant following Hume points out, previous sense experience cannot justify the objectivity of a necessary connection. Our employment of the concept of causality in particular instances therefore merely expresses a subjective necessity. But this is a kind of “relative necessity,” which is obviously far weaker than that which Kant claimed that the category of causality expressed.

Another, more fundamental, objection that Maimon directs against Kant is that, in terms of his system, it remains inconceivable how any of the categories can be applied to our intuitions. The problem arises because of the heterogeneity between the categories and their supposed referents. Because of this, Maimon says that Kant is incapable of providing any adequate answer to the question concerning how the a posteriori conforms to rules expressed by a priori categories, so as to justify the latter’s application. He admits that Kant sought to avoid this difficulty by claiming that the categories are applicable to the a posteriori only insofar as it appears within an a priori form of intuition. However, this does not obviate the initial difficulty because of Kant’s dualism of sensibility and understanding. In his reply to Herz concerning Maimon’s manuscript, Kant endeavors to respond to this question. He argues that a priori concepts must be applicable to a priori intuitions insofar as we would otherwise possess no cognition – and hence no experience – with the result that our intuitions “would be nothing for us.” The question as to how the heterogeneous faculties of sensibility and understanding relate to one another cannot, Kant argues, receive any further explanation, and yet he says that it does not require one, simply because he has demonstrated that our cognition and experience is only possible insofar as they do interact. By his own admission, however, Kant had only read the first two sections of Maimon’s manuscript, and so most probably did not realize that this attempted rebuttal only confirms that his philosophy is as question-begging as Maimon believes.

Maimon, however, does not dismiss Kant’s philosophy out of hand. It may not be indubitable that we possess “experience,” but it is still possible. The task of Maimon’s transcendental philosophy therefore consists in giving a hypothetical account of: what would have to be the case if we possess experience? It is because

114. See ibid., 39–40.
115. See ibid., 40.
116. See Kant, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 11, 50–51.
117. See ibid., 49.
of the nature of his answer to this question that Maimon describes himself as a rational dogmatist as well as an empirical skeptic.

V. A REBIRTH OF RATIONALIST METAPHYSICS?

Maimon suggests that the Kantian question *quid juris* will only admit of a sufficient answer insofar as the resources of Leibnizian–Wolffian metaphysics are incorporated into transcendental philosophy. When discussing how Kant’s division between understanding and sensibility renders incomprehensible the application of the former’s categories to the latter’s forms, he observes how “according to the Leibnizian-Wolffian system, time and space [are] concepts of the understanding of the relations of things as such, and thus we can with perfect legitimacy subject them to the understanding’s rules.” 118 Likewise, when discussing how it remains incomprehensible how the understanding’s categories could apply to particular empirical intuitions, he observes that “according to the Leibnizian-Wolffian system, both [objects and the understanding’s rules] flow from a single cognitive source: (their difference consists only in degrees of completeness of this cognition).” 119 Maimon therefore proposes incorporating these elements of the Leibnizian–Wolffian system into Kantian transcendental philosophy to thus claim that empirical objects, as well as the understanding’s rules, are produced from one and the same source. Such a hypothesis would satisfactorily answer the question *quid juris*, since, if the *a posteriori* arises together with the understanding’s rules from the same cognitive source, there is no difficulty in conceiving how empirical objects conform to rules and conditions dictated by the understanding. This source from which empirical objects arise would also produce all possible relations between objects, with the result that time and space would also conform to the understanding’s rules.

Maimon describes this source as “an infinite understanding,” which he says he assumes “at least as an idea.” 120 This is the highest transcendental idea to which reason can attain. He thus says that “I distinguish myself from Kant … insofar as, instead of three ideas, which he assumes, I assume a single idea (an infinite understanding).” 121 “Our understanding,” he says, “is just the same [as the infinite understanding], only to a limited extent,” 122 and it is the limitations of our own finite understanding that accounts for our everyday failure to realize that empirical objects are the product of understanding. We might, like Kant, find

119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid., 198.
122. Ibid., 40.
this idea more reminiscent of Spinoza than Leibniz, however, the inspiration for this idea may have in fact come from Maimon’s twelfth-century namesake.

Maimon says “I attach objective reality to this idea [of the infinite understanding]”; it does not possess objective reality insofar as it is “considered in itself (for this contradicts the nature of an idea),” but it “receives objective reality from the objects of intuition,” which likewise only “receive their objective reality from this idea.” The infinite understanding, therefore, does not denote a transcendent thing in itself that exists independently of the empirical reality it produces. Rather, the infinite understanding denotes a transcendental condition of experience, which is as inseparable from empirical reality as Spinoza’s “God” is inseparable from the sphere of finite modes. Therefore, if we wish to maintain that we possess the “experience” Kant describes, we must assume the objective reality of an infinite understanding as the transcendental condition of the possibility of such an experience.

The idea of an infinite understanding allows Maimon to contradict Kant’s claim that space and time are originally a priori forms of intuition (to maintain instead that they are originally concepts of the relations of things), while leaving the apodictic truth of mathematics intact. For Maimon argues that all mathematical truths are in fact analytic. In fact, he goes even further and claims that “all cognition a priori must be analytic and derived from the principle of non-contradiction.” It is only the limitations of our finite understanding that make us believe that there are true a priori synthetic judgments; for the infinite understanding, on the other hand, all such judgments are analytic. Maimon argues that we only believe mathematical judgments to be synthetic insofar as their subject is either “badly defined” or “not defined at all,” and claims that demonstrating that all such supposedly a priori synthetic truths are in fact analytic would be a not impossible, albeit laborious, task.

123. See Kant, Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 11, 50.
124. When, in the mid-1780s, Salomon ben Josua (as he was then known) was required by the Prussian state to adopt a surname in place of his patronymic name, he chose to name himself after the twelfth-century philosopher, Moses ben Maimon or – as he is more commonly known in the European tradition – Moses Maimonides (1135–1204). Abraham P. Socher suggests that the Versuch’s reconstruction of Kantian transcendental philosophy owes more to the influence of Maimonides than that of modern European rationalism (see Abraham P. Socher, The Radical Enlightenment of Solomon Maimon [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006], 92), and thus argues that “the notion of human cognition as ultimately explicable through recourse to a divine mind was, in Maimon’s case, a direct application of Maimonidean ideas” (ibid., 47).
125. Maimon, Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie, 198.
126. Ibid., 100–101.
But what sense can be made of the claim that the *a posteriori* is posited by the understanding, so that it is not completely heterogeneous from the categories after all? Maimon responds to this question with his “theory of differentials.” We of course differentiate between objects not merely by means of their spatiotemporal position and differing magnitudes (both extensive and intensive), which depend on these spatiotemporal relations, but also by means of the sense impressions supplying our intuitions with content. If this latter condition is logically prior to spatiotemporal conditions, then it cannot be considered as possessing either an extensive or intensive magnitude. Maimon thus says that “considered in itself, every sensible representation must, as quality, be abstracted from all extensive as well as intensive quantity.”128 That which, for example, produces the representation of red color, must therefore “be thought without all finite extension.”129 If we intuit something red, this color must possess a determinate magnitude, but that does not mean that that which ultimately produces this sense impression can itself be intuited. Indeed, Maimon argues that everything we intuit must be thought as decomposable into basic elements that cannot be intuited. It is these infinitesimally small “physical points,” from which our diverse sense impressions are constituted and objects are generated, that Maimon describes as “differentials.” Because they cannot *in themselves* be intuited, Maimon describes them as “mere ideas.”130 His reconfigured transcendental philosophy thus asserts that there are two kinds of “ideas,” which are both “limiting concepts of a synthesis.” On one hand, there are the “ideas of reason,” in which we think of a “complete synthesis comprehending the infinite in itself”; and, on the other hand, there are – although Maimon is not always consistent in this terminological distinction – “ideas of understanding,” which express the basic elements from which all synthesis is constituted. The former’s referents cannot appear within intuition because they are infinitely large, whereas the latter’s referents cannot appear within intuition because they are infinitely small. Maimon compares the situation with that of the number series:

We proceed here just like, e.g., we proceed in calculations according to our system of numbers, in which we proceed according to just the same rules of unity forwards as well as backwards in relation to an extended magnitude (through the decimal fractions), i.e., we always can think of a greater and lesser unity, for after having counted to 10, we think of 10 as a unity and count again 10 such unities until

129. *Ibid*.
100, etc., i.e., we always think a greater unity, thus we also go backwards and think 0.1, 0.01 etc., as a unity, i.e., we always think smaller unity.\textsuperscript{131}

Thus, just as the number series can potentially be augmented \textit{ad infinitum} and diminished \textit{ad infinitum}, so it is with the sphere of experience. Maimon thus says that “with our cognition of things, we therefore begin from the middle and stop again in the middle.”\textsuperscript{132} Therefore, like Kant's mathematical-transcendental ideas, the differentials are ideas insofar as they express something to which our finite cognitive faculty can only infinitely approximate, but never reach.\textsuperscript{133} They can, nonetheless, be consistently thought, if we think of “a constant regression or decrease of the consciousness of an intuition \textit{ad infinitum}”\textsuperscript{134} and, according to Maimon, their existence must be presupposed if we wish to give a satisfactory account of the genesis and diversity of empirical intuition,\textsuperscript{135} as well as why particular objects are subsumable under the categories.

Particular empirical objects can be cognized by the understanding’s rules insofar as the categories do not \textit{immediately} relate to empirical intuitions, but rather relate to them \textit{mediately}, insofar as the understanding applies itself to the differentials that produce such intuitions.\textsuperscript{136} He explains this with the following examples:

If I, e.g., say: \textit{red} is dissimilar from \textit{green}; the pure concept of understanding of dissimilarity [i.e. the category of negation] is not considered as a relation between the sensible qualities (for otherwise, the Kantian question \textit{quid juris} would remain), but rather … as a relation between their differentials, which are a priori ideas of reason.\textsuperscript{137}

If one judges: fire melts wax; this judgment is not related to fire and wax as objects of intuition, but rather to their elements, which are thought by the understanding in the relations of cause and effect.\textsuperscript{138}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{131} \textit{Ibid.}, 190.
\item \textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{133} See \textit{ibid.}, 21 n.
\item \textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid.}, 21 n.
\item \textsuperscript{135} See \textit{ibid.}, 22 n.
\item \textsuperscript{136} See \textit{ibid.}, 193.
\item \textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.}, 23. Maimon is here describing the differentials as “\textit{Vernunftideen},” despite the fact that in later sections of the text, he insists that they are in fact “\textit{Verstandsidesen},” which should thus be distinguished from our “\textit{Vernunftsideen}.”
\item \textsuperscript{138} \textit{Ibid.}, 193.
\end{enumerate}
Particular empirical objects are thus subsumable under *a priori* categories insofar as the understanding relates itself to differentials that “serve as principles for the explanation of the generation of objects according to certain rules of understanding.” In other words, if we wish to maintain that understanding can legitimately employ the category of negation to judge that “red is not green,” or the category of causality to judge that “fire causes wax to melt,” we must presuppose that the understanding can *understand* the nature of “red,” “green,” “fire,” and “wax,” by *understanding* the determinate rules by means of which these particular empirical objects arise from differentials. The understanding thus *understands* how particular objects have arisen in accordance with the rules that it dictates. It thus *understands* that it is precisely “fire” that melts “wax” and not “melting wax” that is the cause of “fire.” And, in maintaining that “the understanding has not merely a faculty to *think* universal relations between determinate objects of intuition, but also has a faculty to determine objects through relations,” we have to likewise assume that these differentials to which the understanding relates are not ultimately heterogeneous from its nature, but are also produced by it. Maimon thus describes how “the understanding does not subject something given *a posteriori* to its *a priori* rules; it rather lets it be generated in accordance with these rules”; this, Maimon continues, “is the only way to answer the [Kantian] question: *quid juris?* in a completely satisfactory manner.”

As ideas or concepts, the referents of which cannot appear within intuition, Maimon says that “these differentials of objects are the so-called *noumena.*” On the other hand, “the objects themselves that arise from them are the *phenomena.*” As they are introduced in order to explain the material content of our representations, we can see that Maimon abolishes things in themselves from transcendental philosophy in order to replace them with these differentials. The differentials are akin to Kant’s things in themselves insofar as they are thought as existing prior to space and time. But, unlike Kant’s things in themselves, they are not thought as transcendent entities beyond the world of experience (that logically precede the ultimate transcendental condition of experience), since the distinction between the differentials and their appearances is a question of degree as opposed to a distinction between two heterogeneous metaphysical spheres.

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VI. THE LEGACY OF KANT’S EARLY CRITICS

The importance of the influence of Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon on later post-Kantian German idealism cannot be overstated. The German idealists understood themselves to be continuing the Kantian project of making metaphysics into a science, and yet they nonetheless introduced striking innovations that Kant seemed unprepared to sanction. However, it was precisely the need to resolve the tensions and contradictions that figures such as Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon identified within Kant’s writings that convinced the German idealists of the necessity of their innovations.

Within the first wave of German idealism in the early 1790s, it was Reinhold’s foundationalist reconstruction of transcendental philosophy that seemed to provide the most promising resources for successfully rendering metaphysics scientific. The skeptical objections to which Reinhold’s “proposition of consciousness” was subjected by Aenesidemus-Schulze\(^\text{143}\) and Maimon, however, convinced Fichte and others that the science of metaphysics needed to be grounded on a new foundation that would itself ground the proposition of consciousness. Within his *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794/95, Fichte thus argues that the science of metaphysics must be grounded on a *Grundsatz* expressing the immediate certainty of self-consciousness, namely, “I am I.” However, the influence of Reinhold was shortlived. By the mid-1790s, the total collapse of the *Elementarphilosophie* and the wealth of attacks on the very idea that *any* proposition could adequately ground a system of philosophy (by the early German Romantics and others) led to the German idealists completely turning their back on *Grundsatzphilosophie*.

Perhaps far more influential, however, were Maimon’s claims that the results of Kantian philosophy could be rendered consistent only by returning to the resources of the rationalist metaphysics, to revoke the duality of sensibility and

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\(^{143}\) Gottlob Ernst Schulze (1761–1833) anonymously presented a skeptical counter-attack against the transcendental philosophy of both Kant and Reinhold within a series of letters composed by an author masquerading as the Pyrrhonist, Aenesidemus, within his *Aenesidemus, oder Ueber die Fundamente der von Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementarphilosophie* (1792). Reinhold’s claim that the “proposition of consciousness” can serve as the first principle of all philosophy is subjected to a barrage of criticisms by Schulze within *Aenesidemus*’s third letter (see Schulze, *Aenesidemus*, Manfred Frank [ed.] [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996], 38–63). This attack proved highly influential insofar as it was precisely the process of reviewing Schulze’s work that convinced Fichte that the first principle of all philosophy must express a more fundamental transcendental condition from which the “fact of consciousness” itself emerges. Within his “Review of *Aenesidemus*” of 1794, Fichte thus declares that the first principle of a system of transcendental philosophy must be “even higher than the concept of representation” (Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke* I, 5) so that even Reinhold’s “proposition of consciousness can be strictly derived [from it] a priori” (*ibid.*, I, 8).
understanding, rid transcendental philosophy of things in themselves, and effectively introduce a Spinozistic monism, in which the forms of thought and the content of intuition are posited as arising from one and the same source. A striking example of this can be seen within Schelling’s Allgemeine Uebersicht der neuesten philosophischen Litteratur of 1797/98, a text in which the germs of Schelling’s later Naturphilosophie and “absolute idealism” are already apparent. Within that text, Schelling turns to Kant, not to discuss “what Kant had intended with his philosophy,” but rather “what … he had to have intended if his philosophy was to prove internally cohesive.”144 If it is to prove internally cohesive, Schelling argues, the notion of a realm of “things [in themselves], which exist in addition to actual things, primordially affect us, and lend content to representations”145 must be rejected. The first argument Schelling introduces to justify this contention is Jacobi’s argument that Kant’s appeal to things in themselves contradicts his conclusion that “everything that is an object, a thing, or an entity has become an object, etc., only through an initial synthesis of intuition.”146 The second argument Schelling employs is essentially a restatement of Maimon’s argument that the notion that the content of intuition is “given” from a source completely heterogeneous from the understanding will forever make the isomorphism between thought and nature inexplicable, and so will forever be unable to answer Humean skepticism. Schelling thus writes that the very idea that our understanding imposes laws “onto nature as something completely heterogeneous” in fact makes Kant an “inconsistent Humean”; inconsistent insofar as he refuses to admit along with Hume that, if concepts and sensations arise from heterogeneous sources, the assumed isomorphism between thought and nature is merely “a deception” produced by “our imagination.”147 Schelling thus claims that we have to give up the notion of things in themselves and thus argue that “nature is nothing different from its laws”;148 thereby defending the isomorphism between thought and nature by making them both arise from the same source, that is, the self-intuiting activity of Spirit (Geist), which, just like Maimon’s “infinite intellect,” is inseparably related to empirical reality in the same way that Spinoza’s God is inseparably related to the sphere of finite modes. “No thing,” Schelling thus proclaims, “can be real unless there is a Spirit to know it,” and he goes on to explicitly compare this position to that of Leibniz.149 Indeed, taking his cue

145. Ibid., 75.
146. Ibid., 73.
147. Ibid., 79.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid., 76.
from Maimon, Schelling suggests that it is only by incorporating the resources of Leibnizian rationalism into Kant’s transcendental philosophy that the latter will become an “internally cohesive” system.150

We can therefore see that Mendelssohn was incorrect if he thought that the “all destroying Kant” could completely “destroy” the Leibnizian–Wolffian tradition of rationalist metaphysics. For, as the history of the development of German idealism shows, it was precisely the tradition of Leibnizian–Wolffian rationalist metaphysics that was looked toward in order to resolve the tensions and inconsistencies in Kant’s own transcendental philosophy.

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi**


**Karl Leonhard Reinhold**


**Salomon Maimon**

*Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie: Mit einem Anhang über die symbolische Erkenntnis und Anmerkungen*. Berlin: C. F. Voss, 1790. Published in English as *Essay on Transcendental

150. See *ibid.*, 96–9, 170–71.


I. PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Among philosophers, Johann Gottfried Herder is probably best known for his ideas on language. This topic also forms an excellent point of entry into his thought, as it reveals some of the crucial components of Herder’s philosophical system, combining empiricism, metaphysical monism, cultural pluralism, and a qualified brand of realism. To speak of a philosophical “system,” in this context, may seem strange, as Herder is often charged with being an unsystematic thinker. He never produced an extended, carefully ordered treatise of the sort that Kant wrote, spelling out and arguing for a set of logically interconnected claims about knowledge and reality. Writing such a treatise seems not to have accorded with his personality, his talents, and even his own understanding of good philosophical method. Nonetheless, one can isolate a coherent and well-integrated philosophical position informing Herder’s epistemology and metaphysics, along with his anthropology and ethics, and this position is comprehensively illustrated by his theory of language.

Herder’s early essay, “On the Origin of Language,” constitutes his most sustained engagement with the subject. It was composed in response to an essay

1. Johann Gottfried Herder (August 25, 1744–December 18, 1803; born in Mohrungen, East Prussia; died in Weimar) studied theology at the University of Königsberg (1762–64), where he became friends with Johann Georg Hamann and attended lectures by Kant. He became a teacher at Domschule in Riga (1764–69). From 1769 to 1770 he took a long voyage to France, then Holland, met Lessing, and began a friendship with Goethe. He became pastor and court preacher in Bückeburg (1771–76), and then general superintendent and pastor of the court church in Weimar (1776–1803).
contest sponsored by the Berlin-based Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1769. The contest posed the question of whether human beings could have invented language by the use of their natural faculties alone and, if so, how. Herder’s essay, which won the contest, argues that the source of language rests in a particular human capacity, which he terms *Besonnenheit*. In German, this word commonly means considered reflection and self-restraint, but Herder uses it in a specialized sense. Hans Irmscher glosses this sense as “the human ability to distance oneself from impressions of reality and to make them and oneself the object of a free determination.”² In the essay on language, the term *Reflexion* is sometimes substituted for *Besonnenheit*. The concept is actually the counterpart of Condillac’s³ notion of *réfléchir*, a process in which, according to Condillac, our minds are disengaged from the objects pressing on them, so that “we are able to turn our attention successively to various objects or to different parts of a single object.”⁴ But whereas Condillac had claimed that this capacity is produced by the employment of signs, Herder describes it is a necessary condition for their institution. “Man displays reflection,” he writes, “when the power of his soul works so freely that, in the whole ocean of sensation rushing through all the senses, it isolates a wave, so to speak, clings to it, directs its attention towards it, and is able to be conscious of observing it” (*Language*, W1, 722). The latter form of consciousness permits the recognition of distinct properties. Only on its basis can these properties, and objects defined through them, be marked with signs.

Thus, for Herder, the human capacity for naming is rooted in the ability to step back from the multiplicity of impressions received through the senses, and to distinguish unifying patterns within that multiplicity. In the case of natural languages, moreover, the remarking of significant patterns is a function of human needs, wishes, and feelings. Words do not name objects as experienced by a neutral spectator. They name events and things as they affect the inventor of language, and that inventor is an embodied, sensing, feeling creature. Herder

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². Hans Irmscher, “Herders Verständnis von ‘Humanität,’” in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Letters on the Advancement of Humanity*, W7, 818. Cf. Herder’s *A Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason*: “In me there is a double ‘I’; conscious of myself, I can and must become an object to myself. This advantage raises us above animals; it is the characteristic of our species” (W8, 592). Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Herder’s writings are taken from *Werke in zehn Bänden*, Ulrich Gaier et al. (eds) (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985–2000), and the translations are my own. References to this edition are cited as W followed by the volume and page number.

³. The French philosopher and psychologist, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1715–80), radicalized Locke’s empiricism by arguing that both the contents and the capacities of the mind are derived entirely from sensation. His best-known works are *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge* (1746), and *Treatise on Sensations* (1754).

is at pains to stress the primacy of passion and interest in the construction of language, and he connects that primacy with the idea that the first language is closer to poetry than to prose (W1, 740). This idea of language as originally poetic in character is also closely related to Herder's understanding of the initial motivation for the development of language. According to Herder’s description, language is not first invented as a tool for communication. Rather, it arises, spontaneously, from a natural inclination toward imitative expression. The first language, he speculates, was a “mimicking [Nachahmung] of sounding, acting, stirring nature” (ibid.). Consequently, the first speaker – to use an idealized figure – is more of an artist than a utilitarian agent. His expressions respond mimetically to the influx of impressions working on him, which he gives back from his own perspective. When he first wants to become acquainted with a thing, his approach to it seeks a distinguishing feature, a Merkmal, within the welter of sensations that strike him, and finds it in the property that makes the strongest impression. For instance, he first identifies the sheep as der Blöckende, the bleating one (i.e. the one that goes “blööö”), because the sound it makes catches his attention with greater force than any other property, and is echoed in a corresponding expression (W1, 723–4).

Words therefore refer to what is experienced in a given place, in relation to human interests and affects. Accordingly, the different languages of the world are strongly rooted in the environment and circumstances within which they originally arose. They articulate the collective experiences of a particular people (Volk), naming elements within the world of that people. The differences between these elements from one place to another are then, naturally, reflected in the differences between languages. “If the Arab has so many words for stone, camel, sword, snake (things among which he lives!); so is the Ceylonese language, in accordance with the tendencies of its people, rich in flatteries, titles and splendid phrases” (W1, 757). Languages, then, express culturally variable patterns of significance (W1, 794), wedded to forms of life, and inherited across generations. Since Herder also insists, in agreement with his mentor and close friend Johann Georg Hamann,⁵ that words and ideas are inseparable,⁶ it follows that languages circumscribe what their speakers are able to think.

⁵. Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88), German philosopher and theologian, critic of the Enlightenment and general gadfly to his contemporaries. Known for the denseness and obscurity of his style, Hamann called into question Enlightenment ideas of reason through analyses of aesthetics, emotion, and language. He wrote short works rather than extended treatises, including: Socratic Memorabilia (1759), Aesthetics in a Nutshell (1760), and “Metacritique on the Purism of Reason,” an essay that remained unpublished during his lifetime.

⁶. Cf.: “[language] is more than a tool: in the wisdom of the world, words and ideas are closely related” (On the New German Literature: Fragments, W1, 177); and “among all sensuous concepts in the whole language of everyday life thought sticks to the expression” (ibid., 557).
Historically, this is the aspect of Herder’s theory of language that has been the most influential: the thesis that language is profoundly connected with culture, and that different languages embody distinct, and possibly incommensurable, worldviews and patterns of thought. Similar ideas are developed by Wilhelm von Humboldt,7 and Charles Taylor describes this pair as having inaugurated the “expressive-constitutive” line of thought, whose insights some of Taylor’s own writings on language seek to develop.8 This line of thought took a number of important historical directions. It can be traced in the evolution of literary and biblical hermeneutics in Germany, for instance, subjects that were intense areas of interest for Herder himself.9 It was also critical to the establishment of anthropology as a distinct discipline.10 Last, but far from least, Herder’s analysis of language as playing an essential role in the formation and transmission of cultural identity has serious political implications, and helped to provide, in some cases, a foundation for linguistic nationalism. Herder’s conception of the connection between language and culture does not necessarily entail, though, that linguistic borders should match the borders of nation-states. It only entails recognition that language is more than a communicative tool, and that linguistic communities share common horizons of meaning.

Furthermore, given the empiricist slant of Herder’s theory of language,11 the idea that Herder espoused “linguistic constitutivism”12 has to be understood in a qualified fashion. Herder does maintain that “thought sticks to the expression” (Fragments, W1, 557), so that one can only think with words, and, in the case of actual speakers, these words are inherited. Nonetheless, language is still the incarnation of experience, understood in a broad sense, and its meaningfulness

7. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) made important contributions to linguistics and the philosophy of language, as well as anthropology and political thought. He is often credited with having originated the idea that language is a rule-governed system, and with having anticipated the thesis of linguistic relativity. Major works include: On the Limits of State Action (1792), Outline of a Comparative Anthropology (1797), On the Genesis of Grammatical Forms and their Influence on the Development of Ideas (1822), and The Heterogeneity of Language and its Influence on the Intellectual Development of Mankind (published posthumously, 1836).
10. On this subject, see John Zammitto’s detailed and ground-breaking work, Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
is granted and sustained by its link with that experience. Consequently, while Herder does see language as a marker of culture, that is because of its intimate connection with the world of a people. Herder does not maintain, moreover, that people cannot communicate across distinct languages and cultures. On the contrary, he argues for the importance of learning different languages on the grounds that “each language is a key to many treasure rooms.” The study of a foreign language is part of Einfühlung, a word Herder invented to describe the process of “feeling one’s way into” the world of another people through learning and sympathetic imagination.

The issue of empiricism points to another dimension of Herder’s theory of language, which tends to receive less attention, but unjustifiably so. For Herder, as we have seen, a language draws its life from its roots in experience. Words give form to, and thereby first define, the feelings and sensations of human beings interacting with the things around them. But these definitions are not all literal; language is crisscrossed with affective metaphors, in which ideas drawn from one feeling are transferred to another, mingled with transitory associations and related sensations (W1, 752–73). Over time, these metaphors, originally so bold, tend to die, leaving mere empty containers (W1, 754). The result is a decline of poetic force in the languages of late societies, an increasing level of formality and abstraction, divorced from concrete sensations and true sentiments.

This movement, in which language is progressively detached from experience, also has serious ramifications for metaphysics, the language of philosophy. Herder does not eschew metaphysics altogether, as he thinks it can provide useful analogies and a posteriori schematizations of experience. At the same time, he is sharply critical of any brand of metaphysics that proposes to do more than that. Herder’s mature position on metaphysics is developed in his late work, Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason, directed, as the title suggests, against Kant. While Kant’s first Critique also rejects the knowledge claims of metaphysics, Herder objects to Kant’s claims about the existence of a priori concepts. His own analysis and critique of metaphysical concepts are very similar to those of John Locke. These concepts neither mirror the structure of nature, nor are they a priori elements of the mind. Rather, they result from the same anthropomorphic and culturally relative remarking of significant features that characterizes all language construction. Within metaphysics, this process is carried out at higher and higher levels of abstraction, until we eventually arrive at words such as “substance,” “subject,” and “quality” (W8, 406). Such words express the being

of a thing in general, answering the question “How does a thing exist?”, but they do not explain anything. They only recognize, and characterize in a particular manner, a broad feature of our experience (ibid.).

They also carry with them the risk of becoming devoid of any sense whatsoever, and of losing all connection with their origins in experience. Language in general carries these dangers with it, and Herder consequently stresses the need for a genealogy of concepts that will trace them back to their birth. Since reason and language are closely intertwined, for Herder, this would be at the same time a genealogy of reason. In Plastik, an essay on sculpture published in 1778, Herder asks:

> Will a practical doctrine of reason ever be written, a philosophical lexicon of language, the senses, and the fine arts that traces each word and each concept back to its origin and uncovers the processes whereby a word or concept is carried over from one sense to another, and from the senses to the mind?16

Given Herder’s nominalist and empiricist account of concepts, and given his repeated insistence on their anthropomorphic content, it might seem that he views language as entirely subjective, and as revealing more about the character of its inventor than about things in the world. Some of Herder’s statements do leave this impression, suggesting that language not only describes things from a partial perspective, but also falsifies the fundamentally dynamic character of the experienced world. In the Metacritique, for instance, he writes:

> So the snake (Schlange) [gets its name] from its twisting (schniegenden), winding movement, the river (Fluß) from flowing (Fließen), the stream from streaming, the lightning (Blitz) from its quick flash (Blick), the thunder from its crash, and so forth. It is instructive to compare the languages of different peoples in this naming, i.e., substantivizing. Such a comparison shows not only the different

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16. Johann Gottfried Herder, Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion’s Creative Dream, Jason Gaiger (ed. and trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 90; hereafter cited as Sculpture followed by the page number. Cf.: “It is a difficult thing to trace every science in all its concepts and every language in all its words back to the senses, in which and out of which they arise, and yet that is necessary for every science and language” (Journal of My Voyage in the Year 1769, W9/2, 119). These ideas about the construction and analysis of concepts prefigure central themes in later German philosophy of language. An example is Heidegger’s thesis, in Being and Time, on the historical Entwürzelung or uprooting of language (§35), as well as his various etymological deconstructions of philosophical terms. Through his theory of language, Herder is, in fact, an important avenue of influence between British empiricism and the continental tradition.
characters of the inventors, but also the different aspects of things that can be noted and the moment of characterization itself.

(W8, 403–4)

In some respects, these claims are quite similar to Nietzsche’s skeptical assertions in “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” that the creator of language “only designates the relations of things to men,” and that the edifice of concepts is constructed “as it were, on running water.” However, Herder’s position is better described as perspectivist, rather than as skeptical, because of the relation he posits between human beings and nature. Herder is fundamentally a monist, combining a Spinozistic belief in the unity of reality with a Leibnizian conception of this reality as dynamic, and as revealing itself in multiple ways to distinct and limited perspectives. For Herder, reality is essentially Kraft, force, and the forces that build the things we apprehend are the same forces that build us, with all of our faculties. Given this intimate relation to nature, human beings do not project an alien character upon the world; they clarify a bit of the world, from limited perspectives, and they do so through language. The human drive for linguistic articulation, which is at the same time a drive for understanding, seeks, Herder writes, “from the vast whole of the universe to clear [entwölken] a part for oneself” (W8, 509). The critical remarks Herder sometimes makes about the partial, culturally relative, and anthropocentric character of names, do not, therefore, arise from a full-fledged subjectivism. They are directed against the human tendency to mistake the limited perspective for the whole, and to fix in place what is constantly evolving.

II. AESTHETICS

In the corpus of Herder’s writings, there are three major works dedicated to the subject of art: the fourth of the Critical Forests, written in 1769 but not published during Herder’s lifetime; Plastik (1778); and Kalligone (1800), a critique of Kant’s Critique of Judgment. Of these, the short essay on sculpture, Plastik, is by far the most readable, and broaches the major themes that preoccupy Herder in his engagement with aesthetics. The essay claims that sight, hearing, and touch correspond to different art forms, with each of these senses playing a primary role in the creation and appreciation of, respectively, painting, music, and sculpture (Sculpture, 43). Herder argues further that while sight perceives only surfaces, the sense of depth essential to an appreciation of sculpture is actually

rooted in touch, without which we would never gain a sense of the three-dimensionality of the world (40). This attempt to restore value to the neglected sense of touch is linked to a reassessment of the preeminence usually accorded to vision in doctrines of psychology. “Sight,” says Herder, “is the most artificial, the most philosophical of the senses” (39). Given the clarity and precision of the world revealed by the eye, it is unsurprising if our theories borrow most of their terms from this sense (40), but sight only perceives images, forms and colors, the surfaces of things, not the “physically present, tangible truth” (ibid.) of solid bodies. Thus, a phenomenology of the beautiful and the true based on sight alone does not cover everything, and certainly not what is “most fundamental, simple and primary” in our experience (39).

Herder’s analysis of the respective roles of seeing and touch in our perception of things reflects the value he commonly attributes to direct, embodied contact with reality, as opposed to distanced contemplation. Sculpture expresses, and evokes, this kind of contact, putting us in touch with the immediacy of life. It presents “a human being, a fully animated body” which awakens in us “the full range of responsive human feeling” (80–81). Herder’s appreciation for the particularity and definiteness conveyed by sculpture intends at the same time to isolate the distinctive excellence of Greek art. Of the latter, he writes:

> It is beyond doubt that the extraordinary determinateness and fidelity that the Greeks gave to every situation, every passion and every character helped them to achieve a level of art that has not been seen on the earth since. They perceived as do blind people and, through feeling, saw. They did not peer through the glasses of some system or ideal that would conjure the ensouled form of the human body from a cobweb floating in the autumn breeze. (80)

Herder contrasts this Greek sense of reality with the artificiality of life and manners in his own society, from which nature has departed, and for which sculpture would be impossible (82). Yet he does not propose a return to Greek art. Art is the expression of the life and character of a people, as it unfolded at a given time and place. It cannot be resurrected in a different society, for “we can only give loyal, complete, truthful, and living expression to those forms that communicate themselves to us and that live on in us through our own living senses” (53). Herder therefore opposes any classicism aiming at imitation of the ancients, suggesting that we should rather treat them as “friends, not idols,” as “exemplars that present to us in bodily form the truth of ancient times, making us aware of the proximity and distance between their form of life and our own” (61).

Herder’s view of Greek art, in relation to his own age, anticipates Hegel’s account of the place of Greece in human history, with the important difference
that Herder does not see the movement beyond Greek immediacy and naturalness as simply a form of progress. Nor is it only decline, although there are certainly Rousseauian themes in the contrasts Herder draws between ancient Greek society, as expressed in its art, and his own. Herder is, on the whole, a cultural pluralist, seeing different historical moments as revealing unique and unrepeatable possibilities of the human spirit. What he complains about most fervently in his own society is its failure to be itself, a failure he connects with too much secondhand learning: “we see so much that we in fact see nothing, and we know so much that we no longer possess anything that is our own, that is to say, something we could not have learned, something that arises out of the virtues and errors of our own self” (81–2). With respect to aesthetics, the normative implication of this criticism is that art should evolve out of the genuine life of a people; its style and content should reflect that life and not imitate some other. This call for authenticity and naturalness in art, combined with the view that every people has a distinctive character, helped to inspire the Sturm und Drang movement in Germany, with which Herder’s name is often connected. The collection of essays entitled On German Style and Art (1773) was particularly influential in this regard.

III. EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

Herder’s reflections on language and art reveal the basic contours of his theory of knowledge, and of his ontology. They show Herder to be an empiricist, stressing embodiment, sensation, and emotion in our engagement with the world. This empiricism in turn grounds Herder’s belief that human understanding is plural and partial, that thought is dependent on language, and that metaphysical abstractions are mere empty forms. At the same time, Herder’s analyses of linguistic and aesthetic expression also point to a brand of monism, and an attendant dimension of realism, within his position. Language and art do not, for Herder, only manifest the nature of the human subject; they reveal the world as mediated through the perspective of that subject. They can do so because reality is a single system of forces that create, and remain operative within, human beings, as they do in the rest of nature. Sensing, feeling, speaking, thinking people take in a portion of this reality through multiple channels of perception, and give it back in the variety of their cultural products.18

18. For an excellent German-language analysis of these themes in Herder’s earlier works, see Marion Heinz, Sensualistischer Idealismus: Untersuchungen zur Erkenntnistheorie und Metaphysik des jungen Herders (1763–1778) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994).
Many of these elements are focused and made explicit in Herder’s essay, “On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul,” the final version of which was published in 1778. Herder affirms, in this work, that “our thought depends upon sensation” (W4, 365), and that “we only sense, what our nerves give us” (W4, 351), so that our understanding is built out of what we encounter in our embodied being in a given location. “From the Platonic realm of the before-world [the soul] recalls nothing: it also did not set itself on the place where it stands; it does not even know how it got there. But it knows this, or should do so, that it only understands what this place shows to it” (W4, 354–5). It is crucial to Herder’s view, though, that the soul does not just passively receive what is given to it. The active forces of which it is composed – its drives, feelings, and passions – relate to things in tandem with the bodily senses. Through this interaction of the whole human being with its environment, the soul weaves its distinctive world. Given the enormous variety among individuals with respect to the strength and character of their inclinations, in combination with the equally enormous variety of locales in which they can be placed, the resulting possible configurations are virtually infinite, and each is unique. “As individuals differ from one another, so even more do families and nations; the manner of their thought is arranged according to the circle of their manner of sensation” (W4, 368).

In the Metacritique, Herder will say that the essence of understanding rests in the act of making for itself, out of the vast totality of the universe, a world appropriate to the human circle of vision (W8, 509). The human soul clarifies a bit of the universe, from a perspective that is itself part of that universe, and shares its nature. Individuals, as well as cultures, are therefore like Leibnizian monads, mirroring reality from multiple, more or less clear, angles, except that they most emphatically have windows. The soul’s windows are senses and affeets. The latter, for Herder, are not vehicles of distortion, but, as Theodor Litt notes, the threads that bind us with the world.19 Through them, the world plays upon us, as it were; we are, in Herder’s metaphor, a Saitenspiel (W4, 339), a kind of stringed instrument that resounds in accordance with the way it is touched. Cognition, working in the medium of language, raises to a higher level of distinctness what sensation more closely and dimly apprehends. But it does so at the cost of moving away from the richness of experience, and from its proximity to real things, at best bringing only selected features of those things into relief, and at worst degenerating into nonsense.

This theory of the relation between experience and reflection applies to self-understanding as much as to understanding of the world. Within Herder’s account, human beings are by no means transparent to themselves. Rather, “the

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deepest depth of our soul is cloaked in night,” for our thought could not possibly grasp every stimulus and sensation in its primary parts. It could not hear the “crashing ocean of such dark waves” without being overcome by fear and anxiety, and losing its grip on the helm. Nature therefore wisely distanced “our poor thinker” from whatever could not enter into clear consciousness, and closed every channel thereto. Now, the soul does not penetrate to its roots, but enjoys the blossoms:

[F]ragrances drift to it from dark bushes, which it did not plant, did not raise; it stands on an infinite abyss and does not know that it stands there. This self-ignorance is also better for the dark forces and stimuli, which must work together at such a subaltern level: they do not know, why? And they cannot and should not know. (W4, 345)

In fact, Herder maintains that the innermost nature of reality, whether subjective or objective, is beyond the reach of our concepts, and therefore of any scientific or rational knowledge. Thought is dependent on language, and language only names how things appear in relation to a given perspective. It follows that we do not have any direct knowledge of things in themselves. In the Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784–91), Herder therefore claims that “all our science calculates with abstracted individual external marks, which do not touch the inner existence of any single thing,” and “our poor reason is thus only a marking calculator [bezeichnende Rechnerin], as its name says in many languages” (W6, 349). When engaging in abstract reasoning, the soul only calculates “with counting coins [Rechenpfennigen], with sounds and figures,” with external symbols torn away from things and cloaked in other arbitrary symbols, resulting sometimes in empty nutshells (W6, 350).

This thesis, that knowledge is confined to appearances and does not reach the essence of any thing, might lead one to wonder how Herder can then find a foundation for his monism, and the qualified realism connected with it, and why he takes issue so sharply with Kant’s idealism in the Metacritique. To take up the last question first, Herder objects, as noted earlier, to Kant’s claim that the structure of our experience is determined by a priori categories and forms of intuition. Against this claim, he advances an empiricist argument that the operation of our capacity for reflection (Besonnenheit) suffices to explain the development, from experience, of our most general ideas. For instance, describing the initial sense, and subsequent concept, of space, Herder says:

As sensuous awareness, space [Raum] is first making room [räumen], i.e., a privative concept. Our limits, that is to say, have led understanding to note the there, where we are and are not, and to determine,
to measure, to describe it in a thousand fine distinctions, until it finally wanted to be elevated to a pure, i.e., entirely non-sensuous, concept of reason. It is, however, not such a pure concept.

(W8, 352)

“Space” is first encountered through the self-reflexive, interested awareness of being able to be here or there, an awareness grounded in the experience of limits defined by embodiment, essential to the sense of being in this place or that. Thus, space is, in a sense, “subjective”; “it is placed and given with our limited existence [Dasein] in the universe” (W6, 353). We brought space into the world “with our selves,” bringing at the same time a soul that could become aware (inne werden) and make note (bemerken) of it as a multiplicity of possible places (W6, 353).

Herder’s analysis of the concept of time, in the Metacritique, is similar:

For a long time, it seems, man was inattentive to the sequence of changes within and around him; he enjoyed the duration of his existence, without placing a measure upon it. Only when the moment came, that something needed to happen, did he say: “now it is time!” The commanding moment [Augenblick] simultaneously shook him from his sleep. He let the fruits grow; then he plucked them and said: “now they are ready [zeitig].” When something arrived inconveniently, i.e., too late or too early; then he said: “that is untimely [unzeitig].”

(W8, 357)

Animals are also aware of themselves and their environment, and have some relation to time, but here Herder is characterizing the explicit grasp enabled by reflectivity, which permits the highlighting of significant moments that can subsequently be abstracted into a concept of empty time. Thus, Herder locates the roots of our original grasp of space and time in our embodied, practical existence, with the formal idea evolving later, through a process of abstraction.

As to the question of why he supposes that this existence grasps the real world, rather than subjective phantasms, Herder’s answer is, quite simply, that we are “parts of the world” (W6, 508), and have no reason to think of ourselves as separated from it by a difference of kind. Furthermore, being, for Herder, is a primary datum. He had argued in a very early essay, “An Inquiry Into Being” (1764), that being, the givenness of the real, is indemonstrable, and yet certain, not needing any demonstration except in the minds of over-learned philosophers (W1, 19). In the Metacritique, he reaffirms this position, insisting that “being is the ground of all knowledge” (W8, 364), and that Kant’s reduction of the whole of being to “appearance” (Erscheinung), a mere “seeming” (Schein), runs counter to the way in which we ordinarily describe our experience. He
points out, in this regard, that if one pays attention to the original meaning of the Greek terms, “Phänomenon means, what appears; Noumenon, what understanding (nous) thinks.” Understanding then thinks “not behind and outside, but from (an) the phenomenon, and with that the whole confusion is lifted away” (W8, 469).

This does not mean, however, that we have direct access to the source of what appears to us, to the active causes that produce the being and becoming of what we perceive. We can only draw analogies from ourselves, while being informed by the results of the natural sciences, as Leibniz does in constructing his “monad poem” (Cognition, W4, 338). Of the various analogies on offer in his age, Herder finds this one the most compelling, and his own conception of reality as a living system of elemental forces owes a great deal to it, although, unlike Leibniz, Herder sees these forces as interconnected and interacting with one another. One implication of his view that all reality consists of force is that nature is not divided into radically different substances. It is enlivened by a single principle, which shades by degrees into various shapes and forms (W4, 338). There is then no iron wall between the material and the immaterial, for there is no iron wall anywhere in nature (W4, 354). The whole of nature is infused with “One Spirit, One Flame” (W4, 338).

Herder identifies this “One Spirit” with God, and while his view of reality as force is inspired by Leibniz, along with the mathematician and natural philosopher Roger Joseph Boscovich (1711–87), this notion of God as an immanent ground revealing itself in the whole of being recalls Spinoza. Herder’s sympathetic relation to Spinoza is treated directly in his work God: Some Conversations (1787). This was written as an intervention into the Pantheismusstreit, the debate on pantheism, in Germany, which had been ignited by Jacobi’s report, in a letter to Mendelssohn, that Lessing had told him he had been convinced of Spinoza’s idea of God. Herder himself rejects Spinoza’s term “substance,” with its static connotations, in favor of the more dynamic notion of Kraft (force). He also argues that the recent investigations of natural science, “without which metaphysics only builds castles in the air or gropes about in the dark,” have discovered more and more “active or interactive forces” in matter, and have consequently abandoned “the empty concept of extension.” On these points, Herder takes issue with Spinoza. But in describing God as “the primal force of all forces,” who “reveals himself in an infinite number of forces in an infinite number of ways” (God, 103), he offers a revised version of Spinozistic monism,

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*20. For a discussion of Jacobi and the Pantheism Controversy, see the essay by Richard Fincham in this volume.

and its attendant sense that God is not separate from nature. Whether or not this counts as “pantheism” is a question of definition. The description of God, on Herder’s account, would be radically different from the description of any thing, or of the totality of things, so that one cannot posit a simple identity between God and the world. Yet that is true of Spinoza’s system as well, and it is often described as pantheistic nonetheless.

Speaking more precisely, though, for Herder, we cannot give any literal “description” of God qua force, because we cannot give a description of force at all. What we see and feel are the effects of force, within us and outside us, but “we do not know what force is, nor how it works” (154). “Still less,” then, “do we know how the divine force has produced anything, and how it imparts itself to everything according to its nature” (97). Herder never claims that the concept of force can be explicated, or that using it clarifies why things are the way they are. In the essay on cognition and sensation, he says of Kraft: “I am not saying that I hereby explain something; I have not yet known any philosophy that can explain what force is” (W4, 337). We see the operations of various forces in nature, and we feel their operation in ourselves. We can remark, order, and describe their activity, as well as their interaction, but what is acting, what is operating, of that we have no clear knowledge.

## IV. ANTHROPOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Herder’s *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, published in four parts between 1784 and 1791, proposes to sketch a history of the products of these forces on earth. Herder is well aware of how ambitious such a project is, if it wants to be based on empirical knowledge of natural and human history, and he acknowledges that his own contribution can only be provisional (W6, 18). Most of the *Ideas* consists of cultural anthropology, as it deals with human civilization, but it is significant that Herder locates the development of the human species within the overall course of nature, seeing the former as a phase in the latter’s evolution. This is not to imply that Herder espouses any theory of evolution in the modern sense, where later species are thought to be descended from previous ones. He firmly believes in divine creation, working through natural forces, the “finger of divinity” (W6, 173), as he describes them. His picture of nature is that of a chain of being, created successively rather than all at once, in which the distinctions between varieties are graduated and fuzzy rather than sharp. Human beings certainly possess powers unique to their own species – the capacity for reflection being the foremost among these – but Herder tends to describe these powers as continuous with nature, not as constituting a radical break from it. “There is in the human heart no virtue, no drive of which one
cannot find an analogy here and there in the animal world” (W6, 109), he says, and this sense of the inclusion of human beings in nature is reinforced by a repeated use, in the context of anthropological descriptions, of metaphors drawn from other organisms. The most well-known examples are the botanical metaphors in Herder’s account of cultures, which he often pictures as plants adapted to, and flourishing in, distinct regions of the globe.22

This metaphor indicates a literal thesis: namely, that “man is not an independent substance, but is bound to all of the elements of nature” (W6, 252). Human beings, that is, are bodily creatures embedded in a physical world, and this embeddedness shapes the character of all of their capacities and products. It provides the primary data for imagination and reason. It determines the content and style of languages and forms of art. It affects a society’s religions, morals, and social structure. In short, sensuous interaction with a tangible environment forms the material basis of all of those shared features of human communities that are constitutive of culture. Individuals always acquire their human traits in the context of a culture, and a culture brings with it a particular Klima. This term, which has no precise English counterpart, names, for Herder, not only “climate” but all of those factors that affect a person’s bodily existence:

The elevation or depression of a region, its constitution and products, the food and drink a person consumes, the manner of life he follows, the work he performs, clothing, even customary positions, pleasures and arts, along with a host of other circumstances, which operate powerfully in connection with one’s life; all these belong to the portrait of this greatly changing Klima. (W6, 266)

Some of these elements of Klima are themselves a matter of custom, and are passed along by tradition. The less tangible aspects of culture – language, reason, and religion – are in their very nature traditions, as they depend on expressive marks handed down from one generation to the next. They are still, however, linked to a Klima, out of which they evolve and to which their meaning remains connected.

22. In the Ideas, for instance, Herder writes that every plant belongs to a certain climate, to which it is adapted, and adds that likewise: “every form of humanity organizes itself in its region in the most natural way” (W6, 62–3). He therefore expresses the wish for “a general botanical geography for human history” (W6, 67). His corresponding ideal of cultivation is summed up in the Letters: “To the good of mankind as a whole can no one contribute who does not make of himself what he can and should become; each should therefore cultivate and tend the garden of humanity first on that bed, where he turns green as a tree, or blossoms as a flower” (W7, 164).
Culture, then, is a combination of Klima and Tradition. The development of humanity, in its many cultural variants, is conditioned by this combination. Consider, for example, the following chapter titles, from Book 8 of the Ideas:

The power of imagination is everywhere organic and climactic; everywhere, though, it is led by tradition.

The practical reason of the human species everywhere grows under the needs of a manner of life; everywhere, though, it is a flower of the genius of nations, a son of tradition and custom.

The sensations and drives of people are everywhere fitted to the situation in which they live, and its organization; everywhere, though, they are ruled by opinions and custom.

The happiness of people is everywhere an individual good; consequently, though, it is everywhere climactic and organic, a child of usage, tradition and custom. (W6, 1210)

The next book of the Ideas, dealing with language, reason, and religion, is then at pains to stress the empirical rootedness of these human properties, along with their essential sociality and dependence on tradition (W6, 336–79). In making these points, Herder wants to insist on both the cultural specificity and the universality of these attributes. For instance, in the chapter on reason, Herder objects, on the one hand, to efforts by philosophers to make this faculty into something independent of the senses, and free of tradition. On the other hand, he insists, and accordingly, that every human society possesses reason, and that “the distinction between enlightened and unenlightened, between cultivated and uncultivated peoples is therefore not of kind, but of degree” (W6, 340).

Herder’s position on the concept of “race,” which is being formulated and debated among his European contemporaries at the time he is writing, conforms to this general thesis about the unity and diversity of mankind. The chapter of the Ideas in which Herder discusses the term Rasse is entitled: “In however many different forms the human race [Menschengeschlecht] appears on the earth, it is nonetheless one and the same human genus [Menschengattung]” (W6, 251). All human beings, he argues here, are fully human, and this fact has ethical consequences. It means that unlike the higher apes, “the American and the Negro” are your brothers, and “therefore you must not oppress or kill or rob them: for they are human beings, as you are” (W6, 255). Although he does not mention Kant by name, some of Herder’s remarks in this chapter are clearly directed against Kant’s 1775 essay, “Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen,” which had divided the human species into four fixed and sharply distinct races on the basis of color. Herder complains that he sees no reason for such a designation, “for every people [Volk] is a people: it has its own national formation [Bildung], as
well as language (W6, 255). Herder does posit some physical differences among human types, and sometimes even links these to differences in psychology and culture. But he abhors the way in which Europeans use alleged anthropological distinctions to justify their greedy, exploitative, and violent behavior toward non-European peoples. Against this genre of hypocritical self-justification, Herder asserts that all members of the human species possess the virtues and capacities that define humanity, although these are realized in different patterns across the world’s many human types.

A major portion of the *Ideas* consists of descriptive accounts of these patterns among the world’s existing and historical peoples. The accounts themselves are in many cases badly dated, and they are not always free of the cultural partiality to which Herder explicitly objects. They do, however, illustrate Herder’s belief in the need for close study and empathetic imagination when approaching historically or geographically distant peoples. They also constitute an attempt to survey human cultures objectively and without prejudice, even if Herder does not always manage to live up to his stated ideals in this regard. Indeed, promotion of the ideal of cultural impartiality is a major aim of the *Ideas*. The writer of the history of humanity, Herder maintains, must not adopt his own tribe as a favorite, despising all those who do not belong to it. He must, like the botanist, look with equal regard on all the entities he surveys, recognizing each one for its unique qualities (W6, 509). Herder takes it as a central principle that cultures should be appreciated for what they are – which is precisely what they could be, given the time and place in which they emerge and flourish – and that they should not be judged by the standards of later ages and alien nations.

Nonetheless, Herder does claim, in the *Ideas*, that human history manifests a kind of progress. This progress is neither simple nor linear, and there is no single scale on which it can be measured. Still, “in universal history as in the life of fallen, individual human beings all the follies and vices of our species exhaust themselves, until finally we are forced through need to learn reason and fairness” (W6, 668). This pole of Herder’s philosophy of history, in which the internal and external struggles of civilizations lead, ultimately, to a higher development of humanity, is influenced by Kant and anticipates Hegel. “Individual generations go under,” Herder writes, in a very Hegelian sentence, “but the immortal whole survives the wounds of the vanished parts and learns good from evil” (W6, 645). Herder is also, like Hegel, inclined to see this process as one of maturation. He often draws an analogy between historical stages and the stages of individual life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age, situating non-European peoples at “younger,” less advanced stages of development. However, this condescending stance in Herder’s account of Asian, African, and native American societies does not fit well with his own strictures against Eurocentrism. And he does, at the same time, repeatedly claim that each civilization is characterized by its own
forms of excellence, which it makes no sense to compare with others. Among the Chinese, he says, one finds a refined political morality; among Indians a species of detached purity, quiet activity, and patience. The culture of Greece reached the highest level of sensuous beauty, while the Romans cultivated the virtue of heroic patriotism. The respective qualities of these ancient peoples depend so much on time and place that they are almost incomparable (W6, 549). Such qualities are not, furthermore, taken up without loss into different and supposedly more advanced societies. They are merely displaced by other goods, better in some respects, because of lessons learned from the past, but not in all. As Isaiah Berlin points out, one of Herder’s central insights is that no single society is capable of realizing all possible human goods.23 Not only are varieties of human flourishing the product of unique and unrepeatable historical moments, but some human goods are simply incompatible with one another, and so cannot be realized at the same time in the same society.

In Herder’s view, moreover, every society has its vices along with its virtues. Modern “enlightened” Europe is quite certainly no exception. Against the self-congratulatory pretensions of many of his contemporaries, Herder frequently dwells on what he sees as the shortcomings of this Europe. He describes it as overly learned and tired, on the one hand (the analogy of old age is actually ambiguous), and yet voracious, on the other, brutally indifferent to the welfare of non-European peoples, whom it exploits in order to satisfy its ever-multiplying wants. These criticisms, reiterated in the Ideas, had formed a primary theme in Herder’s earlier work, Yet Another Philosophy of History, published in 1774. He affirms, in this work, as he will continue to do in the Ideas and throughout his career, that history manifests some kind of progress (W4, 40), but he objects to the view that his enlightened century forms the pinnacle of all human perfection. Ridiculing this view, he remarks, sarcastically: “How many edges first had to be forcibly rubbed away, before the round, smooth, pretty thing that we are could appear!” (W4, 54). One should not assume, he warns, that a progress in enlightenment is automatically accompanied by an increase in individual happiness and virtue (W4, 40), so that the most enlightened nation is necessarily the happiest one. In fact, “every nation has its center of happiness [Glückseligkeit] within itself, as every sphere its center of gravity” (W4, 39). This statement does not propose thoroughgoing ethical relativism. Herder always emphasizes the common attributes of humanity along with the varied forms these assume in different cultures, and he does not hesitate, on the basis of these, to criticize the flaws and injustices of all of the nations he examines. He rejects the idea, however, that there is a single best nation toward which history has been

inexorably moving as a final end, and for the creation of which all others have merely been means. Herder refuses entirely this way of thinking about the status of historical phases and cultures, insisting that “nothing in the entire kingdom of God … is only a means – everything is simultaneously a means and an end, and so certainly this century as well” (W6, 54).

Taking up this theme again in the Ideas, Herder rails against the presumption that the past existed only for the sake of the present, and maintains that all people everywhere are, and have been, ends in themselves: “[Y]ou people in all parts of the world, who have passed away over the ages, you did not live only to fertilize the earth with your ashes, so that at the end of time your descendants could become happy through European culture” (W6, 335). While the targets of Yet Another Philosophy of History are primarily the French philosophes such as Voltaire, in later works Herder’s affirmation of the intrinsic worth of all ages and cultures is often directed polemically against Kant. To be sure, the progressivist pole of Herder’s philosophy of history has strong affinities with Kant’s own position on this subject. Herder was, however, appalled by some aspects of Kant’s essay, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent” (1784). As Herder saw it, this essay suggests that a well-constituted state, rather than human well-being, is the true goal of history, and that, in light of this goal, earlier generations exist and struggle only for the sake of later ones. Such a view is simply anathema to Herder. What, he asks, could it mean to say that man is “made for the state, as the end of his race and all of its generations, made in fact only for the last generation, which sits enthroned on the decayed frame of the happiness of all previous ones?” (W6, 332).

V. POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

This last cited remark brings out one connection between Herder’s philosophy of history and his political philosophy. Happiness, which Herder conceives quite broadly, in a way that includes the exercise of capacities proper to a species (W6, 329), is decidedly for him the goal of history. It is therefore also the goal of politics. Unlike Kant, who derives moral and political principles of right from the value of freedom, Herder takes the promotion of human well-being as the basis for judgments about fair relations between individuals and nations, and about the constitution of a just state. Kant had rejected this possibility on the grounds that happiness is too variable and subjective a good to serve as such a basis.24 If Herder has no qualms on this score, it is because he is more than willing to

accept the implications of precisely these features of happiness: for instance, that moral and political principles cannot be determined *a priori*, but will have to be based on empirical knowledge about human nature, a knowledge that will require anthropological and cultural investigation, and that these principles will, to a degree, be variable, shifting, and fallible.

Herder’s own anthropological investigations lead him to conclude that human beings share a set of basic capacities and characteristics that unfold into different shapes according to time and place. Herder’s political position is the logical counterpart of this conclusion, and is probably best described as a form of pluralism, treading a line between both relativism and universalism. In his late work *Letters on the Advancement of Humanity* (1793–97), Herder writes: “Man has been the same in all ages; only, he expressed himself in each case according to the conditions in which he lived” (W7, 577). From this anthropological thesis, Herder draws the normative conclusion that the advancement of humanity requires an increase in “reason, goodness, and fairness” (*Vernunft, Güte, Billigkeit*) (W7, 128) across the world, but in a manner that still allows room for cultural diversity. The goal is *Humanität*, but while there are many ways of failing this goal, there are also many ways of accomplishing it. Consequently, “it is quite right for the French and the English to paint their *humanité* and *humanity* in an English and a French manner” (W7, 736). It is quite wrong, on the other hand, for one nation to set itself up as the measure and repository of all perfection, and to impose its will on others. Needless to say, there is no justification for treating the members of any nation as animals (W6, 739), and the enslavement of Africans by Europeans is a moral disgrace (see W6, 674–85).

With respect to the relations between peoples, the moral ills with which Herder is most powerfully concerned are colonialism, imperialism, and slavery. As a result, he tends to stress the right of each people to be left alone to follow its own course, appealing to the uniqueness and significance of cultural identity as a justification. A shortcoming of this position is that it is not sufficiently sensitive to the internal diversity of cultures, or to the hybridity and complexity of many cultural identities. Herder’s position on Jewish identity is a case in point. He expresses great admiration for ancient Hebrew culture in its original setting, but sees the diasporic Jew as culturally uprooted, describing Yiddish as a “sad mixture” (*Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, W5, 678). Herder recommends, as a solution, a combination of return to Palestine and assimilation within Europe, and his views on this subject have sometimes been read as anti-Semitic, and sometimes as proto-Zionist. Whatever Herder himself might have meant, the idea that the borders of a state should match the borders of a *Volk* has serious limitations, and

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Herder’s stress on völkisch identity played a historical role in the development of European fascism.

Herder does not explicitly advance a global culture:state equation, however, and his precise political prescriptions remain rather vague. He was certainly no great fan of the state, whose totalizing power he feared, and one of his criticisms of the age of reason was that it turns society into a “machine,” in which every individual has its allotted place and function (Yet Another Philosophy of History, W4, 73). Herder worries especially about the formulation of large-scale human engineering plans for this social machine. “It is a terrible thing,” he writes in the Letters, to regard mankind as just a line which one can bend, cut, extend, and shrink for some purpose quite as one pleases, in order to execute a plan, to accomplish a task” (W7, 733). Change must be organic and natural, starting with small things and building itself into something greater; when imposed from above according to a grand design, it inevitably fails (W4, 58). The measure of success here is never anything other than human happiness. With respect to the state, this means that “all state constitutions are nothing but means for human happiness” and “the sum of the individual happiness of all members is the happiness of the state” (W7, 132–3). If that happiness is variable and plural, as Herder believes it is, there can be no single and precise formula for the constitutions of good states. They can only be the product of the wishes of individuals, although these individuals must also learn from one another. Generations and nations should likewise continue to learn from one another, until they arrive at the understanding that “no people on earth is the exclusively chosen people of God; truth must be sought by all; the garden of the common good must be built by all” (W7, 226).

VI. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Herder’s claim that no one people is the chosen people of God also hints at his position on the status of the world’s various religions. At first sight, that position may seem inconsistent, standing in tension, at some points, with his professed pluralism. On the one hand, in the Ideas, Herder praises China for its internal religious toleration (W6, 432), and writes sympathetically, and even admiringly, about the Brahminic idea of God in India (W6, 454). On the other hand, he affirms the superior merit of Christianity, for which the Hebrew Bible – which he describes as unmistakably preferable to all other ancient religious books (W6, 488) – is a prelude. However, Herder’s assessment of his own faith actually mirrors the blend of particularity and universality that one finds in his cultural anthropology and his ethics. The Christianity he holds up as an ideal is a moral institution rather than a set of specific doctrines, rituals, and symbols.
This Christianity is supposed to be the first religion to transcend national boundaries. *Yet Another Philosophy of History* defines it as “the clearest philosophy of morals, the purest theory of truth and of duties, independent of all laws, all petty local constitutions; in short, if one likes, the most humanitarian [menschenliebendste] deism” (W4, 47). Certainly, one could object that the essential moral truth Herder identifies here with Christianity can be found, in some version, in other religions as well. Be that as it may, Herder’s prioritization of Christianity rests on his belief in the universality of this truth, with its message of brotherhood and love (W4, 46–7). This is the aspect of religion Herder has in mind when he writes, in *Of Religion, Doctrines and Customs*, that “doctrines divide and embitter; religion unites: for in the heart of all people it is only one” (W9/1, 727). Religion, so understood, involves being true to one’s conscience in a spirit of self-sacrificing love. That is Herder’s definition of Christianity, but he adds: “If the name, ‘Christianity’ disappears, this faith must be called the ‘religion of mankind’” (W9/1, 785).

Religion is, of course, more than morality, as Herder recognizes, and he is not a universalist about the rest of religion, which he sees as firmly connected to culture. Religion is not, for Herder, merely a set of beliefs that can be isolated and placed on the table for universal discussion. It is the medium through which human beings relate to the divine, and this relation is unlike the relation between scientific knowledge and its objects. Religions do not, that is, relate to God as to an object to be known. Rather, their approach to their subject is an indirect one, enacted in ritual practice and expressed in nonliteral language, through the evocative power of metaphors, analogies, symbols, and myths. But these elements are rooted in, and derive their meaningfulness from, the specific forms of life of a given people who live, think, and feel in a particular time and place. Herder’s analysis of “the spirit of Hebrew poetry,” in a work of that title, stresses the fact that the language of this religion, the Hebrew religion, is the language of a people. The force of its symbolic expression is granted by the allusive reference it makes to the experiences of this people: to, for instance, significant elements within the world of its concerns. “In the tents of shepherds,” Herder writes, “God is a shepherd, in the circle of a family, a Father” (W5, 968). For Herder, the capacity of religious language to stir and move, to elevate the mind, the heart, and the spirit toward that which cannot be literally described rests on the derivation of its metaphors from things, persons, relations, and activities that hold a meaningful place in the lives of a community. One should, therefore, be a pluralist about the expressive dimension of religion, a position that also accords well with Herder’s metaphysical picture of an immanent God who is revealed in infinite ways.

Ultimately, Herder advocates universal acceptance of the moral message of Christianity, but in such a way that this acceptance can be combined with
commitment to another religion. That is the conclusion of a short piece Herder wrote very late in his life and published in his own journal *Adrastea*, called “Conversations on the Conversion of Indians through our European Christians” (1802). This work imagines a dialogue between an “Asian” and a “European.” The Asian says, at one point, “Leave to everyone his religion, the one that belongs to him,” and the dialogue is, in the end, against conversion. At the same time, the Asian proposes that the religion of Christians will be blessed by Indians if it brings them good things, “without any Indian accepting it formally and historically … all will enjoy the fruit of Christianity, true humanity of pure relations in a happy union of peoples” (W10, 474).

Yet the dialogue also tries to decenter the European gaze, and to bring the cultural presuppositions of that gaze into question, by asking Europeans to imagine themselves as they appear from the point of view of a very different culture. To this end, Herder imagines the Asian as saying:

> Here you appear, wine drinkers and flesh eaters, animal hair on your head, unclean salve in your hair, in what to us is indecent clothing, of a black color which we cannot abide. You place before us books bound in animal skins – we may not and do not want to touch them. You refuse to adopt those forms of politeness, which, within our traditions, even a king does not refuse; for example, removing your unclean shoes (because, as you say, Moses took off his shoes only before the burning bush). You torment and exhaust us everywhere, on road and bridge, resthouse and pagoda, with your importunate preaching, which enters into every little circumstance of our way of life. What else can we do but let you talk, as long as you want, until you – go. (W10, 474–5)

This passage, while ostensibly about religion, nicely encapsulates the fundamental principles of Herder’s understanding of culture, and of the way in which crosscultural interaction should proceed. It emphasizes the differences between peoples in their values, customs, and ways of life. It underlines the fact that these differences are too readily judged as marks of inferiority by those who do not understand them, and especially by Europeans who take themselves to be on a civilizing mission for the rest of the world. It asks, finally, not only that one try to understand the other in his own terms, but also that one try to see oneself from the other’s perspective. Thus, while the passage does speak against attempts to force one’s own cultural norms on others, its critique of an imperialistic ethnocentrism does not exclude the possibility of fruitful dialogue across differences. Rather, here, as in all of Herder’s writings, the goal is to promote the right conditions for such a dialogue. These include an acknowledgment of the
shaping force of culture, along with a willingness to engage, patiently and attentively, in the acts of imaginative interpretation required, not to transcend one’s cultural horizons – an impossible and incoherent aim – but to expand them.

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PLAY AND IRONY: SCHILLER AND SCHLEGEL ON THE LIBERATING PROSPECTS OF AESTHETICS

Daniel Dahlstrom

Friedrich Schiller\(^1\) and Friedrich Schlegel\(^2\) are responsible for shaping much of aesthetics, literature, and criticism for generations of continental philosophers after Kant. Both writers were able to transmit a conviction that freedom in some sense defines what it means to be human and that literature is uniquely capable of embodying and expressing that freedom. For both writers, literature is transformative – personally, morally, and politically transformative. However,

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1. Friedrich Schiller (November 10, 1759–May 9, 1805; born in Marbach; died in Weimar) studied medicine at the Military Academy (Karlsschule) 1773–80, before launching his career as playwright and poet. His plays include: *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*; 1781); *Kaballa und Liebe* (*Intrigue and Love*; 1784); *Don Carlos* (1787); the Wallenstein trilogy (1798–99); *Maria Stuart* (1800); *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (*The Maid of Orleans*; 1801); and *Wilhelm Tell* (1804). Despite the onset of ill health in 1791, which ended a two-year stint as professor of history at University of Jena, Schiller completed *Geschichte des dreißigjährigen Krieges* (*History of the Thirty Years’ War*) in 1792. Fichte, Goethe, Kant, Lessing, and Rousseau, were significant influences.

2. Friedrich Schlegel (March 10, 1772–January 12, 1829; born in Hannover; died in Dresden) studied law at Göttingen and Leipzig (1790–93) before devoting himself to the study of literature and philosophy. Together with his brother, August Wilhelm, he published *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), the main organ of the Romantic movement. Fichte, Goethe, Herder, Kant, Lessing, Plato, Schiller, Spinoza, and his friends in the Romantic movement exercised significant influence on his thinking. His major works include: *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie* (*On the Study of Greek Poetry*; 1797); “Fragments,” “Ideas,” and “Dialogue on Poetry” in *Athenaeum*; the novel *Lucinde* (1799); *Charakteristiken und Kritiken* (Characteristics and critiques; 1801); *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (*On the language and wisdom of India*; 1808); *Geschichte der alten und neueren Literatur, Vorlesungen* (*Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern*; 1815). For translations of key contributions to early Romanticism, see Jochen Schulte-Sasse *et al.* (eds), *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
they differ significantly on how literature liberates and, by extension, on the freedom it expresses. Whereas a holistic notion of play, a semblance of canceling time in time, is at the center of Schiller’s conception of an aesthetic education, Schlegel’s conceives Romantic poetry as a fragmentary combination of wit and irony, an endless, historically riveted striving. Schiller asserts the liberating potential of art’s capacity to express the ideal satisfaction of human striving; Schlegel counters by affirming the equally liberating potential of art’s capacity to disillusion or, better, to remind itself that any such expression reproduces the “endless play of the world.” In the following essay, I attempt to make these differences more precise by reviewing first Schiller’s and then Schlegel’s most influential statements of their positions. The aim of the exercise is to make clear why their aesthetic imaginations in tandem have been (and continue to be) so compelling for philosophical reflection on art and literature.

I. PLAYFUL FREEDOM: SCHILLER ON TRAGEDY, AESTHETIC EDUCATION, AND THE PROMISE OF POETRY

Beyond good and evil in early essays on tragedy

Despite considering comedy superior, Schiller not only wrote tragedies but also made his first major contributions to post-Kantian aesthetics in a series of essays on tragedy, published in the early 1790s. Schiller’s account of tragedy and, in particular, the pleasure that it affords is framed by Lessing’s interpretation of sympathy and Kant’s analysis of dynamic sublimity. Yet Schiller departs significantly from both of his illustrious forebears as he elaborates a notion of freedom that, precisely in being beyond good and evil, is both sublime and an object of sympathy. Following Schiller’s own development, I begin with his account of the sympathies at work in the tragic genre before moving to his construal of the sublimity of the genre.

According to Lessing, the object of our sympathy is precisely the sort of evil that we fear for ourselves; as he puts it, “where this fear is not present, neither is any sympathizing.” On this account, the dramatist, in order to succeed, must present us with circumstances and situations similar to our own. “From this similarity arises the fear that our fate could very easily be just as much like his as we feel ourselves to be like him and it is this fear that sympathy brings, as it were,

3. Friedrich Schlegel, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, Ernst Behler et al. (eds) (Munich: Schöningh, 1958–), vol. 2, 324. Hereafter cited as KFSA followed by the volume and page numbers. All translations from KFSA will be my own.

to fruition.” In Schiller’s early essay “On the Art of Tragedy,” he also emphasizes that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse sympathy. Schiller rejects several explanations of this pleasure: Lucretius’s and Hobbes’s view that it results from comparison with our safety or the view that the pleasure satisfies a love of justice or gratifies a desire for revenge, in the case of someone suffering from some transgression. He contends instead that “the same tender feeling that has us shrinking back from the sight of physical suffering or even from physical expression of moral suffering allows us, in sympathy with the pure moral pain, to feel a pleasure all the sweeter” (Essays 2). In these opening paragraphs Schiller distinguishes two sorts of sympathy in terms of what he takes to be the two competing sources of pleasure and pain: sensual and moral. Like Lessing, he recognizes the inherent pleasure of emotions and the theater’s capacity to communicate these emotions on one or more of these levels. He is not about to deny that sympathy with another’s suffering and the pleasure afforded it can be largely sensual. However, to the degree that moral capacities get the upper hand in someone, she is more likely to be sensitive to the pleasure that, thanks to a connection with morality, combines with even the most painful state. “Such a frame of mind is most capable of enjoying the pleasure of compassion” (4). Otherwise, the tragic stage’s only appeal would be the sensational and the lurid, the sheer spectacle of gallows, mortal combat, and cries of anguish.

Schiller accordingly countenances, at least prima facie, two types of sympathy, that is, sympathy for someone’s sheer physical pain or “pure moral pain.” The two sorts of sympathy, both of which can be found in the dynamics holding between the stage and the audience, are in inverse relation to one another, and the degree of sympathy with the “pure moral pain” as well as the degree of pleasure entailed by that sympathy are relative to the moral state or character of the sympathizer. Schiller offers little argument for these controversial claims; instead he seems content merely to register the fact that some of the paramount pleasures afforded by the tragic genre depend on moral sensibilities on the part of the audience. Yet the question remains why this sort of sympathy is pleasing and why this sympathetic pleasure is in proportion to the sorrowfulness of “tragic emotions.”

The answer, Schiller claims, is the fact that the assault on our sensuous life is the condition for igniting the power of our minds to act, that is, our rationality,

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5. Friedrich Schiller, Essays, Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (eds) (New York: Continuum, 1993), 6, 16, 19, 20. Hereafter, all citations from Schiller’s Essays will be cited parenthetically by page number from this edition unless otherwise noted.
and this rational “activity produces the pleasure that we take in sympathetic suffering” (5). Sympathizing with someone battling their natural, selfish interests satisfies or at least approximates vicariously satisfying an urge in us to do likewise. For this satisfaction to take place, Schiller adds, there must be (i) a display of conflict and suffering, paradigmatically between moral interests and self-interest, and (ii) a rational desire to resolve the conflict in the favor of the moral interests. As Schiller puts it, “the pleasure that sorrowful, tragic emotions give us originates in the satisfaction of the urge to act” (5). We may, to be sure, fear for someone else or for ourselves, sympathies requiring a communication of suffering and a degree of identification with the victim of suffering. But the aim of tragedy is not to produce sympathy with someone else’s pain either because we fear for them (as Mendelssohn contends) or for ourselves (as Lessing contends). Tragedy’s aim is to arouse sympathy with a protagonist’s moral battle with suffering since that sympathy is preeminently pleasurable.

That very state of mind, therefore, that above all proclaims this power and awakens this higher activity, is the most purposeful to a rational being and the most satisfying for the instinct to act. Hence, it must be linked with a superior degree of pleasure …. The particular art that establishes the pleasure of sympathy as its purpose is called the art of tragedy in the most general sense of the term. (6)

Schiller links sympathy directly to our capacity for empathy, our ability to put ourselves in someone else’s situation, an ability that requires in turn that we have already been in the same sort of situation. Furthermore, the object of our sympathy must have the same nature as we do. So the pleasure of sympathy is the pleasure that derives from putting ourselves in a condition or situation in which someone like ourselves finds herself and doing so in such a way that we share in the action that is her moral response to that condition or situation. Herein, moreover, lies the distinctiveness of the genre. Whereas lyrical literature depicts feelings, tragedy depicts actions; history depicts actions, too, but to instruct and not, like tragedy, to arouse sympathy.

Given this summary of what Schiller means when he says that the aim of tragedy is to arouse sympathy, we can see how clearly it departs from Lessing’s view on the matter. For Schiller it is not fear for ourselves, indeed, not even fear, affection, or love for others, that underlies the sort of sympathy that he regards as proper to tragedy. Tragic emotions, the emotions that we feel in sympathizing with a tragic figure, are pleasing because they vicariously satisfy and thus confirm our capacities as rational, moral agents to take charge of our natural condition and, in that sense, in the very struggle, to transcend or move beyond who we have been. It satisfies our drive to act, our urge to exert control
over ourselves and our emotions by means of a capacity that is distinctly ours as human beings. We sympathize with protagonists on a moral plane because we identify with them, not in their victory or defeat and not, as we shall see, in the goodness or evil of their ways, but simply in their moral struggle as such.

Adapting the terminology of Kant and other late-eighteenth-century figures, Schiller also characterizes this moral struggle as something sublime. When Schiller first addresses the notion of sublimity, he follows Kant in sharply contrasting representations of what is stirring and sublime from representations of beauty. What distinguishes representations of sublime objects is precisely the fact that they bring about a pleasure from something displeasing or, equivalently, provide us with a feeling of purposiveness that presupposes something counter-purposive. A sublime theme or object, for example, makes us feel the pain of our impotence (Ohnmacht) on the one hand, and exult at the existence of a power in us superior (Übermacht) to nature on the other. That pained feeling that seems to serve no natural purpose turns out in fact to be a sensual condition for, and thus in purposive harmony with, a higher, rational capacity within us.

In “On the Sublime,” Schiller revises Kant’s notion of the dynamic sublime into what he calls the “practically sublime,” the moral neutralization of nature’s physical power over us, exemplified by a protagonist’s moral defiance of pain, suffering, and other assaults on her natural well-being and even her life. Schiller sometimes speaks of nature as sublime, other times of the resistance to nature as sublime. But in either case, the sublime object is such because it “discloses the very power within us that does not feel itself bound to these conditions” in nature and this very disclosure is the ground of the pleasure afforded by the sublime (25–6). Indeed, according to Schiller, the experience of the practically sublime not only discloses, but also expands our power. In this connection he cites Kant’s own characterization that “nature is judged to be sublime, not insofar as she arouses fear, but because she calls up in us a force [Kraft] of ours (that is not of nature).” Schiller adds that the force in question is not our capacity, as natural beings, to master nature by natural means, but instead our moral ability, as rational beings, to withstand it. The sublime object must be frightening without inciting actual fear, since “only in a detached consideration of something and through the feeling of the activity inside ourselves can we take pleasure in something sublime” (29). The playwright necessarily walks a fine line here. She must represent scenes and characters that, on the one hand, are vivid enough to produce something analogous to genuine fear without actually frightening the audience and, on the other hand, disclose a humanity intrepid and defiant of nature. “Hence, any object that shows us our impotence as natural

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beings is practically-sublime, as long as it also discloses a capacity within us to resist that is of a completely different order” (35).

In this general account of the dynamically sublime, Schiller makes no mention of sympathy. However, he subsequently distinguishes two types of such sublimity, contemplative and pathetic. The former consists merely in some power of nature superior to us, that we are left to contemplate or not in relation to our physical or moral state. But in the case of the pathetically sublime where we are presented with images of people suffering the catastrophic consequences of this power, Schiller says that we “suffer sympathetically.” “The image of another’s suffering, combined with the emotion and consciousness of the moral freedom within us, is pathetically sublime” (42). Here we see the convergence of the themes of sympathy and sublimity in Schiller’s account of tragedy, a convergence that Kant eschews – at least in so many words.7 We sympathize with someone painfully struggling in a crisis because that sympathy is pleasing and it is pleasing because it reconfirms our own power to act. The image of precisely that struggle is sublime and, hence, tragedy is defined by the sublimity of its themes.

Not to be overlooked here is the crucial dimension common to sympathy and sublimity: the dimension of power. We are pleased by the sympathy, allegedly because it reconfirms a power that is distinctively human, and that sympathy reconfirms this power because we are sympathizing with someone who displays it by resisting any forfeiture or surrender of her control not only to something or someone else but also to a part of her that, in the form of instincts, is already under the sway of the power of nature. This emphasis on power and, indeed, a clash of powers, an emphasis already pronounced in Kant’s account of sublimity,8 is particularly evident in Schiller’s essay “On the Pathetic,” where he insists that, while the mere depiction of suffering can never be the aim of art, it is the necessary means of portraying a human power invincible to that suffering. “The first law of tragedy,” he tells us, is to depict suffering, the second law to depict “moral resistance” to it (48). In contrast to physical resistance, the pitting of one natural instinct against another, this moral resistance to suffering is resistance born of a commitment to an “idea of reason.”9 In what may well be a mild rebuke of Kant’s views in this connection, Schiller thinks that the theater is capable of portraying this commitment through depiction of human phenomena that are contrary to or not determined by instinct, namely, “phenomena that are subject to the will’s influence and control or that we at least can regard as such, that is to

7. See ibid., 157–8.
8. See ibid., 147–8.
9. Here again Schiller is simply aping Kant; see ibid., 148–9.
say, phenomena that the will could have prevented” (52). The tragedian has the job of presenting both suffering and resistance or, as Schiller also puts it, pathos and sublimity. Indeed, the more violent the passion expresses itself in the animal realm without being able to maintain the same force in the human realm, the more evident the latter. “The pathos and the power of tragedy lie precisely in this reference to something transcending sensuality” (53 n.).

At the same time Schiller refuses to infer that the moral resistance must be successful. The ethical propensity or “independence of spirit in a state of suffering” can take two forms, negative or positive, depending on whether a person's suffering has no effect on his moral disposition or issues from his moral character. The former scenario yields what he calls a “sublime composure,” the latter a “sublime action.” His list of portraits of sublime composure includes Milton’s Lucifer and Medea. Paradigms of sublime actions include not only those who suffer for doing their duty, but also those who suffer for violating their duty.11

If Schiller had stopped here, we might be justified in reckoning his view of the tragic hero quite traditional, fully subject to moral considerations of good and evil. But he takes the further step of distinguishing the sublime, entailing evidence of a capacity for morality, from the morally sublime as the actualization of that capacity (61). While the morally sublime is morally satisfying, the sublime alone is aesthetically pleasing. The two senses of sublimity may converge; for example, in the case of Leonidas’s self-sacrifice at Thermopylae, “we applaud the fact that Leonidas actually made the heroic decision that he did, but we shout for joy, we are positively thrilled that he could make it” (63). By contrast, Peregrinus Protheus’s self-immolation at Olympia produces a negative moral assessment and a positive aesthetic one. From a moral point of view, he violated the duty of self-preservation, but from an aesthetic point of view, he set aside the interest of self-preservation.

Schiller’s differentiation of the aesthetic pleasure afforded by the sublime from the moral satisfaction of morally sublime actions is in keeping with his insistence throughout his career that the purpose of the theatrical art is pleasure and not moral improvement. At the same time, as in his On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters (Aesthetic Letters), he cannot resist muddying the waters somewhat by pointing out certain advantages of aesthetic judgments over moral judgments and according a more liberating potential to the former than to the latter.

10. According to Kant, though ideas cannot, strictly speaking, be represented, the sublime can determine the mind to think “the unattainability of nature as a presentation of ideas” (Kant, Critique of Judgment, 151).

11. In “On the Art of Tragedy,” Schiller maintains that our compassion is no less weak when it is mixed with revulsion at the object of sympathy (Essays 8).
In making aesthetic judgments we veer from actual things to possibilities and rise up from the individual to the species, while in making moral judgments we descend from the possible to the actual and enclose the species within the limitations of the individual. No wonder, then, that we feel ourselves broadened in aesthetic judgments, but confined and restricted in moral judgments. (64)

Iago, Richard III, and Medea are not merely moral failures, violating the strictures of our moral imaginations, but for all that they are aesthetically pleasing, sublime subjects of tragic theater. This account of a sublimity beyond good and evil further embellishes Schiller’s explanation of the sympathy that the tragic stage calls for. We sympathize with the moral potency of scoundrels and sinners no less than that of heroes and saints. Schiller adds that the experience is itself enriching: “It is merely the capacity for a similar dutifulness that we share with him and the fact that we see our own capacity in his that explain why we feel our spiritual power elevated” (66). Although Schiller does not specify the precise sense of that enhancement (e.g. aesthetic, moral, or both), he clearly puts great stock in the art’s capacity to “shape humans morally” – not directly, but indirectly. That indirection follows, for Schiller, from the fact that art’s direct aim must be pleasure not moral edification and that art directly influences the character, not the actions of people.

The two direct aims converge. In her attempts to please, the dramatic artist comes to realize that the greatest pleasure is afforded by creating sublime characters with whom we can sympathize, protagonists caught up in a moral conflict, because this sort of sympathy confirms and even enhances a power within us, as rational beings, to transcend or overcome ourselves as creatures of instinct. What is striking about Schiller’s conception of tragedy is precisely this affirmation of a sublimity that is beyond good and evil, the sublimity of a tragic figure with whom we can sympathize and who, for that reason, pleases us aesthetically even if we find him or her morally repulsive. The Nietzschean ring of this aesthetic freedom and the possibilities of self-overcoming it presents are patent.12

As far as his [the poet’s] interest is concerned, it makes no difference if he intends to take his heroes from the class of pernicious or of good characters, since the very measure of power required for the good can quite often, for that very reason, be demanded of something evil. When we make aesthetic judgments, we focus far more

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*12. For discussion of Nietzsche’s aesthetics, see the essays by Daniel Conway and Gary Shapiro in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
on power than on its orientation and far more on freedom than on lawfulness. (67–8)

Not surprisingly, Schiller also places this distinctively aesthetic freedom at the core of his project of a humanizing education, for which aesthetics provides both means and end.

**Aesthetic education**

Schiller published *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (hereafter *Letter*(s)), his most celebrated contribution to aesthetics and, in particular, to the age-old question of its moral and political significance, in three installments (*Letters* 1–9, 10–16, and 17–27, respectively). In the first, largely diagnostic installment, Schiller identifies the dire plight of humanity, particularly in the wake of the failed promise – in his eyes – of the French Revolution. A lack of moral readiness on the part of the people is allegedly responsible for that failure. But this lack exemplifies a basic dilemma confronting politics and political theorists and animating the *Letters*. For while the character of a society’s political life depends on the character of its people, the reverse is no less true. But if politics itself cannot provide a way out of this conundrum, then nor can reason; as Schiller puts it pointedly, why in an “enlightened age” are we still barbarians? Nor would history suggest that the arts provide a way out of the dilemma. Echoing Rousseau, Schiller acknowledges that “in almost every epoch of history one finds humanity diminished where the arts blossom and taste rules” (*Letter* 10). Nevertheless, on this very question of the moral and political efficacy of the arts, Schiller parts ways with the Genevan in no uncertain terms. “If man is ever to solve the problem of politics in practice,” Schiller contends, “he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom” (*Letter* 2).

There are at least two reasons motivating this contention. First, in the Greek world, Schiller notes, there is historical precedent for the opposite of the disharmonies characteristic of modern culture (disharmonies between the senses and reason, between the individual and the mechanisms of economic and political life

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14. Although Schiller sometimes (e.g. *Letter* 14) ascribes freedom and morality solely to the rational side of human nature, the overriding sense of freedom at work in the *Letters* is freedom as self-mastery, equally liberated from the tyranny of nature and the tyranny of ideas. In a footnote to *Letter* 19, Schiller acknowledges the possible misunderstandings caused by these two notions of freedom.
as a whole). In light of his differences with Schlegel's Romanticism (see below), it bears noting that Schiller's admiration for Greek culture, while profound, was measured, owing to his sense of its limitations and the cost of moving beyond them born by subsequent ages. “The appearance of Greek humanity was indisputedly a maximum that on this level could neither continue nor rise higher” (Letter 6). The second reason why, despite Rousseau's historical argument, Schiller is more sanguine about the prospects for educating humanity aesthetically is his rejection of that argument's working assumption of an empirical conception of beauty. In the second installment of the Letters Schiller proposes instead to pursue a “transcendental path” to a purely rational conception of beauty as “a necessary condition of humanity,” with the explanation that this departure from concrete phenomena is required to establish “a secure, unshakable ground of knowledge” (Letter 10).

Schiller contends that, for every human being, there is at once an enduring person and a transient condition, each dependent on the other and demanding its due. As a result, there are two basic, ostensibly antithetical laws of human nature, that of “externalizing” (realizing) everything within the person and “formalizing” everything outside it. We are accordingly “driven” by two opposing forces, a “sensuous” drive toward the material content of life’s individual, momentary sensations and a “formal” drive toward freedom in the form of universal, eternal laws (Letters 11–12). Inasmuch as each drive acts as a constraint on the other (the sensuous drive as a physical, the formal drive as a moral constraint), culture’s “task,” as Schiller puts it, is to intensify each drive to the point where they have a moderating effect on one another. While Schiller’s notion of formal drive’s connection with universal laws is plainly of Kantian inspiration, he takes cues from Fichte’s conception of reciprocity to elaborate a notion of freedom that requires, not the subordination of one drive to the other, but their coordination.

Without denying the utopian character of this liberating task of coordination, Schiller counters skepticism toward it by invoking the experience of play. Construing play as an experience in which both drives, that is, feelings and thought alike, merge, he declares that “man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays” (Letter 15). Whereas the sensuous drive is preoccupied with life and the formal drive with form, the play drive, as Schiller calls it, reconciles these disparate drives in its preoccupation with its own distinct object, beauty, defined as a living form. Thanks to this definition, Hegel later emphasizes, Schiller

15. For sources of Schiller’s use of play (Lessing, Kant, Ramdohr), see Frederick Beiser, Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-examination (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 142–3; see Letter 27 for a genealogy of play, extending from physical play (in overflowing nature) to free play (in human fantasy and association) and, ultimately, aesthetic play, capable of transforming sexual desire.
perform the “great service of having broken through the Kantian subjectivity and abstraction and having dared to go beyond it, grasping unity and reconciliation as the truth intellectually and realizing it artistically.”16 In this aesthetics of play, beauty cannot be adequately understood in strictly subjective or objective terms. As a form, it points to the subjective or, more precisely, imaginative dimension (spatial and/or temporal configurations) in terms of which Kant characterizes beauty. But for Schiller, the playwright-philosopher, this form is not an empty form without purpose, the preoccupation of a tasteful play of faculties. Instead, beauty is a living form and only by virtue of this objective, organic, and purposeful dimension does it yield the experience of play that is definitive of human nature, the key to the means and end of human existence.17

The real, historical prospects for an aesthetic education of mankind – for a revolution not only in name – turn on the possibilities of creating playful experiences of beauty, experiences capable of generating, regenerating, and consummating the freedom that is, at least ideally, the destiny of mankind.

There remains, however, the considerable problem of explaining how the playful experience of beauty is possible at all, given that it allegedly unites (coordinates and facilitates) opposites (matter and form, passivity and activity, sensuousness and thought). In the final installment of the Letters – and in a move that anticipates much of German idealism and Romanticism – Schiller responds to this problem by invoking the will. The noncontradictory unity of the human spirit resides in the will inasmuch as it is not merely distinct from the two basic, opposed drives but also enjoys complete freedom relative to both of them. Although opposed, each of two basic drives pursues its own object and, hence, does not act directly on the other. Schiller accordingly declares: “In a human being there is no other power than his will” (Letter 19). In a direct departure from Kant, Schiller understands this freedom of the will not as the freedom proper to someone with intelligence alone, but as a freedom grounded in the “mixed nature” of human beings and, indeed, as an effect of nature, one capable of being furthered or thwarted by natural means. What Schiller dubs the “aesthetic condition” negates and is accordingly free of the sensuous and rational determinations characteristic of our physical and moral conditions respectively (Letter 20). Yet, precisely by being – like the sublime object of tragedy – beyond moral constraints, beauty has the capacity to restore our freedom regularly to us, while providing a paradigm of self-determination arising out of indeterminacy.

17. “Sie [Schönheit] ist also zwar Form, weil wir sie betrachten; zugleich aber ist sie Leben, weil wir sie fühlen. Mit einem Wort: sie ist zugleich unser Zustand und unsere Tat” (Letter 25/Essays 164).
Indeed, the aesthetic condition is necessary if human beings are ever to move beyond “the dismal state of nature” and the demands of “animal self-love”; in other words, human beings are sensual and, hence, cannot be made rational until they have first been aesthetic (Letters 23–4). In yet another, obvious counterpoint to Rousseau,18 Schiller accordingly declares: “Man in his physical condition merely suffers the dominion of nature; he emancipates himself from this dominion in the aesthetic condition, and he acquires mastery over it in the moral” (Letters 24).

Schiller considers the transition to the aesthetic condition the more difficult of the two transitions (inasmuch as its emancipatory character anticipates the moral condition). He explains the transition through the notion of “aesthetic semblance.” When basic needs have been met, human beings tend to indulge in the sheer semblances (Scheine) of things, a tendency underlying the play-drive and the mimetic proclivity to shape sights and sounds into an “aesthetic semblance” pleasing in itself. The very essence of arts is semblance and semblance is aesthetic only if it is “honest (expressly renounces all claims to reality) and autonomous (dispenses with all support from reality)” (Letter 26). To the extent that aesthetic semblance takes hold for individuals or whole peoples, it performs the essential, humanizing task of demarcating and securing the distinctiveness of truth and morality. On the final pages of the Letters, Schiller draws the political consequences of his account as he introduces the notion of “the realm of aesthetic semblance” or the “aesthetic state” (ästhetischer Staat). Beauty's capacity to transform sexual desire into love also signals its capacity to resolve competing desires in society at large. Only in an aesthetic state can we confront each other, not as enforcers of our respective rights (“the fearful kingdom of forces”) or as executors of our wills (“the sacred kingdom of laws”), but as free and equal citizens: “the third joyous kingdom of play and of semblance” (Letter 27).

Modernity and the promise of poetry

Schiller’s final major work in aesthetics, On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry (1795–96) contrasts the naturalness of naive poets, typified by ancient writers such as Homer, with the more self-conscious and, in this sense “sentimental” style typical of modern writers such as Ariosto. In this somewhat idiosyncratic use of the terms, “naive” signifies a direct, not an unsophisticated manner of writing; “sentimental” does not mean mawkish but self-reflective. Whereas the naive style is straightforward with an air of objectivity and without any intrusion by the author, the sentimental poets cannot refrain from introducing their own subjective feelings and opinions into the writing. Schiller puts the difference

18. See Beiser, Schiller as Philosopher, 157–61.
in terms of naturalness (“The poet either is nature or will seek it. The former constitutes the ‘naïve,’ the latter the ‘sentimental’ poet”), task (“The sentimental poet does not complete his task, but his task is an infinite one”), cause-and-effect (“Sentimental poetry is the progeny of detachment and stillness, inviting us to them; naïve poetry is the child of life and it also leads us back to life”), dependency (“Thus, while the naïve genius is in need of some external support, the genius of the sentimental poet consists in nourishing and purifying himself on his own”), and one-sidedness (“spontaneity overrides sensitivity in the sentimental poetic spirit as much as sensitivity overrides spontaneity in naïve poetry”) (Essays 200, 234–5, 241). Perhaps the central contrast lies in the fact that the sentimental poet alone calls attention to a particular sense of the difference between reality and his ideas and idealizations. She does so by mocking reality in pathetic or playful satires, by mourning the absence or loss of the ideal in elegies, or by celebrating its future realization in idylls.

Despite frequently casting the difference between naïve and sentimental poetry in historical terms, Schiller traces it to antithetical modes of poetic consciousness, ancient or modern, and even between contrary traits within a single poet (e.g. Goethe). Prefiguring Hegelian dialectics, he also introduces the difference in terms of a journey that individuals as well as mankind as a whole must make: “Nature makes a human being one with himself, art separates and divides him; by means of the ideal he returns to oneness” (202). Revisiting this parallel at the end of the essay, he concedes “that neither the naïve nor the sentimental character, considered in itself, can completely exhaust the ideal of beautiful humanity, an ideal that can only emerge from the intimate union of both” (249). Schiller is less sanguine about the prospect of such a union than he is at the conclusion of Letters. Underlying the poetic difference between the naïve and sentimental is, he submits, a fundamental and debilitating psychological antagonism resolved only in “a few, rare individuals” – the difference between permitting nature (realists) or reason (idealist) to determine theory and practice. Indeed, the essay ends with a clear echo of the Terror as he grimly notes the far greater danger presented by the false idealism of a visionary than by the false realism of those who only believe what they can touch. Yet even on these final pages Schiller remains confident in poetry’s paradigmatic capacity to reconcile basic oppositions. The sides of all such oppositions, epitomized poetically by the difference between the naïve and the sentimental, ultimately come

19. Comedy “moves toward a more important goal”: freedom from passion and the clarity, composure, and good humor entailed by that freedom (Schiller, Essays, 209).
together – “in their difference from and need of one another” – in the concept of the poetic (249).

II. IRONIC FREEDOM: SCHLEGEL ON ROMANTIC POETRY

Getting over the obsession with objectivity: explaining the Romantic turn

*The Greeks and the Romans* (finished in December 1795, although not published until January 1797) is the fruit of Schlegel's early efforts to do for Greek poetry what Winckelmann had done for the plastic arts of antiquity, namely, demonstrate its paradigmatic capacity to exhibit the ideal, objective form of beauty operative in nature. In the preface, Schlegel acknowledges that his study would have been much improved, had he been able to read *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* before his study went to press. He notes, in particular, how Schiller's essay shed new light on the limitations of classical poetry and expanded his insight into “interesting” poetry (KFSA 1, 209). Schlegel uses “interesting” as a metonym for “modern” (a usage that springs in part from his appropriation of Kantian conceptions of the disinterestedness and freedom involved in the experience of beauty, to characterize Greek poetry's achievement). “Interesting” denotes an unflattering and ultimately incongruous characteristic of the goal of modern poetry: unflattering because it is a criterion for restless, self-absorbed moderns unsatisfied with the ancient, objective standard of beauty, and incongruous because it is an unlimited and subjective, unprincipled and ultimately unattainable goal. In other words, for a certain stripe of modern aesthetes, Schlegel contends, it is more important for art to be interesting than for it to be beautiful, even if what makes it interesting is quite individualistic or subjective and permanently transient, not least for the individual who initially finds it interesting. In this sense, mixing genres and even mixing philosophy with poetry can make for interesting art.21 The dominance of this orientation toward interesting poetry is, Schlegel submits, a self-destructive and thus passing crisis of taste.22 By contrast, as Schlegel puts it, “Greek poetry has actually attained the ultimate limit of the natural formation of art and taste, this supreme epitome of free beauty”; for all times, it is “the paragon of art and taste,” containing “a complete collection of examples for all original concepts of art and taste” (KFSA 1, 287–8, 293, 307). Not surprisingly, Schiller characterized this early work of Schlegel as a bit of “Graecomania.”


22. KFSA 1, 211–15, 228, 245–9, 275, 318, 311.
However, in the course of 1796, the same year that marks the inception of a feud with Schiller (in which neither author seems to have distinguished himself), and even before the publication of his early paean to Greek poetry, Schlegel is already altering considerably his attitude toward modern poetry and the prospects of an aesthetics with transhistorical, objective principles of criticism. In the so-called Lyceumfragmente of 1797, he explicitly criticizes the obsession with objectivity (Objektivitätswut) characteristic of his earlier studies and begins to contrast modern poetry favorably with ancient (e.g. “In the ancients one sees the completed letter of all poetry; in the moderns one intimates the spirit coming to be”; “The ancients are masters of poetic abstraction; the modern have more poetic speculation”) (KFSA 2, 155, 158, 160). In publications over the next two years (see below) that further repudiate neoclassicist tendencies in poetry and criticism, he gives his most potent and influential declaration of the ideal of Romantic poetry as the “only” poetry – “since in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic” (KFSA 2, 183).

To what extent a reading of Schiller’s study of “naive” and “sentimental” poetry prompted the change in Schlegel’s attitudes toward ancient and modern literature – or even a template for his contrast of classical and Romantic poetry – is a longstanding controversy traceable to remarks by Goethe. What is uncontroversial is the far greater impact that the terms “Classical” and “Romantic” have exercised on literary studies, even if Schlegel extols their harmonization and, indeed, characterizes the outlook of Romantic poetry as “a classicism growing without limit” (KFSA 2, 183, 298–9). To be sure, the sentimental poet, like the Romantic, is bent on an infinite striving, a goal exceeding the self-sufficiency and completeness exemplified by naive or Classical poetry. Yet, while similar concerns preoccupied Schiller and Schlegel, there are also patent differences, epitomized – as I argue below – by the contrast between play and irony respectively.

Given these differences, there is reason to look elsewhere for the sources of the shift in Schlegel’s attitudes. Frederick Beiser argues that this shift can be traced, not so much to Schiller’s influence, as to philosophical concerns of an epistemological cast. Beiser accordingly pins the shift on Schlegel’s growing disillusionment with what he originally took to be the promise of Fichte’s foundationalism (his “claims to first principles and a complete system”) for establishing the objective science of aesthetics and criticism that eluded Kant.²⁵ In reflections in the winter of 1796–97, Schlegel comes to the conclusion that an infinite regress plagues any pretense to first principles, and that we, nevertheless, can and should endlessly perfect our principles of criticism without exception, doing so in a process of self-criticism that is an ongoing and open-ended part of inquiry.²⁶

For every concept, as for every proof, one can ask for a concept in turn and a proof of it. For this reason, philosophy, like an epic poem, must begin in the middle, and it is impossible to present it and give an account of it piece by piece in such a way that the first [principle] is completely justified and explained. It is a whole and the path to knowing it is not a straight line but a circle. (KFSA 18, 518)

*Progressive universal poetry: witty, fragmentary, and transcendental*

This process of self-critical writing requires what Schlegel understands as *wit* (*Witz*): an inspired capacity to discern unseen similarities and communicate such “abbreviated wisdom” in a form that befits it as an individual insight into an infinite, developing whole (KFSA 18, 89). Schlegel accordingly characterizes wit, on the one hand, as “an explosion of a tethered spirit,” the work of “a thick, fiery reason,” “a prophetic capacity,” what the Romans called having “nose” for things, the “principle and organ of universal philosophy,” and, on the other hand, as “the unconditioned social spirit.”²⁷

The suitable form for communicating this wit – at once compendious, complementary, and in need of complementing – is the *fragment*. A fragment is not simply an anecdote, epigram, or aphorism – each of which might be understood as complete in itself in splendid isolation. Despite similarities with these forms of writing, fragments are self-conscious indications of incompleteness, gestures to a whole that can only be fathomed, if at all, by an endless,

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²⁶. KFSA 18, 3–15, 505–21. Notably, after early misgivings with Kant’s lack of principles for criticism, Schlegel can be seen as returning to a Kantian position here.

²⁷. KFSA 2, 148, 158, 159, 163, 200; on the meanings of “*Witz*,” see Eichner, “Einleitung,” KFSA 2: XXXVI–XLI.
precarious approximation. In this sense, the fragment is the signature style of some of Schlegel’s most influential writings, including his entries to Athenaeum (e.g. “Fragments,” “Ideas”). This journal, the main literary and philosophical organ of what came to be known as the “Romantic school” or “early German Romanticism,” is the fruit of a circle of close friends: Novalis, the Schlegel brothers, Caroline Schlegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Ludwig Tieck, Dorothea Veit, Wilhelm Wackenroder.

Shortly after insisting (in the Athenaeum Fragments) on the normative character of any definition of poetry (Fragment 114), Schlegel issues his most famous gloss of Romantic poetry, characterizing it as “a progressive universal poetry” (Fragment 116). In a direct reversal of views expressed in The Greeks and the Romans, he challenges traditional concerns about preserving purity of genre (epic, drama, and lyric) and construes a broad range of works (including the novel, essay, and even some philosophical and historical writings) as poetry in the proper sense of the term. The universal character of Romantic poetry lies, at least in part, in its refusal to identify poetry with any particular genre or marks of a piece of a writing that can be simply read off it (e.g. meter, rhyme, etc.). But the sense of its “universality” extends even further since its aim is not simply to unite the separate genres and put poetry in contact with philosophy, but – among other things – to mingle and fuse “poetry and prose, genius and criticism, the poetry of the educated and the poetry of the people, to make poetry alive and social and to make life and society poetic, to poeticize wit, to fill and saturate the forms of art with matters of genuine cultural value” (KFSA 2, 182).

The progressive character of Romantic, that is, genuine poetry is tied to the fact that it is self-reflective. Self-reflection is a transcendental notion in the Kantian sense that it is the condition that enables (and accordingly ranges over, transcends) every other consciousness (unreflected or not, self-styled as poetic or not), and in the Fichtean sense that, unlike any other consciousness or object of consciousness, its reality consists precisely in its ideal, self-reflective activity.

28. August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845), Friedrich’s brother and coeditor of the Athenaeum, is also known for his contributions to German Romanticism, not least through his criticism, poetry, and gifted translations of Calderon, Shakespeare, and other Romance-language authors. Through the widespread publication of his lectures on fine art, dramatic arts, and literature, given in Berlin and Vienna, he played a major role in spreading the basic ideas of Romanticism across Europe. In 1818 he became a professor of literature and art history at the University of Bonn where he would spend the rest of his life, producing notable works of criticism and inaugurating studies of Sanskrit writings.

29. Heinrich Heine, Die romantische Schule (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1833); Rudolf Haym, Die Romantische Schule: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Geistes (Berlin: Gaertner, 1870); Behler, German Romantic Literary Theory, 31ff. The Athenaeum contains, in addition to the noted fragments, Schlegel’s notable study of Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, essays on philosophy and religion, and “Dialogue on Poetry.”
Schlegel incorporates each of these senses of “transcendental” into his understanding of Romantic poetry: “There is a kind of poetry whose essence lies in the relation between the ideal and real, and which therefore by analogy to philosophical jargon, should be called ‘transcendental poetry’” (KFSA 2, 204). Just as any transcendental philosophy, to be worthy of the name, must be critical, so, too, in whatever transcendental poetry depicts, it must depict itself as well and “be at once poetry and poetry of poetry” (ibid.).

At the same time, however, progressive as it is, Romantic poetry’s transcendental character also differs fundamentally from those Kantian and Fichtean senses. It differs in being polyvalent, algorithmic, and historical. That is to say, the poem not only is the reflection of the poet and the poetry but also holds the potential for reflection of all sorts on that reflection or, better, for endless, ongoing, and thereby “progressive” self-reflection. Romantic poetry can, as he puts it, “hover on the wings of poetic reflection, in the middle between the portrayer and the portrayed, free of all real and ideal self-interest, raising that self-reflection again and again to a higher power, multiplying it in an endless series of mirrors.”

For Schlegel, it bears iterating, Romantic poetry is by no means the antipode to philosophy; to the contrary, it is integral to philosophy’s telos. “For in philosophy the path to science goes through art alone, just as the poet, by contrast, becomes an artist only through science” (KFSA 2, 216). In this sense, Schlegel’s understanding of the transcendental character of Romantic poetry directly challenges the transcendental philosophies of Kant and Fichte. Just as Hamann twenty years earlier chastised Kant for thinking of categories and concepts independently of the historical language in which they are expressed, so Schlegel’s identification of the poetry with transcendental self-reflectiveness challenges the purity of the transcendental self-consciousness, whether it be conceived as the ever-present possibility and thus enabling condition of consciousness of objects (Kant) or as the reality that posits itself in the very act of thinking (Fichte). As noted earlier, he compares philosophy to an epic poem, always having to start in medias res, a whole that we can come to know only by a circular path. In this spirit, anticipating views that figure strongly for the next two centuries in philosophy (think of the Husserlian zigzag or the hermeneutic circle), he criticizes the philosophy of his contemporaries for being too linear, for “not being sufficiently cyclical” (KFSA 2, 171).

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30. Schlegel, KFSA 2, 182–3. As for the title “Romantic,” it bears recalling that Roman is the German for “novel” and that the Romantics appreciated highly imaginative, genre-mixing, and ironic fantasies typified by such Romance-language writers as Dante and Cervantes – the author of “the only thoroughly Romantic novel,” in Schlegel’s view (KFSA 16, 176); Behler, *German Romantic Literary Theory*, 168–9.
Schlegel’s repudiation of his earlier obsession with objectivity does not entail
that criticism is unprincipled. Although critics lack access to “some universal
ideal,” they can determine the “individual ideal of each work” and ought to
judge the work in terms of that ideal; in other words, “criticism compares a
work with its own ideal” (KFSA 16, 179, 270). Determining that ideal, while
never complete, requires that we understand the poet, indeed, understand the
poet better than she understands herself, including her confusions. At once
echoing Pliny and presenting the basic argument for comparative literature,
Schlegel adds that we can understand the poet in such a manner only if we
are poets ourselves and immerse ourselves in the poet’s history and historical
context, including the entire literary repertoire on which the poet, wittingly or
unwittingly, draws.

Irony as transcendental buffoonery, religion, and the realist turn

The vocation of man, Schlegel writes, is to wed the infinite with the finite, even
though their complete coincidence is “eternally unattainable.” What sustains
and arouses the feeling of their “inextinguishable conflict” is irony, the “sublime
urbanity of the Socratic muse” and “an actually transcendental buffoonery”
(KFSA 2, 152, 160). The images of both Socrates and the buffoon of the Italian
stage capture the sense of someone overlooking the scene from within, rising
above (transcending) everything conditioned in it, including one’s own art, in
the process destroying any illusions about it, by mimicking its mannerisms
(buffoonery). In just this manner a sense of irony informs the process (subjectiv-
ty) and the work (objectivity) of Romantic poetry. As the task of sustaining
the feeling of the conflict, irony demands of the poet and the poem a specific
sort of self-discipline, a self-restraint that is “the result of self-creation and self-
destruction.” This sense of irony is also a direct expression of the fusion of
philosophy and poetry mentioned earlier. For while Schlegel regards philos-
ophy as irony’s “homeland” and irony as a “philosophical capacity,” he thinks
that poetry can elevate itself to it and, indeed, it is the self-limiting, “skeptical”
character of irony that liberates the poet from overestimating her creation, from

*31. For a discussion of this principle of understanding the author better than she understands
herself in the context of hermeneutics, see the essay by Eric Sean Nelson in The History of
Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
32. Schlegel, KFSA 2, 241; 16, 168; 18, 63. Schlegel exemplifies this sort of criticism himself in
essays on Boccacio, Forster, Jacobi, Lessing, Wieland, and, above all, Goethe.
33. Schlegel, Neue philosophische Schriften, J. Körner (ed.) (Frankfurt: Schulte-Bulmke, 1935),
368.
34. KFSA 2, 149, 172. Schlegel interprets the naive as what is or seems “natural, individual, or
classic” to the point of irony, a constant alternation of self-creation and self-destruction.
falling prey to her own proclivities (naive or sentimental, objective or subjective). “Irony is philosophically witty” and “In transcendental poetry,” Schlegel declares, “irony dominates.”

In “Ideas,” Schlegel counterposes poetry as a realism with philosophy as an idealism and the role of irony, the combination of the real with the ideal, falls to religion or, better, a religion and a humanity yet to come. Thus, after arguing that “logic can develop into philosophy only through religion” and that “only someone who has his own religion can be an artist,” Schlegel advises that “there is as yet no religion” (KFSA 2, 257, 260, 264–5). Religion takes shape linguistically in the form of myth and, accordingly, Schlegel calls for the creation of a new mythology, one that fills the absence left by the old mythology’s demise, an absence that forced modern poets inward. While short on details, Schlegel describes this new mythology as “a new realism,” no less boundless than the idealism of the age from which it emerges (KFSA 2, 259, 312–15).

III. CONCLUSION

For all their differences, the aesthetics of Schiller and Schlegel have much in common. Placing philosophical speculation at the center of criticism and literature, each draws critically on the transcendental philosophies of Kant and Fichte. Each writer struggles to come to terms with modernity’s increasingly rationalistic, artificial, and alienating character in contrast to antiquity’s presumed naturalness. At the same time, without denying Greek poetry its paradigmatic status, both extol the distinctiveness of modern poetry. Neither fails to appreciate the moral and political import, however indirect, of art and literature. What is at stake in literature for both of them is humanity’s defining, self-liberating potential.

Yet their differences are no less marked. “Sentimental poetry,” for example, is hardly synonymous with “Romantic poetry.” The realism of Romantic poetry has in fact more affinities with the naturalism of naive poetry than the moralism characteristic of sentimental poetry – a difference exemplified by their assessments of Shakespeare, whom Schiller considered a natural poet and Schlegel extolled as a Romantic poet. Mention has already been made of the fact that Schlegel’s distinction between “Classic” and “Romantic” has, in Dilthey’s words, “proven more fruitful” than Schiller’s distinction. Dilthey and others attribute this development to basic differences in their project. Schiller analyzes the

35. KFSA 2, 152; Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977), 36, 44.
essence of poetry into two basic forms and, although he does so with an eye to freeing modern poetry from the criteria of Greek poetry, his understanding of those forms is shaped by aesthetic considerations framed more by anthropology than by history. By contrast, Schlegel’s point of departure and method, indeed, his philosophy itself, is thoroughly historical; he understands modern, Romantic poetry as the outgrowth of classical poetry and as an organic, unfinished unity that partakes and reflects the organic, unfinished unity of culture (a culture, moreover, without European borders).  

The differences between these aesthetic legacies are patent when we compare Schiller’s concept of play with Schlegel’s concept of irony. In both cases, a sense of aesthetic freedom is achieved in the face of an underlying dualism via a reciprocal relation between finite and infinite. Yet for Schiller, the play drive famously joins opposing drives, the sensory-passive-material drive with the rational-active-formal drive, yielding an aesthetic condition, the counterpart to beauty, the “happy equilibrium” in which “no trace of the division remains behind in the whole” (Essays 138, 166). The content and aim of aesthetic education is “to shape [auszubilden] the whole of our sensory and spiritual powers in the greatest possible harmony” (146 n.). Schiller understands the aesthetic condition – means and end of the aesthetic education – as a matter of opposing and thus negating both sensory and moral needs in order to arrive at a kind of equanimity, equivalent to what he labels “a canceling of time in time” and a “capacity of carrying out what is infinite within the finite” (126, 165). “In the aesthetic condition, the human being is accordingly naught [Null]” (147).  

By contrast, Schlegel demands of the poet an awareness of the ineradicable division of conditioned and unconditioned that determines her every work and does so in every detail, entailing a constant process of “self-creation and self-annihilation.” From the vantage point of this Romantic irony, there can only be an ongoing process of self-overcoming reflection and there can be no pretension to an endgame of some harmonious totality. While the playfulness of aesthetic semblance (encompassing poet, poem, and reader) is a liberating

37. Richard Brinkmann, “Romantische Dichtungstheorie in Friedrich Schlegels Frühwerken und Schillers Begriffe des Naiven und Sentimentalischen,” Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 32 (1958); Wilhelm Dilthey, Leben Schleiermachers, in Gesammelte Schriften, XIII, Martin Redeker (ed.) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 243–4. Some other differences are worth noting: Schlegel, coming from a renowned literary family, was steeped in ancient literature, reading it with ease in the original; the same could not be said for Schiller (Behler, “Einleitung,” KFSA 1, CLXXIV); Schiller expressed his eventual disenchantment with the French Revolution while Schlegel still championed it; see Beiser, The Romantic Imperative, 48–9. A decade before his work on Sanskrit and the wisdom of India, Schlegel urges poets to look to India for “what is supremely Romantic” (KFSA 2, 320).  

38. See Strohschneider-Kohrs, Die romantische Ironie, 228.
equilibrium, Romantic irony is liberating precisely by instantiating the disequilibrium between this experience and reality. If Schiller’s notion of sublimity and the aesthetic condition prefigures a Nietzschean freedom beyond good and evil, Schlegel’s Romanticism anticipates the self-overcoming to which Zarathustra calls us.

Yet, as Schlegel himself notes, irony, while essential, is not the whole of Romantic poetry. His depiction of it as “a wonderful, eternal alternation [Wechsel] of enthusiasm and irony” suggests that irony needs the play of the aesthetic condition and semblance – even if only because it, like modern art, is a “rebellion against semblance.” So, too, in what might well be a nod to Schiller, Schlegel stresses Romantic poetry’s dependence on a “naive profundity” allowing the “semblance” of an imaginary world to shine through. “The beginning of all poetry is to cancel the course and the laws of reason thinking reasonably and transport us again to the beautiful confusion of fantasy” (KFSA 2, 319). This beginning is, however, only the beginning; irony is the transcendental buffoonery that poetizes the poem, the realistic reminder that the play of aesthetic semblance is mere play, a reproduction of “the endless play of the world.”

MAJOR WORKS

Friedrich Schiller


Friedrich Schlegel

I. INTRODUCTION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE OTHER AS A PROBLEM IN GERMAN IDEALISM

According to Kant, “human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.”\(^1\) Nowhere is this fate more evident than in the great metaphysical questions concerning freedom, immortality, and God. These questions necessarily arise in human experience and reflection on it, yet they also exceed the capacity of reason to determine cognitively and are peculiarly subject to metaphysical illusion. This illusion arises not when we are thinking obscure matters, but when we are thinking clearly; metaphysical illusion is difficult to detect. For on the one hand, nothing is easier than to think about freedom, the soul, and God. But Kant warns us that to think is not the same as to know. That is because concepts without perceptions are empty. Thought is finite and must wait upon objects to be given to it in perception and intuition. Thus for Kant topics like freedom and God are thinkable and conceivable, but since they are not given in empirical intuitions, they are not knowable. Kant holds that cognition is restricted to mundane phenomena and the necessary laws governing their operation.

However, having closed the door to a transcendent metaphysics of the supersensible, Kant opens another door to the metaphysical issues of God, freedom,
and immortality, to wit, through practical reason, freedom, and faith. According to Kant the critical philosophy denies knowledge in order to make room for faith, practical faith. But while practical faith and freedom are important, and while Kant holds that through freedom we do gain access to the noumenal realm, this access is for practical purposes only. It is not theoretical knowledge of any supersensible object(s). In determining the bounds of cognition and proscribing any cognitive transcendence of such boundaries, Kant’s position raises a question whose answer seems obvious, but turns out to be much more complicated, to wit, how do I know I am free? We confront a paradox: If I know that I am free, I must know myself as a conditioned phenomenal object subject to causal-mechanical necessity. Therefore if I know I am free, then paradoxically I am not free because qua phenomenon I am subject to the necessity formally prescribed to phenomena by the structure and agency of rationality itself.

Kant’s solution to this antinomy is to apply his doctrine of denial of knowledge in order to make room for faith, and his notorious distinction between appearances (phenomena) and things in themselves (noumena). As far as the self-consciousness of freedom is concerned, for Kant the outcome is that there is no cognitive access of the self to its freedom. I not only do not know, but cannot know that I am free. Instead, according to Kant the consciousness of freedom is mediated by the moral law: the moral law is the ratio cognoscendi of freedom, and freedom is the ratio essendi of the moral law. In other words, I discover that I am free through obligations and imperatives imposed by reason and the moral law. But the moral law is not a natural law that holds necessarily whether it is cognized or not. Rather, only a being who is free is capable of apprehending a moral imperative and the moral law. A stone has no sense of any moral imperative or obligation.

Thus for Kant there is no knowledge of freedom; instead the consciousness of freedom is mediated by practical categorical imperatives. But the consciousness of freedom is important, not only for Kant’s ethics of autonomy, but also because it implies personhood, and grounds Kant’s systematic distinction between things and persons. A thing is a use object. A use object is one that does not contain its own end, but rather is a receptacle for the end of an other, that is, a person. In contrast, a person is a being that, as free, contains its own end. Its end is to be self-determining, autonomous. Thus to use a person is morally evil, because that is to treat a being that is capable of being and containing its own end, merely as a receptacle for the end of an other.

It is evident that Kant thinks that there are persons, and communities (cf. kingdom of ends). It is equally evident that like freedom and God, persons

and communities exceed the boundaries of cognition, and are to be treated as “objects” of faith, moral faith. However, since the transcendental constitution of cognition extends only as far as mundane phenomena, there is strictly speaking no cognition possible of freedom, God, others, and communities.

One of the sharpest critics of Kant and German idealism in general was Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi.3 Jacobi, a student and translator of David Hume, takes a Humean position that we are confronted with a disastrous choice between a false reason and no reason at all, that is, that reason and philosophical cognition are self-subverting. His criticisms of Kant are among the most influential, on both his contemporaries and subsequent generations. For example, take Kant’s notorious doctrine of the thing in itself: according to Jacobi, without it one cannot be a Kantian philosopher, but with it one cannot remain a Kantian. Kant’s position thus subverts itself. Further, since according to Kant to know is to condition, it follows that to know God is equivalent to providing conditions to/for the unconditioned. Jacobi thus walks through the door opened by Kant’s denial of knowledge in order to make room for faith. For his affirmative doctrine of immediate knowing or Gefühlspphilosophie, Jacobi offers a mixture of Humean impressions and Kant’s practical faith. He agrees with Kant that God is beyond the capacity and limits of cognition and rather a matter of practical faith or immediate knowledge.4 Jacobi conceives faith as an immediate certainty “which not only needs no proof, but excludes all proofs absolutely and is simply the representation agreeing with the thing being represented. Conviction by proofs is certainty at second hand …. Conviction based on rational grounds must itself derive from faith.”5

Moreover, the reference of faith in Jacobi’s sense is not restricted to the supersensible or the idea, or God. Rather, faith has a much broader common-sense reference:

Through faith we know that we have a body, and that there are other bodies and other thinking beings outside us. A veritable and wondrous revelation! … We become aware of other actual things … with the very same certainty with which we become aware of ourselves, for without the Thou, the I is impossible.6

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*3. Jacobi’s criticism of Kant is discussed in detail by Richard Fincham in this volume.
4. Immediacy for Jacobi means that such “knowledge” is invulnerable to criticism.
6. Ibid., 231, emphasis added.
Faith thus is taken in a broader sense than the religious or theological; it becomes synonymous with immediate knowing of our bodies, others, and God.\(^7\) If for Kant both the self-consciousness of freedom and the existence of others is problematic, for Jacobi they are absolutely certain, immediate givens.

Confronted with the antinomy between Kantian agnosticism concerning others, and Jacobi’s claims concerning equiprimordial, immediate knowing of self and others, Fichte believed it necessary to raise two related questions: (i) How do I know that I am free? (ii) How do we know that there are others? Fichte’s answer to both of these questions is the concept of recognition, which posits not merely a correlation between self and other, but the significant claim that my knowledge of my freedom is not a self-objectification of theoretical cognition that Kant had denied, but rather is mediated to me by the other. Recognition by other makes me available to myself as a totality in a way that I cannot achieve on my own. The self depends on the other present in its ownmost self-relation for its own self-knowledge. Fichte thus introduces the thesis of a mediated autonomy, a mediated self-relation, a mediated self-knowledge.

How does this dependent independence fit within a program of transcendental philosophy? According to the latter, any object is relative to the subject. Anything that is for the subject, exists through the subject; this basic proposition is the central doctrine of critical or transcendental idealism. Note, however, that the dependence of the self on its other for the consciousness of its freedom and independence challenges such idealism. For where idealism holds that all objects are relative to the subject, in recognition the self grasps itself as relative to the other as well. Moreover, the other confers on me a self-knowledge that I cannot give or provide myself. The relation between self and other is not asymmetrical, as idealism holds, but is reciprocal, jointly constituted. The other is the condition of my own self-consciousness of freedom, and in my consciousness of my freedom I am a dependent independence. How then do we know that there are others? That is Fichte’s question, and the problem of integrating the mediation of the self to itself by the other becomes a major problem in the development and transformation of idealism into a philosophy of spirit.

In what follows, we take up Fichte’s question, and show how Fichte’s struggles with this question both anticipate the later philosophy of Edmund Husserl, who likewise sought to develop a theory of the other, and illustrate similar problems and deficiencies found in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenological philosophy. Conversely, viewing Fichte’s struggle with his question through a Husserlian lens allows us to see that Fichte and German idealism are not necessarily restricted to the doctrine of critical or transcendental idealism, but

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likewise have a phenomenological-intuitive moment. This means minimally that the other is both given and constituted. Any adequate account of intersubjectivity has to do justice to both aspects of the problem. At the most general level this is the problem of the relation of thought to existence. However, the methodological commitment of Fichte to the transcendental idealism he inherits and takes over from Kant privileges the subject, and this privileging of the subject contradicts Fichte’s own phenomenology and prevents him from developing an adequate account of the other. His idealism thus remains subjective. To accept this criticism of Fichte as a valid one, means that one at the same time sees the impossibility of transcendental idealism as an account of the other, and the necessity of a move to a philosophy of spirit constituted by reciprocal recognition, and to an objective idealism or holism: the view developed by Schelling and Hegel.

II. FICHTE ON THE OTHER

Johann Gottlieb Fichte was among the first to identify the other as a philosophical problem. In his early Vocation of the Scholar, Fichte writes:

There are a few questions which philosophy must answer before it can become Wissenschaft and Wissenschaftslehre …. Among these questions are the following: … How does the human being come to assume and recognize that there are rational beings similar to it outside of it, since such beings are not at all immediately or directly given to or present in its pure self-consciousness? … The relation of rational beings to each other I term Gesellschaft. But the concept of Gesellschaft is not possible except on the presupposition that there actually exist rational beings outside of us …. How do we come to such a presupposition …?9

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8. Johann Gottlieb Fichte (May 19, 1762–January 29, 1814; born in Rammenau, Germany; died in Berlin) was educated in the theological faculty at the University of Jena (1780), transferred to the faculty of law at Leipzig in 1781, before becoming a private tutor (1784–90). He began the study of Kant, whose primacy of practical reason produced a revolution in Fichte’s own thought. In 1791, Fichte produced his Critique of all Revelation, which Kant recommended for publication, and which, owing to a publisher error, was taken as Kant’s own philosophy of religion. When Fichte was revealed as its author, his academic career took off. He held appointments at the University of Jena (1794–99), the University of Erlangen (1805) and the University of Berlin (1810–14), and was a private scholar in Berlin (1799–1804).

9. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten (1794), in Fichtes Werke VI, I. H. Fichte (ed.) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 302; published in English as Some Lectures Concerning the Vocation of the Scholar, in Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings, Daniel Breazeale (ed. and
The last question is important because it brings into focus the problem of the other and its significance for philosophy. The other is a condition of the Wissenschaftslehre; yet the other is to be interpreted and explicated within and by means of the Wissenschaftslehre.

We begin with a paradox: Idealism asserts the primacy of the subject, and the corollary primacy of freedom. The rule is: no subject, no object. For the object is transcendently constituted by the subject. Fichte says “All being, whether of the ego or the non-ego, is a determinate modification of consciousness; and without consciousness there is no being.” But Fichte also makes a claim that appears to contradict this axiom of idealism: it is impossible, he says, to begin with freedom, because the self depends on the recognition of the other for the consciousness of its freedom.

Fichte writes: “The question was, how may the subject find itself as an object?” This question has a history. It reflects Kant’s delineation of the problems of self-knowledge (paralogisms) and of the self-consciousness of freedom. According to the first Critique, freedom – the capacity for self-originated causality – is possible. But Kant leaves open the question whether there actually is such freedom. As the condition of possible objects of experience, the transcendental subject cannot be itself an object of experience, and thus cannot be an object of knowledge. According to Kant, neither the transcendental subject nor freedom can be known, because to know means to objectify, and what is objectified is conditioned and subject to phenomenal necessity. Kant affirms the possibility of freedom, but only for practical purposes. Thus the free self must assume, but cannot know that it is free. In the second Critique, Kant asserts that the consciousness of freedom is mediated by the moral law. The moral law is the ratio cognoscendi of freedom, and freedom is the ratio essendi of the moral law.

Fichte proposes an alternative explanation to the problem of knowing that one is free. According to Fichte, the self cannot give itself the consciousness of freedom; rather, freedom is intersubjectively mediated. The first and third propositions of the Grundlage des Naturrecht run thus:

§1 A finite rational being cannot posit itself without ascribing to itself a free causality ....

10. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre (1796), in FW III, 2; hereafter cited as GNR; published in English as Foundations of Natural Right, Michael Baur (trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4; hereafter cited as FNR.
11. GNR 33; FNR 32.
§3 The finite rational being cannot ascribe to itself a free causality in the world of the senses, without ascribing freedom also to others, and therefore without assuming other finite rational beings besides itself.\textsuperscript{12}

The other makes the subject available to itself in an original way by summoning (\textit{Auffordern}) the subject to freedom. The summons to responsibility is not something that the self can give to itself; instead, the summons of the other makes the self available to itself as a totality, and this bestowal makes possible the self’s discovery of its own freedom. Thus Fichte writes: “How and in what sense is the subject determined to free causality, in order to find itself as an object? Simply insofar as it finds itself summoned to action, as someone who is capable of acting freely, and who could equally fail to act.”\textsuperscript{13}

The summons (\textit{Aufforderung}) requires the irreducible independence of the other. The other who summons one to freedom and responsibility cannot be originally constituted by the subject because the summons of the other precedes and founds the subject’s consciousness of freedom. Since the other summons and obligates the subject’s freedom, the other must precede, occasion, and grant the subject its consciousness of freedom. The fact of being summoned constitutes a phenomenological proof of the existence of the other: “If such a summons to action actually occurs, a rational being besides and outside of the self must be assumed as its cause, and so it is absolutely necessary to posit a rational being outside the subject.”\textsuperscript{14}

Further, this other must be an intelligent rational being, for only such a being can summon me to responsible free action. The influence of the other is not a causal one, but an influence compatible with freedom and intelligence, namely a summons or invitation. The summons is an action directed toward and respectful of the rational free agent as an end in itself. Fichte maintains that “The summons to free self-activity is usually called education.”\textsuperscript{15} As a corollary Fichte insists that “the human being (and so all finite beings generally) becomes human only among others. Self and other stand in a relation of potential reciprocity.” This relation he calls recognition: “The relation of free beings to each other is therefore a relation of reciprocity through intelligence and freedom. Neither can recognize the other, if both do not reciprocally recognize each other, and neither can treat the other as a free being if both do not reciprocally treat each other with respect.”\textsuperscript{16}

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\textsuperscript{12} GNR 17, 30; FNR 18, 29.
\textsuperscript{13} GNR 34; FNR 33.
\textsuperscript{14} GNR 39; FNR 37.
\textsuperscript{15} GNR 39; FNR 38.
\textsuperscript{16} GNR 44; FNR 42.

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Ludwig Siep, sensing an incompatibility between Fichte’s treatment of recognition in his *Grundlage des Naturrecht* and his transcendental program in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, explains it by distinguishing two levels: the level of transcendental explanation and the level of ordinary consciousness. Recognition is not a *Begriff* or category, but an action of consciousness (*Bewussteinshandlung*), and so must be susceptible of transcendental explanation. But what would transcendental explanation of recognition and the other look like? Addressing this issue, Fichte takes up the question of the other and not only explores issues that anticipate Husserl, but maintains views that, with one exception, are strikingly similar.

### III. HUSserl: THE LIFE-WORLD AS THEME AND PRESUPPOSITION OF TRANSCENDENTAL REFLECTION

Husserl carried out a lifelong struggle against the reduction of all meaning to facts, that is, positivism. From his early writings to his late *Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl sought to show that positivism decapitates reason and suppresses the fundamental problems of reason. Positivistic science identifies the life-world as a collection of facts, and downgrades the human life-world – freedom, embodiment, others, and values – to something merely subjective. Reality is acknowledged only as a mathematical construct. Husserl sought to expose the displacement and downgrading of the life-world in favor of “pure facts” and “pure theory.” Such moves are reductive and truncate both philosophy and the sense of reality. This impoverished reality sense is the crisis of European culture.

The way out of the crisis is to correct the scientific inversion and displacement of the life-world. The first phase of Husserl’s critique of science is to show that it presupposes and is grounded in the life-world. Science is but a garb of ideas that we construct for the life-world. The life-world thus becomes a major topic in Husserl’s later phenomenology, a topic not without ambiguity.

As is well known, Husserl’s elaboration of his program is marked by tensions between his transcendental method of explication, which focuses on subjective meaning-bestowal, and the ontological sense of the primordial life-world to which he calls attention in his critique of science. The life-world is presupposed by theoretical science as the subsoil of ordinary meaning and intersubjective

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*18. Husserl’s philosophy is discussed in detail in the essay by Thomas Nenon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*. 

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communication. Husserl writes: “The life-world is the world that is constantly pregiven, valid constantly and in advance as existing, but not valid because of some purpose of investigation, according to some universal end. Every end presupposes it, even the universal end of knowing it in scientific truth presupposes it, and in advance.”

Husserl maintains that the life-world is a realm of immediate evidences that we neither construct nor constitute. All theoretical inquiry presupposes this original environment and immediate evidence in the sense that, if ordinary life-world interhuman communication were invalid or merely subject-relative, then science itself would be invalidated. If phenomenology were to displace the life-world or declare it invalid, then phenomenology would have nothing to describe except its own machinations, and thus would become formal and empty.

Yet Husserl also insists that phenomenological method is transcendental, and that the life-world itself is transcendentally constituted. Transcendental phenomenology is to be a science of the life-world, and not to be confused with the mundane natural science of empirical psychology. Explication within the phenomenological epoché, is always explication of sense, not metaphysical-causal explanation. This explication of sense consists in a reversal of ordinary life-world consciousness – which intends and focuses on objects. As Husserl indicates, “By virtue of our present method of epoché, everything objective is transformed into something subjective.” Instead of explaining the world by causal analysis as in natural science, phenomenology inquires into the world as phenomenon, and seeks to uncover its primordial sense by examining the meaning-bestowing acts through which that sense is constituted.

The point is not to secure objectivity but to understand it. One must finally achieve the insight that no objective science, no matter how exact, explains or ever can explain anything in a serious sense. To deduce is not to explain. To predict, or recognize objective forms … – all this explains nothing but is in need of explanation. The only true way to explain is to make transcendentally understandable.

On the one hand, the life-world is the pretheoretical foundation of all scientific and philosophical praxis. On the other hand, the explication of the life-world is provided by transcendental phenomenology. But does transcendental phenomenology ground the life-world or presuppose it? If transcendental

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phenomenology presupposes the life-world, why is it not dragged into the subjective-relative sphere with everything else? Would not that make “pure theory” an illusion? How can Husserl contend (as he does) that the life-world is transcendently constituted? In order to deal with this issue, Husserl speaks of a special sort of constitutive activity, namely, passive genesis. The life-world is not actively constituted; it is not a deliberate artificial construct. Its sense is pregiven. All that transcendental phenomenological reflection can do is uncover the pregiven sense the world already has.22

Some critics claim that Husserl’s transcendental method, while successful as a critique of natural science, is shipwrecked on his equal insistence on the irreducible priority of the life-world. According to transcendental idealism, the transcendental subject takes priority over the sense(s) it constitutes. Its relation to sense is asymmetrical. But according to ordinary consciousness, relations of self and world, self and other are inherently two-sided and reciprocal. Can these be reconciled? Husserl’s answer to this difficulty is to affirm both sides of a paradox: human subjectivity is both transcendental, that is, a subject intending the world, and an object in the world (self- and other-constituted).23 Husserl refuses to choose finally one side or the other. Both are necessary.24

Husserl struggles to make good his affirmation of both sides of the paradox in his account of intersubjectivity in the fifth Cartesian Meditation. Affirming the paradox generates two opposing requirements: (i) all sense is constituted by the transcendental ego as part of its self-explication, and (ii) the other must be constituted as other. In ordinary life-world experience, one person is just as “real” as another; each is self-presencing and presenting and not reducible to a representation. Neither takes absolute priority over the other. However, the reflective turn of transcendental phenomenology commits Husserl to a first-person account; in phenomenological reflection only one is the “primordial I,” and all the rest are “others.” This implies a fundamental asymmetry between the primordial I and the other. The other as constituted is not self-presenting or self-manifesting. The excess of sense attaching to the experience of the other must have its roots in “my” primordial experience.

Husserl accounts for intersubjectivity through the concepts of pairing and appresentation, that is, an analogical transfer of sense. Husserl denies that appresentation is an inference or an argument from analogy. It is something

24. One price of this paradox is that the human ego and transcendental ego are called ego by equivocation. Husserl himself does not always observe this sharp distinction. He blurs it in a reference to Fichte: “Can the ego which posits itself, of which Fichte speaks, be anything other than Fichte’s own?” (Crisis, 202).
like a mediate apprehension, an apprehension of the other mediated by his body. Husserl never succeeded in clarifying this mediate apprehension or its status. Interpreters such as Paul Ricoeur tend to interpret the apperception of the other as a kind of analogy, or analogical argument. But this is incorrect, for Husserl denies that apperception is an argument from analogy.\(^\text{25}\)

Consider the following text, which shows how the two requirements of Husserl’s phenomenology, the descriptive-realistic, and the constitution-idealistic, come together.

Let us assume that another man enters our perceptual field. Under the primordial reduction this means that in the perceptual field of my primordial nature there appears a body \([Körper]\) which, so far as primordial, can only be a determinate modification of myself (an immanent transcendence). Since in this nature and in this world my own body \([Leib]\) is the only body \([Körper]\) that is or can be constituted originally as an organism \([Leib]\) (a functioning organ), that other body \([Körper]\) over there – which, however is also given as an organism \([Leib]\) – must have derived this meaning through an apperceptive transfer from my body-organism \([Leib]\) and in a way that excludes a truly direct and primordial justification (that is, by perception in the strict sense of the term) of the predicates belonging to that organism \([Leiblichkeit]\) in its specificity. From this point on, it is clear that only a resemblance established with my primordial sphere that connects the other body \([Körper]\) with my body can provide the foundation and the motive for conceiving that body “by analogy” as another organism \([Leib]\).\(^\text{26}\)

In this passage, we can see apperception as a kind of analogy at work in experience. The body of the other is \textit{like} mine, an organism; it is not a mere machine or \textit{Körper}. Note that the passage both sets up an analogy, and that the analogical transfer of sense runs asymmetrically from my own to the alien. On the one hand, the other must somehow already be present prior to the construction of the analogy as the condition of its construction, for if the other were not

\(^{25}\) Paul Ricoeur tends to treat apperception as an argument from analogy (see \textit{Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology}, Edward Ballard and Lester Embree [trans.] [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967], 126–7). He acknowledges that it becomes transformed into something more, to wit, a transfer into another life in imagination and in sympathy (\textit{ibid.}, 129). However, Husserl flatly denies that apperception is an argument from analogy or inference; see \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, 111.

already given in passive genesis, we could not even construct the analogy. On the other hand, the other’s presence is a contradictory one whose meaning seems exhausted in its exclusion of itself from primordial presence. Ricoeur comments on the above passage:

Right up to the end the descriptive spirit and the requirement of constitution tend to meet but fail to blend into each other, for according to the idealistic requirement of constitution, the other must be a modification of my ego, and according to the realistic character of description the other never ceases to exclude himself from the sphere of my monad.27

We will discover a similar problem of the nonmerger of the two requirements in Fichte.

The problem in Husserl’s account is that only one ego, the primordial ego, is presented. All others are appresented, and this appears to mean a derivative mode of presence. This asymmetry creates difficulties. As Ricoeur observes, all other analogies proceed from object to object in the same sphere of experience, but here in the pairing of alter ego with primordial ego, the transfer of sense is asymmetrical, that is, it is always from the own to the “alien.”28 Assuming that this one-way transfer of sense succeeds, is the other still other? On the other hand, if it does not succeed, then does the other not amount to a failed cognition?

There is a further problem arising from the asymmetry between primordial ego and alter ego: all communal reciprocity must be constructed upon this asymmetry.29 This is the well-known weakness of Husserl’s phenomenological sociology. The primordial asymmetry appears to undermine the reciprocity that is insisted on by ordinary consciousness. Ricoeur claims that “one must renounce the asymmetry of the relationship me-other required by [Husserl’s] monadic idealism” in order to account for the reciprocity and equalization required by empirical and sociological realism.30 These problems in Husserl’s execution of his project in Cartesian Meditations may succeed only in demonstrating that, so conceived, the project is impossible.31

27. Ibid., 130, emphasis added.
29. Ibid., 131.
30. Ibid., 136.
31. Fortunately the Cartesian Meditations is not Husserl’s only attempt, and probably his least successful attempt, to present an account of intersubjectivity. In his posthumously published studies on intersubjectivity, Husserl’s approach is through an analysis of empathy, Einfühlung, Mitgefühl. See Gerd Brand, Welt, Ich und Zeit (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955).
IV. THE STANDPOINTS OF LIFE AND OF REFLECTION IN FICHTE’s
INTRODUCTIONS TO WISSENSCHAFTSLEHRE

Husserl’s paradox of subjectivity frames a similar issue and problem in Fichte. There is a phenomenological dimension in the systematic program of German idealism. Implicit in Kant, phenomenology becomes explicit in Fichte, and yet more explicit in the title of Hegel’s first book, the Phenomenology of Spirit. In his second introduction to the Wissenschaftslehre in 1797, Fichte distinguishes between the standpoint of life and the standpoint of the philosopher. This distinction corresponds roughly to the Husserlian distinction between Lebenswelt and the standpoint of transcendental philosophical reflection. Fichte articulates the distinction thus:

In the Wissenschaftslehre there are two very distinct series of spiritual action: that of the ego which the philosopher observes, and that of the observations of the philosopher. In opposing philosophies … there is only one line of thinking, namely that of the philosopher, and the content of his thought is not itself understood to be thinking and reflective, but rather as mere Stoff.32

There are two standpoints: the natural consciousness and the philosophical consciousness reflecting on and interpreting the former. Ordinary consciousness is described and explained by the philosopher, and the philosophical consciousness depends on and is rooted in the experience of ordinary consciousness. The claim that there are two series, each necessary and irreducible, is precisely the claim of Fichte’s transcendental idealism. As Fichte puts it, “The type of realism that presses itself upon all of us – including the most resolute idealist – when it comes to acting, i.e., the assumption that objects exist outside of and quite independently of us, is contained within idealism itself, and is explained and derived within idealism.”33

This distinction between the standpoint of transcendental idealism and the standpoint of ordinary consciousness allegedly “contained” within the former, raises the question of the relation between thought and being, between philosophical reflection and experience in the broadest sense. How does thought, that is, reflection, go beyond itself? This question becomes especially urgent in a transcendental program that focuses not on objects in the world but on the

32. Fichte, Zweite Einleitung, in FW I, 454.
33. J. G. Fichte, Second Introduction to Wissenschaftslehre, Daniel Breazeale (trans.), in Introductions to Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings Daniel Breazeale (ed. and trans.) (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994), 38 n. Hereafter cited as IWL followed by the page number.
conditions of possibility of experience. Assuming that this program is successful, does it yield anything more than an empty formalism? This issue becomes even more acute in regard to the problem of the other: is the transcendental, is “I-hood [Ichheit],” inherently solipsistic? Husserl’s nightmare was that phenomenology may vanquish garden-variety Cartesian solipsism, only to discover that solipsism emerges again at the transcendental level.

In the Second Introduction, Fichte characterizes the two standpoints as apparently opposite and contradictory: in an important note, he writes: “It is only in his own name [i.e. from the standpoint of philosophy] that the philosopher asserts that ‘everything that exists for the I exists by means of the I.’”34 It is difficult to imagine a stronger or more ambiguous statement of idealism: what does “exists by means of the I” mean? Is it a metaphysical claim that the subject creates being? That all being is relative to the subject? An epistemological claim, to wit that we can know only what we can make? A transcendental claim that invokes the I as the condition of possibility of experience? All of the above? Whatever it may mean, it is clear that the philosophical standpoint inverts the claim of ordinary consciousness. Fichte explains:

The I that is explained within his philosophy however, asserts that “just as truly as I exist and live at all, there also exists something outside of me, something that does not owe its existence to me.” Basing his account on the first principle of his philosophy, the philosopher explains how the I comes to make such an assertion. The philosopher occupies the standpoint of pure speculation, whereas the I itself occupies the standpoint of life …35

Fichte sharpens Husserl’s paradox into an explicit opposition. How can these opposing claims – “everything for the I exists through the I” and “there exists something or someone outside of and independent of me” – be reconciled?

If the two standpoints are mutually contradictory, they cannot coexist side by side, but rather appear to cancel each other out. Yet Fichte insists that “[t]he standpoint of life is comprehensible only from the standpoint of speculation.”36 According to Fichte, the apparent realism of ordinary consciousness “has some basis, since it forces itself upon us as a consequence of our own nature, but this is not a basis that is known and understandable [from within the standpoint of life].”37 Experience, in short, is not transparent or intelligible by itself.

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
Like the dwellers in Plato’s cave, ordinary consciousness does not understand itself; philosophy is necessary to comprehend it, and for this comprehension philosophy must go beyond experience. It apparently leaves the cave. But if the philosophical comprehension of experience means to negate or invert it, then the philosophical standpoint would seem to be charging ordinary consciousness with error.\textsuperscript{38} Philosophy then would not explain experience, so much as correct or displace it.

If this were what Fichte meant to suggest, his speculative or transcendental philosophy would be just one more theoretical science that downgrades the life-world as merely subjective, and finds it to be the “primordial error.” Fichte and Husserl would thus part company.

However, this is not what Fichte means. In a cryptic remark, Fichte informs us that “The standpoint of speculation exists only in order to make the standpoint of life and science comprehensible. Idealism can never be a way of thinking; instead it is nothing more than speculation.”\textsuperscript{39} This suggests that philosophical speculation does not displace the life-world, but is somehow relative to and dependent on it. The philosopher, \textit{qua} human being, inhabits the life-world and lives in the natural attitude. The philosophical standpoint is not a life-world standpoint, but a deliberately and artificially sustained one. Moreover, as an abstraction, it does not really leave the cave. Fichte maintains \textit{both} that ordinary consciousness requires and needs philosophy for its comprehension, \textit{and} that philosophy presupposes and depends in some sense on the life-world. The task of philosophy is phenomenological: “Therefore it describes the entire way which the former [viz., ordinary consciousness] has taken, but in reverse order. And the \textit{philosophical reflection, which can merely follow its subject, but prescribe to it no law, necessarily takes the same direction.”\textsuperscript{40} Here Fichte sounds a note astonishingly like Husserl’s declaration that phenomenological explication does

\begin{verse}

\textsuperscript{39} IWL 38 n.

\textsuperscript{40} Fichte, \textit{Wissenschaftslehre}, in FW I, 223; published in English as \textit{Science of Knowledge}, Peter Heath and John Lachs (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 199. Cf.: “phenomenological explication does nothing but explicate the sense this world has for us all, prior to any philosophizing, and obviously gets solely from our experience – a sense which philosophy can uncover but never alter” (Husserl, \textit{Cartesian Meditations}, 151). Cf.: “We shall see that in natural reflection, as opposed to the artificial reflection of transcendental philosophy, we are able, in virtue of its laws, to go back only so far as the understanding, and then always encounter in this something given to reflection… but we do not become conscious of the manner in which it arrived there. Hence our firm conviction of the reality of things outside us, and this without any contribution on our part, since we are unaware of the power that produces them.” (Fichte, \textit{Wissenschaftslehre}, in FW I, 234; \textit{Science of Knowledge}, 208).
\end{verse}
nothing but explicate the sense this world has for us all, prior to any philosophizing: a sense that philosophy can uncover but never alter. Philosophical reflection is a reconstruction in thought of the meaning of experience. It cannot displace the latter. Both standpoints are necessary.

But how can this be? This question cannot be answered from Fichte’s introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre. Instead we must turn to the Wissenschaftslehre novo methodo of 1796/99. These lectures are a new – but by no means final – statement of Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre. This work aims at a new, more complete and systematic presentation that incorporates Fichte’s account of the Aufforderung in the 1795 Grundlage des Naturrechts and 1796 System der Sittenlehre.

V. WISSENSCHAFTSLEHRE 1796/99: FOUNDATIONS OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Fichte offers a programmatic clarification of the relation between ordinary consciousness and transcendental philosophy. He tells us that “by itself transcendental philosophy creates nothing … it has no desire to become a way of thinking that could be employed within life; instead it observes an [actual] I which embodies within life this system of thinking described by transcendental philosophy.”41 The sharp delineation of the transcendental standpoint from the standpoint of ordinary consciousness creates several problems: how is the philosopher as a human being within the ordinary standpoint, able to raise himself to the transcendental standpoint? This is the question concerning the motivation for going beyond ordinary consciousness, that is, the possibility of philosophy itself. Second, the sharp delineation suggests that the two standpoints “are diametrically opposed to each other.”42 But this is not the case; Fichte expressly declares “these two viewpoints must not be absolutely opposed to each other … but must be united.”43 This is a stronger claim than he previously made, which was simply that both standpoints are necessary and not incompatible. Now they must be united.

How can this be? Fichte claims that even though they may appear contradictory owing to the inversion of one by the other, the two have different objects and thus their words have a different sense. The idealist philosopher observes the way in which reason becomes determinate, individuated in an actual rational being. But:

42. FTP 472.
43. Ibid., 473.
the situation is different for the observed individual than it is for the philosopher. The individual is confronted with things, human beings, etc., that are independent of him. But the idealist says, “There are no things outside of me and present independently of me.” Though the two say opposite things, they do not contradict each other …. When the idealist says “outside of me,” he means “outside of reason”; when the individual says the same thing, he means “outside of my person.” This implies a revision of the earlier formulation, that everything for the I exists by means of the I. The earlier formulation undercuts not only the Kantian doctrine of the thing in itself, but also the thesis of ordinary consciousness concerning the world and others. Fichte’s reformulation of the transcendental viewpoint is that there is nothing outside of reason. This is compatible with the ordinary consciousness thesis that there are persons. The claim that there are others outside of me qua person, does not mean that these others are outside of reason. What are the implications of this revision for our issue?

This revision reflects both Fichte’s thesis of the primacy of the practical, and his discussion of the Aufforderung, or summons. Fichte maintains that the practical standpoint:

enables one to see why and to what extent the ordinary view is true and why one has to assume that a world exists. Speculations do not disturb the idealist … and do not cause him to commit errors …. One has not yet achieved a clear understanding, has not yet obtained the true philosophical view of things … so long as one continues to think and expect that daily life is something altogether different from life as it is characterized from the speculative standpoint.

On the contrary, Fichte assures us, “the results of experience and speculation are always in harmony.” This is a statement of Fichte’s faith; it is a promissory note. To determine whether Fichte’s assurance and confidence on this point is

44. Ibid., 105–6.
45. Fichte’s strategy here is not unlike Kant’s in the third antinomy: the apparent contradiction can be removed by distinguishing different senses of the language and corresponding different senses of the object. The question, however, is what the spatial term “outside” means, and whether it is even appropriate in transcendental philosophy.
46. FTP 106.
47. Ibid.
justified, we must press on to a consideration of his views in more detail. I shall focus on an ambiguity in his account of the Aufforderung and freedom.

VI. FICHTE’S ACCOUNT OF THE AUFFORDERUNG OR SUMMONS

The status and location of the Aufforderung in Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre is one of the most vexing questions. In his introduction to the English translation of Grundlage des Naturrechts, Frederick Neuhouser notes that Fichte identifies the relation of right as a necessary condition of self-consciousness, only to run into the problem that membership in a community based on right is not only a contingent decision, but one that might be decided negatively. In short, community might be optional. This creates the problem how an arbitrary, optional, and contingent membership in a certain type of community could be a necessary condition of self-consciousness. Fichte subsequently revises his position: since right is grounded in recognition, and since recognition in turn presupposes the Aufforderung, it is the Aufforderung, not right, that is a necessary condition of self-consciousness.48 While the concept of right is supposed to belong to Fichte’s Realphilosophie, of which the Naturrecht is part, the concept of Aufforderung seems to belong to the transcendental conditions of Realphilosophie (right).

Before turning to our examination of Fichte’s discussion of the Aufforderung in Wissenschaftslehre novo methodo, let us first recall Fichte’s phenomenological descriptions of ordinary consciousness and the experience of being summoned to freedom.

Recall first of all his discussion of the face of the other in his Lectures Concerning the Vocation of the Scholar. Fichte’s “face” anticipates certain features of Levinas’s discussion in Totality and Infinity.49 The difference is that Levinas asserts the ethical primacy of the other, while Fichte seems to maintain that self and other exist in reciprocity. But both agree that the face has broad ethically obligating significance. The face summons me to responsible freedom. Second, consider Fichte’s candid raising of the issue of intersubjectivity in his Grundlage des Naturrechts, which he characterizes as “a vexing question for philosophy which, as far as I know, it has not yet anywhere resolved.”50 He elaborates:

how do I know which particular object is a rational being? How do I know whether the protection afforded by ... universal legislation

48. FNR, xviii–xix.
50. FNR, 75.
befits only the white European, or perhaps also the black Negro; only the adult human being or perhaps also the child? And how do I know whether it might not even befit the loyal house-pet? As long as this question is not answered, that principle [of right] has no applicability or reality.\footnote{Ibid.}

Fichte observes that this question does not await some technical philosophical resolution, but is already decided by ordinary consciousness: “Surely there is no human being who, upon first seeing another human being” would not expect an:

immediate reciprocal communication. This is the case not through habituation and learning, but through nature and reason … However, one should not think – and only a few have to be reminded of this – that the human being must first go through the long and difficult process of reasoning we have just carried out, in order to understand that a certain body outside him belongs to a being that is his equal. Such recognition … either is achieved instantaneously without one being aware of the reasons for it … or [it] does not occur at all.\footnote{Ibid., 75–6. I have altered the word order in the last sentence.}

Philosophy does not produce the \textit{Aufforderung} or create intersubjectivity. But it is supposed to make sense of it, comprehend it and its necessity genetically. The central problem is: How does consciousness transcend itself? “One can summarize the entire task of the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} in this single question: How does the I manage to go outside of itself?”\footnote{FTP 388.} The \textit{Aufforderung} by other seems to propose a solution to this question – but only from the perspective of ordinary consciousness.

The \textit{Wissenschaftslehre novo methodo} continues the distinction between the two series, the ideal and the real, first distinguished in \textit{Aenesidemus} and in the Introductions to the \textit{Wissenschaftslehre}. While Fichte assures us that both are compatible and both are necessary, in \textit{novo methodo} he gives much less attention to ordinary consciousness than to the transcendental side. Again, the two series are contrasted: the transcendental-speculative according to which nothing is outside of \textit{reason}; and ordinary consciousness according to which others are transcendent to and independent of me as \textit{person}. The \textit{Aufforderung} is on the boundary between the two. This makes it both important and next to impossible to determine whether in a given passage Fichte is considering the transcendental
or the empirical-phenomenal aspect of the issue. He makes a sharp distinction and yet has to transgress it repeatedly.

So here is a rough statement of how the two standpoints appear to be opposed, the inverse of each other, in spite of Fichte’s assurances that they are compatible and can merge. In the experiential-empirical aspect of the summons, the other – the summoner – takes priority over the one summoned. The summons, in Fichte’s description, “appears to come from a rational being outside ourselves.”

That is, the summons immediately implies the existence of the summoner as its condition. The summons to self-activity grants a certain relative priority to the other person. The other summons poses a question, and I find myself questioned, that is, summoned to act freely. Fichte describes the summons “from below” as follows:

> As the ground of the summons that occurs within me, I necessarily think of a free acting that actually occurs outside of me. This, which is a determining subject and also determinable, is an actual free being outside of me. This determining subject is necessarily free, since what is discovered in this case is supposed to be an instance of acting, which can be explained only with reference to a free intellect. Ordinary human understanding immediately makes just this inference. It says, “I am questioned; therefore a questioner must exist.” Furthermore, it is entirely justified in saying this.

For ordinary consciousness, the summons implies the existence of the summoner. Fichte asserts that ordinary consciousness is entirely justified in this inference.

However, the transcendental standpoint inverts the ordinary consciousness standpoint. From the transcendental standpoint, “all external influence is completely eliminated, for otherwise we would be dogmatists.” Here freedom has priority. “The I is what acts upon itself, and by virtue of this self-directed activity, it is a willing subject.” Acting upon itself means that the I is self-reverting activity. What the ordinary consciousness takes as a summons by the other must from the transcendental viewpoint be regarded as self-determination, the I acting upon itself, that is, as auto-affection. Fichte seems to be thinking of the categorical imperative here: in the categorical imperative, the I summons itself.

54. FTP 74.
55. Ibid., 454, emphasis added.
56. Ibid., 339.
57. The empirical will first arises from the pure will, and the pure will is the categorical imperative; ibid., 293.
58. Ibid., 74, 422.
Further, from the transcendental point of view, freedom is described negatively as not being determined. Fichte refers to Kant: "Kant said (and so do we) that freedom, negatively defined, is the power to be the first rather than the second member of a series. It can be positively described as the power to make an absolute beginning."\(^{59}\) Pure freedom is radically indeterminate. It is the power to determine itself out of this radical indeterminacy; as radically indeterminate, it has the power to be first. As radically indeterminate, freedom is the power to make an absolute beginning and determine itself. As transcendental, freedom is asymmetrically related to what it constitutes. Transcendental analysis inverts the relation between self and other present in the summons qua *phomenon*. Transcendently the subject (will) is prior, not the other.

This inversion of ordinary consciousness constitutes an antinomy. According to ordinary consciousness, the consciousness of freedom originates through the summons of the other. Freedom is experienced as being summoned by another to act. The summons means that my freedom cannot possibly be first, or absolutely self-originating. Individual freedom of persons presupposes not only others, but community. However, transcendently viewed, freedom is the power to be first, to make an absolute beginning; freedom is radical autarchy. Nothing can be prior to freedom. But if freedom is absolutely self-originating, how could it possibly be compatible with, much less need or require an *Aufforderung*, a summons by another to act? If nothing can be prior to self-originating freedom, how could such freedom need, require or exist in community? For community would have to precede my freedom as its condition, and that seems impossible because it would contradict freedom’s original indeterminacy.

*Both sides of this antinomy are necessary.* For ordinary consciousness, we are conscious of our freedom as not self-creating or as not the *causa sui*; we discover our freedom to be mediated by others – we are questioned, summoned to act. In this request, question, or solicitation, we discover our freedom to respond or not. The other who summons us renders us determinate; the other appears primary, and our freedom is not an unmotivated absolute self-generation, but a response to a request, a solicitation, a summons. In short, “The summons would contain within itself the *real ground* of a free decision … i.e., it would be the determining agency that intervenes between what is determinable and what is determinate …. *Something is posited in the summons which is not posited in mere determinability,*”\(^{60}\) to wit, the other as real ground of the summons.

On the other hand, *transcendental analysis* focuses on the equally crucial point that the response to the other has to be our own, has to be self-generated, even if we refuse the summons. Unless our response to the summons were self-

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 423.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 356, emphasis added.
generated, it would be heteronomous, or an automatic response to an external stimulus. But the summons is not a merely external stimulus; rather, it is a condition in which we are called to be self-generating and self-active in a moral sense. Transcendently the summons appears to be like the categorical imperative. Autonomous self-determination requires both that we impose categorical imperatives on ourselves, and that we must ourselves be the real ground of our moral activity. Thus the summons is a situation in which we must be both passive and active: “Here we encounter ‘determinate determinability,’ freedom in combination with a passive state of being affected.”

How does Fichte propose to resolve this apparent antinomy? Like Husserl, Fichte affirms both sides of it. For example, in *Naturrecht* he claims that freedom has a divided ground, partly “external” to the subject in the summons – the “real ground” – and partly “internal” to the subject, that is, the “ideal ground.”

This division of real and ideal grounds implies an intersubjective mediation of freedom. What we might expect Fichte to do is to take up the problem of how the ideal ground and real ground of freedom can be correlated and reciprocally conditioning. That was Schelling’s approach, in which Schelling flirted with the doctrine of pre-established harmony as a way of grounding and explaining the correlation. This is a questionable metaphysical solution that probably undermines the very freedom it attempts to explain. It also obscures Fichte’s discovery that autonomy is not absolute, but mediated.

Another alternative would be to show that these grounds, although divided, are not finally self-sufficient, but are reciprocally mediating and codetermining. That effort would be consistent with Fichte’s observation that “reciprocal interaction is the category of categories.” And it could make good on Fichte’s claim that persons may be “outside” each other without being “outside of reason.” What might emerge would be an account of the interhuman or “between,” that

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62. FNR 39; GNR 41. This means that freedom or autonomy is a mediated one. Mediated autonomy means that freedom has a divided ground, partly in the subject and partly in the other: “The ground of the action of the subject lies immediately in the being outside of it, and in the subject itself …. Had that other being not acted and summoned the subject to activity, the subject would not have acted. Its action as such is conditioned by the action of that being outside of him” (GNR §4, 41; FNR 39–40).

63. F. W. J. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1962); published in English as *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), Peter Heath (trans.) (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 155–75. Schelling identifies the issue quite clearly: “how … by pure negation, can anything positive be posited in such a way that I am obliged to intuit what is not my activity … as the activity of an intelligence outside me. The answer is … to will at all, I must will something determinate … but this is inconceivable unless already with my individuality … limiting points have been set to my free activity … by actions of intelligences outside of myself” (*ibid.*, 166–7).

64. FTP 421.
is, a mutual recognition where each party jointly and reciprocally plays the role of mediator to the other, and the role of extreme. The result could be a “syllogism of recognition” in which ideal and real grounds can neither be identified nor separated; that is, they must be dialectically related and reciprocally mediating. This is the path that Hegel takes.

But Fichte does not, as far as I can see, pursue this path in the novo methodo. He raises the issue of correlation between ideal and real grounds, only to reject the very idea of correlation because it implies an inadequate conception of the unity of the I. The Aufforderung implies that something is posited in the I that is not posited in mere determinability. This implies some agency that intervenes in the I and serves as the mediator, the “awakener” of the ideal ground in the I. The apparently external basis of the Aufforderung and its contingency implies that the unity of the I is pieced together. Fichte believes that while such a view has “a certain amount of truth,” it is inadequate because it introduces an unacceptable contingency into the unity of the I. Instead, Fichte believes that the I must be grasped as the unity of synthesis and analysis. Unity is not a given; rather, it must be achieved. This means that “separation occurs in and through the unification, and unification occurs through the separation.”

The latter statement is a promising beginning because it connects union and separation, necessity and contingency, as necessary conditions and moments. But Fichte does not show how or why separation occurs, that is, a one becomes a many, and how the many resolve into the one. Nor does he take up the problem of the unity of necessity and contingency, union and separation, within the I. Instead, he demands unity and focuses on the unity of analysis and synthesis. As we will see, the term for this unity of synthesis and analysis is the will, that is, practical reason. To anticipate, Fichte maintains the primacy of the will over the apparent “externality” of the Aufforderung, and demotes Aufforderung to the status of a phenomenon. The Aufforderung is reduced to being the sensible

65. Ibid., 364–5.
66. Ibid., 368.
67. Ibid., 365. The text presents difficulties noted by Breazeale. The K manuscript reads that the unification of the I is “first divided without being able to be united.” The H version has “it is first divided for the possibility of a union.” Ives Radrizzani conjectures that in K “ohne” is a mistranscription for “um,” hence, K should read, “first divided in order to be able to be united.” At issue is how serious the negation is. If negation means simply that division is the possibility of union, and union the possibility of division, the two are made symmetrical. But this leaves out the crucial idea of synthesis being the overcoming of a resistance that surely is Fichte’s central emphasis in the primacy of the practical. So the “first divided without being able to be united” conveys precisely the idea of a resistance that must be overcome. To suppress this difference collapses the Ursprungliche Duplicitaet of Ichheit into sheer identity.
68. Ibid., 365.
manifestation of the categorical imperative. Thus Fichte obscures his own important discovery of the Aufforderung, namely, that autonomy is mediated and achieved in union with other. The unity of the I, which is supposed to be a unity of self and other, of synthesis and analysis, turns out to be a subjective unity.

Fichte acknowledges a problem at this crucial step of his argument:

Haven’t we … gone astray? We have analyzed the concept of a summons, but we arrived at a second concept…. We have discovered that what comes first is not the concept of the summons, but rather an act of willing. There is no moment at which consciousness first arises; consciousness is an act of willing.69

How is it possible to affirm both Fichte’s idealist concept of the will/categorical imperative and his intersubjective concept of the summons? Who summons whom? Does another subject summon me? Or do I summon myself? Ordinary consciousness moves from the summons to the existence of the summoner, and Fichte maintains that the inferential process of ordinary consciousness is entirely justified. Yet from the transcendental standpoint the move is from willing oneself as a moral agent to the summons.70 This implies that from the transcendental standpoint, the other who summons the I to activity is displaced; the real ground of freedom collapses into the ideal, short-circuiting mediation. The I summons itself.71 As we will see, Fichte himself says this.

VII. BEYOND FORMALISM: FROM INDETERMINATE DETERMINABILITY TO DETERMINATE SELF-INDIVIDUATION

Fichte asserts that the spirit of our philosophy is this: (there is) nothing outside of me, no alleged thing in itself can be the object of my consciousness. The only object for me is I myself.72 Consequently, for reason, there is no limitation by others; all limitation is self-limitation, otherwise we have dogmatism,

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69. Ibid., 369.
70. Fichte refers to some version of the categorical imperative, which he does not hesitate to interpret theoretically.
71. It should be noted that on the very next page he contradicts the above contention that the will, not the summons comes first, when he writes that “consciousness begins with consciousness of a summons” (FTP 370). I do not know whether this means that Fichte is careless, inconsistent, or simply that the text of the lecture manuscript is corrupt. Perhaps this inconsistency is a result of his distraction by the Atheismusstreit.
72. FTP 332.
heteronomy. The original limitation of the will, or practical reason, is expressed by the categorical imperative, which sets for the will a moral task. This means that the limitation from which consciousness arises is not inflicted on me; it is one which I have assigned to myself.\textsuperscript{73} According to Fichte, the categorical imperative or self-summons is only a first step in self-limitation; the self-summons remains abstract, indeterminate, even formal; it is not yet actual because it lacks determinacy and a determinate goal.

The moral task I assign myself requires individuation. In other words, practical self-determination involves a move from what is indeterminately determinable to what is determinate.\textsuperscript{74} In this move from the determinable to the determinate Fichte situates a quasi-transcendental argument for intersubjectivity, that is, a mass of rational beings. Transcendental intersubjectivity is a condition of individuation:

I cannot discover myself apart from similar beings outside of me … for I am an individual. It makes no sense to say “I am an individual” unless others are thought of as well. Accordingly my experience begins with a realm of rational beings to which I myself belong; and everything else follows from this.\textsuperscript{75}

The practical imperative of moral self-consciousness originates with an act of self-selection from a mass of rational beings. Fichte apparently interprets Kant’s \textit{Faktum der Vernunft} as providing access not only to freedom, but to a mass of rational beings as the condition of free self-limitation and individuation. The practical imperative implies that reason is self-individuating. But reason cannot be understood solipsistically or reduced to a merely first-person egological standpoint as in Husserl. According to Fichte: “individual reason cannot account for itself on the basis of itself alone. This is the most important result of our inquiry. No individual rational being can subsist for itself. It subsists only in the whole, by means of the whole, and as a portion of the whole.”\textsuperscript{76} The mass of rational beings clarifies Fichte’s assertion that there is nothing outside of reason. Reason cannot be individual in a solipsistic sense; rather, reason is indeterminate rational mass, a potential for communalization and individuation. Fichte claims that a mass of rational beings precedes and conditions my free self-limitation in the categorical imperative; it is the mass of rational beings from which I select myself. This mass of rational beings is the transcendental

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 342.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 351.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 304, emphasis added.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 352.
\end{itemize}
condition of possibility both of my self-selection and of rational/moral individuation required but not supplied by the categorical imperative.

Individuation implies and presupposes other rational beings from which I select and individuate myself. Rational self-individuation implies others who are not me and from which I select myself. Reason is or signifies a primordial mass of rational beings from which both self and other simultaneously distinguish themselves from each other and thus both individuate and communalize themselves. This is a transcendental argument from indeterminate determinability to self-individuation and communalization.

It is worth noting that Fichte’s transcendental argument for self-limitation reverses the direction of sense-transfer later established in Husserl’s analysis of pairing between ego and alter ego. As we have seen, Husserl’s account is first-person: there is only one primordial ego; all others are appresented. Thus the transfer of sense is from the primordial first-person ego to the alter ego, from the own to the alien. But Fichte, in spite of his talk about I-hood (Ichheit), is not committed to a first-person account of the transcendental. He is committed only to an account of the rational will before which both empirical I and other are equivalent and reciprocal. Thus for Fichte, to say “I am an individual,” makes no sense unless others are thought of as well. In other words, to say “mine” as Husserl does in the reduction to ownness makes no sense unless saying “yours” also makes sense. For Fichte, “mine” and “yours” are determinate, reciprocal concepts, and the mass or community of rational beings is a condition of such determinacy, reciprocity, and individuation. That is a stronger claim, and I would submit a more defensible claim than Husserl is able to make. But it requires abandoning the first-person transcendental subject.

Note, however, that this claim that individuation begins with a selection from a mass of rational beings seems not only to resolve the intersubjective problem, but to suppress it. For if reason is already some sort of transcendental intersubjectivity/community-mass, it is difficult to see how the other could arise as or be a problem — precisely because individuation is already determined as self-selection vis-à-vis other from this community-mass. Fichte endorses this suppression when he remarks that “the sensible world is only a certain aspect or way of looking at what is intelligible.” For Fichte, individual and community are reciprocal concepts. If that is the case, there would be no problem of the alter

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77. The term Fichte uses is “mass of rational beings,” but that is cumbersome and far from clear; rational beings do not usually hang around in masses. On the other hand, Fichte is not yet speaking of an actual human community. So my compromise term, “community-mass,” is not simply a mass and not a community. It is that from which the I selects itself and individuates itself.

78. FTP 350.
ego in Husserl’s sense. The *Aufforderung* in which I am summoned by another would be somehow grounded in transcendental intersubjectivity and reciprocity.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that Fichte’s significant differences from Husserl here make any difference in the final analysis. For Fichte’s claim that reason is a mass of rational beings does not mean that the mass or community of rational beings (ends) is present. Rather, it is noumenal, that is, it is thought of or inferred. Fichte writes:

> I do not perceive the reason and free will of others outside of me; this is something I only infer from appearances in the sensible world. Consequently these other rational beings belong not within the sensible world, but rather within the intelligible one, the world of noumena.\(^{79}\)

Fichte contends that:

> rational beings are merely thought of. By means of thinking, I project them into the manifold of appearances in order to explain these appearances to myself … I think of them in order to introduce unity into appearances and into my overall experience. Reason, freedom and rational beings: these therefore belong within the intelligible world, among the noumena.\(^{80}\)

With his admission that the community of rational beings is not experienced or intuited but rather inferred and/or projected, Fichte contradicts his earlier claim that there is a community of rational beings conditioning self-individuation. The inference from the sensible presence of another’s body to another noumenal presence seems questionable, and if questionable, then the possibility of solipsism emerges, this time on the transcendental level. How can community serve as the experienced condition of rational self-individuation if it is merely an inference or projection of the rational subject? Of course Fichte might reply that such rational community may be a practically necessary assumption, like Kant’s postulates of practical reason.\(^{81}\)

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81. Fichte writes: “I select myself from a mass of reason and freedom outside of me; thus it would appear as if this freedom outside of me were merely something thought of by me. This is not the case … It is indeed true that a rational being outside us is only a noumenon, something thought of by us. Yet this is something I must infer only from the phenomena” (FTP 448). But what justifies this transphenomenal inference? The claim that it is the body of the other that justifies this inference does not really help, because that seems to end in the fallacy of
postulates, the status of the content of the postulate remains unclear. In respect to its form a postulate is relative to a subject, and has no being beyond or independent of the postulating subjectivity. But the ontological status of the content of the postulate/projection – the community of rational beings – remains unclear. Yet this is the point on which everything turns. Fichte’s language of projection/postulation and the relativity of the postulate to the postulating subject, the requirement of an inference – all this reinstates limits of cognition similar to those on which Husserl’s account also shipwrecks. If the other has to be inferred or postulated, this seems to deny the subject has any experience of that independent mass of rational beings from which it selects itself. Without the condition of indeterminate determinability provided by a mass of rational beings from which I must select myself, there could be no individuation.

To be sure, Fichte wants to argue that the self-individuation of reason in practical activity and the Aufforderung to freedom are not only compatible, but merge. He strives valiantly to bring off this merger. According to Fichte, “The world of experience is erected upon the intelligible world. Both worlds – the intelligible thought world and the world of experience (discovered) – occur simultaneously; neither can exist without the other. These two worlds are reciprocally related to each other within the mind.” This means that individuation is a two-step process, even if the two steps must be simultaneous instead of sequential. He maintains that individuation through the categorical imperative is only a first step toward individuation. That is, although I oblige myself to become a moral individual, my self-imposed categorical imperative remains indeterminate. The transcendental analysis of moral individuation as indeterminate points to the necessity of a complementary Aufforderung for its determinacy and actualization in the sensible world. The determinate goal of free activity is supposed to be supplied by the Aufforderung. In the summons I discover myself as a subject that ought to act. The summons to free activity renders the “ought” [of the categorical imperative] determinate and thus sensible. The summons also renders freedom determinate by supplying a determinate goal:

What is given me through the summons is a series of elements through which some goal is conditioned, and I am supposed to complete the series .... The other person initiates this series and

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four terms, to wit, that the other is related to his body as I am related to mine, as Max Scheler pointed out; see Nature and Forms of Sympathy, Peter Heath (trans.) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 240–41.

82. FTP 305.
83. Ibid., 450.
proceeds to a certain point, and this is the point where I have to begin
… he summons me only to carry it to its conclusion.84

The summons qualifies my determinability; it includes “the perception of myself
as determined to act upon and in reciprocal interaction with other rational
beings …. Here we encounter ‘determinate determinability,’ i.e., *freedom in
combination with a passive state of being affected.*”85 Thus the summons qualifies
and completes the categorical imperative. The summons provides a determinate
goal, which it is my responsibility, not to *originate* absolutely, but to *continue* or
*complete.*

Thus Fichte tries to show that freedom, while practically and morally self-
originating, is also self-limiting, and that transcendental self-limitation coin-
cides with the summons (i.e. limitation) by other. The summons connects
the ordinary consciousness standpoint with the transcendental standpoint by
connecting the body of a being outside of me with the concept of a rational
being. I infer, Fichte says, “the existence of a rational being outside of me from
my own freely produced limitation, i.e., from the task of limiting myself.”86
However he fails to show how the inferred or postulated existence of rational
being outside of me is experienced as a *condition* of the task of determinate self-
limitation and individuation. If such rational being/community is experienced
as present, a postulate or an inference would be superfluous. But if such being/
community must be inferred, inference seems inadequate to establish its pres-
ence, and rather presupposes it.

VIII. TOWARDS AN EVALUATION

Fichte contends that consciousness resembles a circle of conditions in which
what is determinable within the ideal series and what is determinable within the
real series must mesh and be determined by each other.87 What is determinable
in the ideal series is the realm of rational beings from which I select myself as
an individual; what is determinable in the real series is the world within which I
express myself as an individual.88 The sensible realm is thus founded on the intel-
ligible, and Fichte strives to show that the two merge. Fichte tries to show that
moral self-limitation and limitation by the *Aufforderung* of the other coincide.

Freedom in combination with a passive state of being affected is the decisive point and meaning of the *Aufforderung*.

But do self-limitation and limitation by other coincide? This is the very point at issue. The critical question is the place of the summons by other in this circle. Does the unity of *Ichheit* include the real ground of the summons, such that there is nothing outside of reason? That is the transcendental requirement. If so, then the real ground of determinate determinability would be included in the ideal ground, that is, reason. But then Fichte's position appears to become one-sided: the other who summons me to responsible action would be displaced, for all rational limitation is self-limitation. So the I as rational will summons itself; the unity of I-hood (*Ichheit*) apparently excludes any other (external to reason) who summons.

On the other hand, as Fichte also points out, the real ground of the summons is *not* included in the ideal ground, that is, in I-hood (*Ichheit*). The real ground of the summons “is not posited in mere determinability.” Consequently the summoner must in some sense be “outside” *Ichheit* and thus “outside of reason.” The summoning other must be external, and the unity of *Ichheit* as an indeterminate determinable become determinate, would appear to be “pieced together,” that is, a synthesis or a “We.”

Fichte remains faithful to the transcendental requirement of autonomy: there is nothing outside of reason. This means that the sensible is founded on the intelligible or the noumenal. What is first is not the summons but willing. However, as rational will, the I summons itself. Fichte's transcendental account of the summons appears to displace the summons – and summoner – by reducing them to “phenomena” of the will. Fichte writes: “This summons to freedom is only the sensibilized form of the summons to act upon and interact with other rational beings. *Summoned by myself* to engage in acting, I find myself within a determinate sphere.” Here Fichte alters the form and meaning of the summons from “summons by other” to “summons by oneself.” Not only is the other displaced, but Fichte states that I “attach” the determining subject to the summons.

Günter Zöller has observed that a realist interpretation of the solicitation or summons is implausible: “Yet the solicitation is not really an appeal issued from outside the individual but is the individual’s ‘clandestine’ representation to itself of its own finite being under the form of the solicitation.”† Zöller’s reading of

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90. FTP 452 n.G, emphasis added. On the other hand, Fichte contradicts this: “this task of limiting oneself is a summons to engage in a free activity (for it does not appear to come from the individual; instead it appears to come from a rational being outside of us)” (*ibid.*, 74).
the summons seems correct. The other who summons me is a phenomenon; however transcendentally-practically considered, I summon myself.

If the other who summons me turns out not to be other, or to be myself as other, this would mean that Fichte fails to establish a correlation of the transcendental with the empirical, of philosophy and life-world. Instead he reduces the other to, or displaces the other by, the will. The Aufforderung by other is a phenomenal expression of the self-summons in categorical imperative. If this is correct, then Fichte fails to demonstrate his claimed harmony of the philosophical standpoint with ordinary consciousness. Contrary to Fichte’s express declaration, ordinary consciousness would not be justified in its view that the other summons me; rather that view would be in error.

If so, then Fichte would have failed to achieve his systematic project in the novo methodo. The claimed harmony of the ideal and real series masks an asymmetrical subordination of real to ideal. That subordination may accord with the primacy of the practical and the requirement of a certain sort of autonomy. But such autonomy seems to exclude community rather than found it. Even if there were a noumenal community, it would still be asymmetrically related to the empirical community that it founds. This asymmetry implies that Fichte fails to make good on his claims that reciprocity is the category of categories and that autonomy is mediated. Rather, reciprocity is founded on and asymmetrically related to an original unity. The unity of this original duplicity trumps, or rather defines, synthesis. The other, who by summoning me, codetermines my determinability, is ultimately subordinate to or perhaps even excluded by the requirement of strict autonomy, to wit, that all limitation must be self-limitation. Precisely because the unity of the Ichheit trumps synthesis, the other remains a postulate, the I does not become a We, and the unity of the I, although universal, remains subjective.

MAJOR WORKS


I. CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling’s philosophical trajectory was launched already in his earliest childhood. For Schelling was very much a philosopher “by nature,” emerging as fully formed as Mozart. By the age of nineteen he was writing with the same authority that he commanded until his death in 1854, at the age of seventy-nine.

After his birth in Leonberg (close to Stuttgart), Schelling’s father, a Lutheran pastor and noted Orientalist, took a position in the tiny cloister-community of Bebenhausen, amid the thickly forested hills north of Tübingen. As a schoolboy Schelling learned Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic, to which he eventually added French, English, Spanish, Italian, and even some Sanskrit. This heavily

1. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (January 27, 1775–August 20, 1854; born in Leonberg, Germany; died in Ragaz, Switzerland) was educated at the theological seminary at the University of Tübingen (1790–95), receiving his doctorate in 1795; and went on to postgraduate study in natural science, mathematics, and medicine at the University of Leipzig (1795–98). His influences included the Upanishads, the Bible, Lao Tsu, Sophocles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Kabbalah Writings, Aquinas, Dante, Eckhart, Michelangelo, Raphael, Boehme, Luther, Bruno, Spinoza, Baader, Bengel, Georg Creuzer, Fichte, Goethe, Hamann, Hegel, Hölderlin, Jacobi, Kant, Kiemeyer, Leibniz, Lessing, Novalis, Oetinger, Schiller, Arthur Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Swedenborg, and Vico (by way of Herder). He held appointments at the University of Jena (1798–1803), University of Würzburg (1803–1806), Erlangen University (1820–27), and the University of Munich (1827–41), and was Member of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Director of the Kunst Akademie in Munich (1806–20), and Privy Counsellor and member of the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaft in Berlin (1841–45).
philological formation ultimately contributed to one of his major philosophical innovations, the distinction he made in his later years between negative philosophy, on the one hand, which has its source in pure reason, and positive philosophy, which draws its insights from art, literature, and the religious scriptures of all ages and traditions. In addition to a linguistic sensitivity for how the written and spoken word transcends its conceptual content, the young Schelling gained from his father an appreciation for Protestant mystics such as Bengel and Oetinger. Their mixture of theosophy and alchemy blended devotion to nature with the general Pietism of the age, yielding a “nature mysticism” that seems appropriate to the bucolic setting in which he found himself. If years later he accorded natural language apriority to the concept, he even more emphatically accorded nature apriority to language: thus his contention, for instance, that the “Book of Nature” is the deepest source of positive philosophy.

While his relevance today is assured in part by the way his idea of the nonconceptual or “positive” moment in history continues to survive in Heidegger’s Ereignis (“event of appropriation”), Habermas’s Lebenswelt (“life-world”), Deleuze’s “transcendental empiricism,” and Žižek’s “indivisible remainder,” more recent interpretations of Schelling’s thought view his importance primarily in the light of the current ecological crisis. Schelling’s capacity continuously to resurface (even after continuously being declared “dead”), and to do so in astonishingly diverse ways, reflects the kind of genius that, as Kant pointed out, gives rise to inspiration rather than imitation. The fact that he left behind no established school has oft en made him seem unimportant. To others, it serves to confirm the authenticity of a thinking that always has to be thought anew. Heidegger regarded Schelling as “more profound” than Hegel, but presumably

2. Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752) was considered to be the most important eighteenth-century Württemberg Pietist, known above all for his eschatological millennialism.

3. Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–82) was a disciple of Bengel who, in contrast to his teacher, criticized allegorical readings of Scripture as drawing attention away from the reality of spiritualized bodies.


6. See Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman, “Introduction: The New Schelling,” in The New Schelling, Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman (eds) (London: Continuum, 2004), 1. The image of a Schelling who is always able to assume a new form also pervades another anthology that has a similar title: Schelling Now, Jason Wirth (ed.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004). Taken together, these two volumes provide enormous resources for anyone who wants to understand the relevance of Schelling for contemporary continental philosophy.
not more “important.” Eric Voegelin went even further, effectively according him a rank equalled or surpassed only by Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.8

When, at the age of fifteen, Schelling enrolled in the theological seminary of the University of Tübingen, he had already acquired an intense but highly unconventional religiosity that emphasized the possibility of inward spiritual transformation and encouraged a skeptical attitude toward the institutionalized structures of church and state. According to legend, he was assigned a dormitory room in the Tübingen Stift together with Hegel and Hölderlin, both of whom were several years older than Schelling but quickly came under the spell he cast. The three students developed an unorthodox reading of Kant that minimized the critical limitation of reason and emphasized instead the revolutionary potential of transcendental reflection: insofar as reason can look away from the objects of experience in order to investigate itself, it remains free of the strictures that constitute objectivity within the web of experience. Convinced that Kant, rightly read, would prove the catalyst for a transformation of spirit fully as radical as the political revolution then unfolding in France, they were in the best possible position to greet the arrival on the scene of Fichte in 1793. But whereas Fichte envisioned spiritual revolution primarily in terms of Kant’s moral philosophy (with its rejection of Eros), Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling were prepared to announce the orgasmic return of the repressed. Instead of celebrating reason’s capacity to free us from nature (as if nature were simply the sum total of the objects of experience), they regarded reason as the revelation of a luminosity immanent within nature.

It is Schelling who seized on this idea with the greatest degree of depth and clarity, carrying it to the point of an exuberant pantheism that remained characteristic for him throughout his long career, so much so that it has to be understood not as the result of influences received but as the basis for why he was open to those influences in the first place. With regard to Kant, for instance, Schelling quickly moved from the first to the third Critique, passing over the Puritanical interlude of a moral philosophy that castigates our most natural inclinations. As for his reading of the ancients, Schelling’s pantheistic predisposition led to his early commentary on Plato’s Timaeus.9 Composed while he was still a student

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in Tübingen (and published first in 1994), the commentary was animated not only by an appreciation for the beauty of the cosmos but by the intuition that Plato's real innovation was not the doctrine of creation, but the conviction that a dark and inchoate and nonetheless inexorably self-forming matter constitutes the hidden condition for nature as a whole. To speak of nature is always to speak of that which precedes creation, whether human or divine. This dynamic materialism has to be understood as Schelling's most original and lasting impulse; it was by no means the passing whim that Hegel's later caricature made it seem to be (the idea that Schelling was the gifted but undisciplined “Proteus” of philosophy). Here Heidegger's judgment has its place: “seldom has a thinker fought so passionately, from the beginning, for his one sole position.”

In addition to Plato, Kant, and Fichte, the fourth philosopher who contributed to the discussions in the Tübingen Stift was Spinoza. Given his reputation for atheism (in the context of the lively Pantheism Controversy ignited by Jacobi\(^ {11} \)), Spinoza exerted an obvious fascination for young theology students. As is well known, for Hegel he came to represent the possibility of taking rationalism to the point of a metaphysical monism anchored in a strong conception of the philosophical absolute. For Schelling, on the other hand, the lure of Spinoza had more to do with the latter's metaphysical materialism. His Spinoza was a metaphysical materialist who saw in nature not simply the abstract form of unity, but a whole complex reality of modes and affeets that would spring to life for anyone capable of transcending the idea of substance.\(^ {12} \) Such a Spinoza could be viewed as a kind of latter-day Socrates who challenged conventional ways of thinking, denying orthodoxy with the confidence of one who has his own vision of the divine. And indeed, as young students in the Tübingen Stift, Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin were in full agreement that philosophical thinking demanded the boldest possible denial of orthodoxy, together with the capacity to envision the approaching “Kingdom of God.”

What distinguished the three young thinkers from Fichte was a decisively this-worldly emphasis that embraced nature as fully as history. In terms of concrete philosophical insights, they criticized Fichte for not realizing that his

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*11. For a discussion of the Pantheism Controversy, see the essay by Richard Fincham, in this volume.

narrow identification of the absolute with subjectivity rendered it unattainable. To attain the absolute would mean the utter disappearance of the world – *and thereby the disappearance of subjectivity as well*. This amounts not only to the realization that consciousness and subjectivity are unthinkable apart from a relationship to an object, but also to the deeper insight that the underlying identity of subject and object therefore has to be unconscious. For Schelling, the tendency to identify this unconscious source with nature provided him with a thought that sustained a career lasting almost sixty years.

**II. THE EARLIEST PUBLICATIONS**

By the time he was twenty, Schelling had published short essays that attracted the attention of Fichte, most notably *On the I as Principle of Philosophy* (1795). Fichte was so appreciative of the essay that two years later he helped secure its author a professorship at the University of Jena, where the two philosophers entered into a brief but active collaboration. Because of this connection, it is hardly surprising that Schelling’s earliest phase is usually described as a purely Fichtean form of subjective idealism. What this overlooks is the degree to which Schelling insisted that the “I,” precisely when it is invoked as the “principle of philosophy,” has to be understood on the basis of its transreflective origin: a move that entails a rapprochement between Fichte and Spinoza, together with the positive recognition that, regardless of how the freedom versus determinism debate fares within the empirical order, the absolute can be understood only as the free and unconditioned ground of nature and spirit alike. Schelling views this ground, the meeting place of nature and spirit, as necessarily *unconscious*.¹³ What freedom means in this context, he does not fully explain.

This explanation is the task of another early work that Fichte did not so actively embrace: *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, also from 1795. Often understood as an attempt to synthesize the philosophies of Spinoza and Fichte, the *Philosophical Letters* is in fact an attempt to use a single insight to gain distance from both of these thinkers. Schelling argues in the essay that a one-sided idealism and a one-sided realism lead to the same consequence: mystical surrender of the self into an absolute beyond all consciousness (whether this is construed as pure ego or as thing-in-itself). With regard to the issue of the nature of reality as such, he agreed with Fichte that the idealist’s faith in freedom and the realist’s attachment to nature both generate equally viable metaphysical

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systems. In other words, the question of the truth of reality is left without a theoretical resolution. Again like Fichte, Schelling understood this to mean that we must philosophize out of the practical standpoint. But whereas for Fichte this simply meant acting “as if” freedom were the ultimate reality, for Schelling the antinomy could not so easily be set aside. Instead of representing simply two theoretical alternatives, idealism and realism actively clash, constituting thereby the founding condition of life. Tragic drama comprehends this more effectively than philosophy (with its distaste for contradiction) ever can. Oedipus is free and determined at the same time: this is the source of his tragic end. Philosophical speculation arises as a necessary response to the human dilemma, compelling us into a search for a logically coherent system that we can never finally command. The real goal of speculation should therefore be the return to life itself, a return that the young Schelling regards as simultaneously a return to nature. The Fichtean ideal of a kingdom of spirit that will one day contain or even eradicate nature represents a failure to understand the necessarily finite nature of freedom, a Schellingian theme most recently resurrected by Jean-Luc Nancy. What it means is that, while human beings can indeed prove themselves free by operating on the basis of Fichte’s “as if,” they should not delude themselves with dreams of a realized kingdom of ends that fully embodies such freedom, for nature always wins in the end.

Championed (most persuasively by Manfred Frank) as the philosopher of radical freedom, a kind of early-nineteenth-century predecessor of Sartre, Schelling’s real endeavor was somewhat different: to understand freedom in its finitude – and this means in its relationship to nature. This is what separated him first from Fichte and later from Hegel. If Hegel has come to represent that empire of reason (and of political power) that promises to contain and ultimately to abolish tragedy (just as Fichte dreamed of containing and ultimately abolishing nature), then Schelling anticipates Heidegger as the prophetic voice that warns of tragedy’s renewal. Where necessity rises above freedom is where nature shows its life. At the same time, it is where freedom reveals itself in its

fragility as a specifically human freedom, more the ever-recurring struggle to be free than the final accomplishment of freedom.

III. NATURPHILOSOPHIE (ONE)

Called by Fichte to Jena, Schelling quickly completed two major works that were well out of Fichte's range: Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature (1797) and the still untranslated Von der Weltseele (On the world soul; 1798). These contributions to a philosophy of nature won him the admiration of Goethe in nearby Weimar and membership in the Romantic School that had gathered at Goethe's feet: Novalis, Schiller, the brothers Wilhelm and August Schlegel (the latter then married to Schelling's future wife Caroline), Schleiermacher, and Tieck. The same young man who had been placed in such close proximity to Hegel and Hölderlin had now been thrust into the inner circle of Germany's most luminary minds. He taught shoulder to shoulder with Fichte and was in constant dialogue with the Romantics. When Fichte was dismissed from the university on the charge of atheism, the young Schelling assumed the mantle of German philosophy. His response was characteristic, and in its imprudence seemed utterly oblivious to the dangers of tragic hubris: in 1799, he penned and published a poem, the Epikurische Glaubensbekenntnis Heinz Widerporstens (Heinz Widerporstens's Epicurean confession of faith), which contains a frontal attack on conventional Christianity while advocating in its stead a pantheistic religiosity that finds God “in stone and moss, in flowers, metals and all things.” Even Goethe expressed shock, but also his lasting respect, inviting the twenty-four-year-old Schelling to join him and Schiller in ushering in the New Year of a new century.

To explain why such a man might find the idea of tragedy compelling, two observations can be made. First, by grounding freedom in a transreflective absolute, Schelling anticipated the idea that Heidegger later calls “thrownness.” Instead of identifying freedom with autonomous self-determination, he understood it as a self-determination that arises from an unconscious origin. Before it can ever make anything of itself, the self first has to arrive on the scene. Life is suffered before it is lived. With this intuition, Schelling encountered the idea of fate or destiny. This leads to a second observation: Schelling's own life offered confirmation for his philosophical insight. To find himself acclaimed at such an

19. The lyric poet Novalis (1772–1801), whose real name was Friedrich von Hardenburg, and the playwright Johann Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), were two of the most significant representatives of German early Romanticism. While Novalis tended toward mysticism, Tieck was more worldly and helped introduce Shakespeare to German literary circles. [*] Schiller and Wilhelm Schlegel are discussed in this volume; Schleiermacher is discussed in an essay by Eric Sean Nelson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
early age the philosophical genius of an emerging new epoch was above all else to have found himself. The idea of genius implies giftedness, what Kant famously called the “Gunst” (or favor) of nature, rather than autonomously willed productivity. When Schelling took up his Naturphilosophie (such a fixed concept that I will retain the German instead of using the English “philosophy of nature”), he was not simply expanding Fichte’s idealism. Instead, he was seeking to uncover the preconscious origins of the self – and to do so in a way that would account for his own profound sense of destiny. The accomplishment of tragedy is that while revealing the self-deception of one who feels himself sovereign over the world, it simultaneously reveals the groundedness in nature that is itself the real source of genius.

On the face of it, it might appear that the Naturphilosophie was Schelling’s attempt to illuminate the natural conditions of the self in order that he himself (or we ourselves) might gain greater control over them. Psychoanalysis, which has deep roots in Schelling’s philosophy, is certainly often understood in this way, as if reflection itself were the goal of life.20 But “mere reflection,” we are told, “is a spiritual sickness in mankind.”21 These words from the Introduction to the Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature constitute one of Schelling’s truly fundamental thoughts. What he was searching for was not a system of nature that could be understood by a thinker somehow hovering outside it, but an account of his own strong sense of identity with nature. The idea of the organic, borrowed in large part from Kant’s Critique of Judgment, is the idea of a natural entity that carries its form within itself. It is not the human understanding that imposes from the outside the form of plant-ness on to a plant, for the form must already be given within it if the plant is to have life. Purposiveness in the organic world is not to be explained by attributing it either to a creator-god or to the epistemological subject; instead it is purposiveness within the natural order itself, that “purposiveness without purpose” that has its highest revelation in the accomplishment of genius, a productivity that goes so far beyond what could ever be intended that it is incapable of comprehending itself. The cure for the “spiritual sickness” of reflection is the realization that philosophical knowledge is carried by a not-knowing that imbeds the philosophizing subject within the blind subjectivity of nature. As self-production it is genuine subjectivity. But it is blind subjectivity, for even when it comes to light in the human understanding it never knows

itself fully. Purposive order arises from nature and is recognized in its purposiveness by the human understanding. The same understanding that grasps the forms of nature realizes that it has not created them: order in nature is always first and foremost order in nature — and therefore has to be disclosed from nature herself. This leads to an insight fully consistent with Schelling’s understanding of tragedy:

Nature speaks to us the more intelligibly the less we think of her in a merely reflective way … So long as I myself am identical with nature, I understand what a living nature is as well as I understand my own life; I apprehend how this universal life of Nature reveals itself in manifold forms, in progressive developments, in gradual approximations to freedom. As soon, however, as I separate myself, and with me everything ideal, from Nature, nothing remains to me but a dead object, and I cease to comprehend how a life outside me can be possible.\(^{22}\)

Only the mind that has overcome its reflective division from nature realizes the full extent of its inner union — or that “Nature should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature.”\(^{23}\)

While much of the science may be dated, Schelling was able to graft a tremendously wide range of empirical observations on to his speculative metaphysics of nature. He depicted the universe as an organic whole caught between the forces of expansion and contraction (light and gravity), and then went on to show how derivative forces were also constitutive of the microcosmic order. He believed that the cosmic “breathing” that gives life to nature as a whole is concretely expressed in a series of natural polarities that range from the electric and magnetic forces animating the chemical process to the sexual polarity that underlies and sustains organic reproduction, and from the internal division between sensation and irritation within animal life to the way the atmosphere as a whole is constituted out of a tug-of-war between oxygen and carbon dioxide, itself expressive of the interdependence of plant and animal. Against the mechanical (or clockwork) conception of the universe, Schelling’s view was dynamic and anticipated important features of the post-Newtonian physics of the twentieth century (above all the understanding of matter as crystallized energy). It restored, within a more modern context, the Platonic and Aristotelian view that nature has nothing “inert” within it, but is instead the actualization of the slumbering potency of matter, a potency that ultimately is identical with

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 35–6.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 42.
pure privation or prime matter. Against the emerging atomic theory, the early Naturphilosophie advanced the view that matter itself is an always-wavering equilibrium of opposed forces.

Despite Schelling’s objections to the strongly Newtonian bias of most nineteenth-century natural science, there are still important areas of confluence with some important new developments. Faraday’s experimental confirmation of Oersted’s electromagnetic theory is a case in point: Oersted was a student of Schelling, who was fully justified in asserting that the origins of electromagnetic theory lay in Schelling’s own 1799 First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature. Similarly, new research reveals that evolutionary theory in biology is much closer to some of Schelling’s central concerns (e.g. the developmental diversification of species) than has hitherto been realized. Even so, the Naturphilosophie has to be understood first and foremost as a sustained critique of the mechanical presuppositions of modern science and of its tendency to reduce (in its passion for measurement) the physical to the mathematical. For Schelling, space and time are mathematically determinable only as a dynamic and self-generative system of number, and for precisely this reason they are not to be reduced to the fixed grid of a Cartesian coordinate system. He implicitly agreed with Leibniz’s intuition that calculus rather than geometry has to be understood as the representative mathematical system. The interplay between forces of expansion and contraction gives birth to number even as it gives birth to space and time – and to thought even as it gives birth to matter.

This dynamic conception of nature is primordial in the strictest sense and governs even the conception of God. A powerful thunderstorm is never a mere symbol of divine fury to the degree that it is internally constitutive of the divine life itself. Nature is everywhere alive, implicitly if not explicitly. If modern science operates on the assumption that life is an accidental disruption of the dead inertness that constitutes the true being of nature, Schelling assumes the opposite: the more alive something is the more real it is. Inert matter exists only to the degree that the highest form of life is not so much consciousness as divine awakening. A dead universe is the deposit of a universal organism. When it erupts with life, it is effectively completing its own unconscious version of what the philosopher experiences consciously in the act of recollection. His “evidence” for this is not empirical but intuitive, the realization that the existence of a perceptible universe presupposes an original productivity. While the typical natural scientist finds no mystery in presence as such, and is satisfied to assume that, in one form or another, the universe has “always been there,” the philosopher of nature realizes that on the deepest level presence itself has to be experienced as an utterly improbable insurrection against the void – even if this is fully natural and has

been going on forever. In the language of Spinoza, *natura naturata* (or nature as object) has to be understood as the product of the dynamic forces that together make up *natura naturans* (or nature as creative subject). Schelling assumes that the universe exists in order to express its primordial productivity by giving birth to life – something that it does over and over, and on the most disparate planets and in the most disparate times.

Two centuries earlier, Giordano Bruno had been burned at the stake for such ideas. And in his own time, Fichte’s dismissal from the University of Jena proved that the danger of persecution was still a clear and present one, with no one prepared to distinguish the pantheist from an atheist. In such an environment, Schelling persisted in a battle that had two opposing fronts. On the one hand, he opposed the emerging empirical sciences, convinced that, by restricting themselves to what is simply given to experience and ignoring the metaphysical question of origin, they adopt a solipsistic standpoint without even knowing they do so. Given that no observer can observe another’s subjective act of observing, empiricist epistemology is solipsistic and inherently nihilistic, yielding a desolate view of a universe populated by dead atoms and robotic contraptions.

The charge of solipsism (which he typically directed against the naive Kantian) could seem strange, given that Schelling’s own answer to the question of how knowledge of nature is possible is the one he learned from Leibniz: the monad has “no window” – and therefore contains all of nature *within* it. One wonders, of course, how an internally directed and absolutely nonempirical intuition (Schelling’s famous *intellectual intuition*) can serve as the basis for overcoming solipsism. How can self-knowledge serve as the basis for understanding that the things we see are truly things *outside of us*? Schelling’s answer is that what the self knows is its own *reality*, and thereby its own givenness, its own “having been produced by something other than itself.” The deepest ground of the self is transreflective, which is why he first introduced the notion of intellectual intuition, absorption in this ground, with the striking sentence: “We awaken from intellectual intuition as from a state of death.” Although he evokes the philosophy of Leibniz, he dismisses even the theoretical possibility that a monad could ever fully elevate unconscious perception into consciousness. This reveals the second front on which he did battle. As clearly as his *Naturphilosophie* was opposed to the viewpoint of the natural sciences, it was also opposed to religious orthodoxy. God cannot be understood as a separate and self-conscious entity. The intuition into the transreflective ground of the self has universal implications (holding for God as well as for man). In this respect, as important as Leibniz is for Schelling, it is Spinoza who gets the last word. Schelling reveals himself then as a most peculiar kind of idealist: always a materialist in the end.

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25. SW I, 325.
IV. SYSTEM OF TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM

If this is the consequence of the Naturphilosophie, it seems somewhat difficult to reconcile with the work that followed – the System of Transcendental Idealism (1800) – which returns to the language of Kant and Fichte and appears to be forthrightly idealist in conception. The method of the work has been made familiar by Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (1807): the philosopher's understanding of subject–object identity is allowed to “run ahead” of and guide a narrative description of how self-conscious spirit emerges from animal sensibility. Because this emergence is presented as spirit's progressive recollection of the original act whereby the “absolute I” surrendered itself to nature, the entire treatise appears to be a fairly straightforward attempt to “deduce” reality from the principle of self-consciousness. Two things have to be remembered, however. First, while insisting that his entire project is sustained by intellectual intuition (subjectivity's ability to somehow “see itself”), Schelling has not forgotten his initial comparison of the intuition with death. The primordial “I” is precisely not the awakened “I” of self-consciousness. As a result, the assumption of a thoroughgoing identity between subject and object is just that: an assumption (or, as he calls it, a postulate). This leads to the second point: the purpose of the entire development is to reveal the necessity of concretizing intellectual intuition by showing how it first comes to life not in a subjectivity that has rendered itself fully transparent, but in a flash of recognition that accompanies a work of genius. Intellectual intuition realizes itself in an aesthetic intuition, through which a subject (the creative artist) comes to glimpse an independent subjectivity operating within the work standing before it. Against Hegel, who argues that spirit ultimately learns to see itself in the world as a whole, Schelling argues that spirit encounters itself as objectively given only in that miraculous moment when a work of art is viewed as mysteriously completing itself. The intuition can be communicated only to the degree that certain observers of art are able to view the work from the vantage point of the creative process that gave birth to it in the first place. To experience art in this way is to glimpse the absolute and to gain hope of humanity’s final reconciliation – but not in the form of a universally communicable science. If Hegel learns from Schelling, there is still an abyss that separates them.

The hermeneutic goal of the System of Transcendental Idealism is the disclosure of an unconscious productivity at work in humanity. The outline of the System reveals a consistency with the central claim of the Philosophical Letters. In the first stage of the new work, which relies heavily on Kant's first Critique, the focus is on theoretical necessity: to know the world theoretically is to know the impossibility of changing it (Oedipus’s fate is determined). This is followed by a second series of reflections that take up the contrasting position of practical
philosophy (the Kantian and Fichtean ideal of autonomy): we are reminded that nothing can really be known apart from the world we actively shape (Oedipus struggles to change his fate). This antinomy between freedom and necessity is never explicitly resolved. The substantiality of the theoretically known world depends on the indemonstrable supposition that there are things-in-themselves. The contrasting practical supposition of freedom is equally indemonstrable. It is the work of art (the free creation that experiences itself as a work of necessity) that lives out this tension. Whereas the Philosophical Letters discussed this in terms of tragic drama, Schelling now makes the claim that art in general (not logic!) is the proper organon of philosophy. Because artistic creation is an active shaping of what is simultaneously a necessary and objective endowment of nature, it involves a form of knowing that, transcending both theoretical and practical reason, alone reaches the truth. Aesthetic intuition is unveiled as the highest form of reason insofar as it allows us consciously to create forms even as they are unconsciously given to us through inspiration. Like Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy, Schelling looks to paintings such as Raphael’s Transfiguration of Jesus for the artistic self-representation of what this means. And like Nietzsche, he understands this in terms of the tension between the Apollonian and the Dionysian.26

The idea also serves as the basis of Schelling’s philosophy of history: humanity creates out of its hidden drives and desires, realizing thereby what human nature has always already constituted as its hidden destiny. Although similar to Kant’s idea of “social unsociability” and Hegel’s “cunning of reason,” Schelling’s version of the story places even more emphasis on unconscious productivity, and (anticipating Freud and Lacan) rejects the fantasy of a rational utopia that will one day free itself from such forces. Thus, even in the System of Transcendental Idealism, it is nature that ultimately prevails. If Schelling follows Fichte in regarding the transcendental self as the initially unconscious activity of self-production, he distinguishes himself from Fichte by identifying this activity with nothing less than the entire broad sweep of both natural and world history. The “I” that makes itself into “me,” is not the “I” that I identify with my conscious self: instead, it is nature herself, which, having made herself into me, is yet far more than I myself could ever fathom. The fundamental position has not changed at all.

Like Hegel, Schelling had the courage to seek the philosophical comprehension of the absolute. This was their common project, to understand God. But what that God is — and what his “kingdom” might be — appears profoundly different, depending on whether one views it through the lens of reason or the lens of tragic drama. This is not to suggest that Schelling simply decided to “set aside” reason. The one thinker of his age from whom he is most intent on distinguishing himself is Jacobi, the strident opponent of Spinoza who understood Kant as proving both that there is an unconditioned absolute and that, because it is inaccessible to reason, it should be approached only through faith. In opposition to Jacobi’s fideism, Schelling was convinced that reason is a powerful enough instrument to reveal its own limits. Even if one were to accept the Hegelian identification of reason and reality, reason itself will show that there is no “reason” why reality must be rational. For that matter, there is no reason (or no prior reason) for why anything at all should exist. Schelling’s commitment to rationality was sufficient for him to provide powerful and coherent arguments for why philosophy, if it is to follow reason into its final consequences, must end by embracing the tragic view. He remained committed to that view even during the brief period of his active collaboration with Hegel (1801–1803), after the latter had been summoned to Jena to serve as his assistant. Instead of designating this period as his “system of identity” (which implies a radical shift of perspective), it makes more sense to follow Schelling’s own lead in calling it too Naturphilosophie.

Hegel’s influence, such as it was, can perhaps be inferred from the fact that in 1804 Schelling completed a work entitled System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular. This is significant given that he so frequently commented on the impossibility of completing a system of philosophy, which is presumably why, whenever he put forward a “system,” he almost always qualified it in some way, offering a “First Outline” (1799) or nothing more satisfying than “My System” (1801). If the 1804 system appears to be the important exception to this tendency, it is noteworthy that Schelling withheld it from publication.

A look at the 1801 Presentation of My System of Philosophy provides a clue for why Schelling persisted in calling his philosophy as a whole by the name Naturphilosophie. The dominant figure of the entire system is the image of magnetic polarity, which combines opposition with unity, insofar as negative and positive poles attract rather than repel one another. A complete magnet is given, moreover, even if one or the other pole is severed from the rest of the magnet (the severed positive pole will “sprout” a negative pole at its base). In other words, the negative is contained in the positive and the positive in the
negative. Schelling sees precisely this as holding for the relationship between consciousness and nature (subject and object). No objective sphere can be conceived that does not have at least the seed of subjectivity within it (the world is simply not as emphatically alien to consciousness as thinkers in the modern era have generally assumed). In other words, objective nature is alive with the possibility of spirit. And consciousness, in turn, is always turned toward some kind of an object. The goal behind all of this is to make clear that the sum of all opposing forces constitutes a point of identity in which all opposition is reconciled, not dissimilar to the way, in the natural series of numbers, negative and positive infinity “add up” to an identity with the zero that stands between them. The relationship between negative and positive forces in nature prefigures the relationship between subject and object that grounds the consciousness of reality. In fact, the lower so consistently prefigures the higher that the full multiplicity of what exists can be understood as everywhere one and the same, now slumbering, now awake.

Hegel’s famous statement in the Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit that the system of identity refers to a “night in which all cows are black” has to be read in light of the fact that the system he ridicules is one he initially shared with Schelling. Indeed, the very phrase he used had been coined by Schelling, in order to indicate that identity is so far from being a “black night” that it contains within it the full dynamism of nature and spirit. It represents, moreover, the final and most impressive blossoming of Neoplatonism in the history of Western thought. Within Neoplatonism, the deepest impulses of both rationalism and mysticism are brought together and reconciled. The One that contains reality within it is the Unbedingte or unconditioned. More literally translated (and in accord with Schelling’s understanding of the term), it is the “un-thinged,” the primordial No-thing that, because it yearns for existence, is yet not nothing. As the common origin, the One serves both as the ontological ground and as the basis for all of rationality. Although empirically inaccessible, it is the object of intellectual intuition, that inner “seeing” that reveals the very essence of the absolute. As No-thing (or pure unity, the One), it is simultaneously free of all objectivity, so that the object of intellectual intuition is a “non-objective” object indistinguishable from the self-developing subject that underlies and sustains both the appearance of reality and the intuitive perception of that appearance. The paradox of a subjectivity that, while pure, is yet its own “object” is a paradox rich enough to sustain a vision of dialectical self-development that provides an account for the full creative unfolding that is nature. The No-thing is always both itself and “everything.” As the infinite ground, the No-thing disappears in the appearance of finite objectivity; yet at the same time it preserves itself by gathering itself into the Beyond, from which it always emerges victorious. Even in a world where “there is no nothing,” everything is destined to die.
The figure of a no-thing that becomes something places us on the threshold of a philosophy of will (whereby will is understood metaphysically as representing the capacity of not-being to become being). More importantly, in terms of Schelling’s own development, we are at the stage when intellectual intuition is no longer presented as an act of self-abandonment so radically nonobjective that it can only be known by the trace it leaves behind in the work of art. It is now understood as an act that can both be completed and sustained, which is precisely what makes Schelling a Neoplatonist. This is not to say that he follows Plato in characterizing intellectual intuition as a direct cognizing of pure form. Instead, he joins Fichte in borrowing from Kant’s idea of the productive imagination, emphasizing less the determinacy of form than the indeterminacy of the activity that gives birth to form. Intellectual intuition is the self-apprehension of the infinite subject within the finite subject. While this emphatically requires self-abandonment on the part of the philosopher, it is a self-abandonment that provides an opening – and a consciousness – for the self-discovery of the absolute. Schelling understands that which awakens in this self-discovery either as “God” or as the “universe.” His philosophy is Naturphilosophie to the degree that he sees no difference between the two. In a formulation from 1806, he presents this intuition as the final overcoming of the Cartesianism that still infected Kant and Fichte: “The ‘I think, I am,’ has from the time of Descartes been the most fundamental error in knowledge; thinking is not my thinking, and being is not my being, for everything belongs only to God or to the universe.”27 This “God or the universe” reveals the continuing presence of Spinoza in Schelling. In terms of his philosophy, what it means is that the word “unity,” for instance, can simultaneously refer to God, the unity of reason, and to the physical force of gravity, which holds the universe together. 

Naturphilosophie is first and foremost a celebration of the divinity of the universe. It is the work of a supremely happy man, composed during the years of his marriage with Caroline (whose former husband August Schlegel remained a close friend of the family). Schelling presents nature as the throbbing heart of an Aristotelian God, who within himself (within his profoundly female inner essence) remains above the fray, assuring by his very indifference the ultimate harmonizing of a universe only temporarily bound by strife. Philosophy has completed itself in religion, attaining its sought-after knowledge only when the philosopher has been silenced into pure seeing.

It is thus appropriate that the more systematic works of this period were accompanied by a literary supplement. In 1802, a dialogue appeared under the title Bruno or On the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things. Its literary form serves as an indication that the ideal of completed rationality has somehow 

27. SW VII, 148.
been disrupted. This becomes explicit in another work of the period, which was planned as a supplemental dialogue. Published in 1804, Philosophy and Religion introduces the idea of a catastrophic fall, a shattering of identity that goes beyond the dialectical movement of the concept. Within the philosophical idea, God and nature are one. Within the world we inhabit, they have somehow been torn asunder. The Naturphilosophie forms the background for a philosophy of history that includes nature within it, and resurrects Schelling’s deepest insights into the tragic nature of being as such. Behind the cheerful Neoplatonist lurks the tormented Gnostic. If the Aristotelian God is lost in repose, then the God of this universe is something – or someone – else entirely. If nature, contained in God, is the holy and the beautiful, then that same nature, cast forth from God, is the horrific. This thought, shattering enough in itself is merely the prelude for Schelling’s most difficult and yet most characteristic thought: the barbaric principle of nature must itself be comprehended as something contained within God, as the ground of his very possibility.28

VI. THE MIDDLE PERIOD

After a brief stay at the University of Würzburg (1804–1806), Schelling became the secretary of the Academy of Art in Munich, where he stayed from 1806 to 1820. In terms of his personal life, the most important event of that period was the death of Caroline in 1809. The dark presentiment that can be read out of the 1804 essay on religion had now received its confirmation. The break with Hegel thereby became final and irresolvable. It was Schelling alone who carried the burden of realizing the fragility of the absolute, which he now regards as somehow infected by the dark and mysterious nature of the finite. The philosophy of light and understanding has given way to something both darker and more ominous. The year 1809 was not only the year of Caroline’s death, but it was also the year of Schelling’s last significant publication, the Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom. Human freedom, conceived as the possibility of choosing evil, has as its condition an unruly impulse within nature itself.

While Schelling is often presented as if he simply shifted his attention away from nature to the realm of freedom, nothing could be further from the truth. As has been emphasized already, his concern was not simply to think through the possibility of freedom, but to understand that freedom in its finitude – as

a specifically human freedom. Because nature is what constitutes the limit to freedom, it remains as central in this essay as in his previous Naturphilosophie, which is why he begins his discussion with the observation: “The entire new European philosophy since its beginning (with Descartes) has the common defect that nature is not available for it and that it lacks a living ground.”

This “living ground” Schelling transposes into God himself: “It is nature – in God, a being indeed inseparable, yet still distinct, from him.” What makes the ground a “living” one is its unruly character, the utter darkness of its deepest root, which Schelling later calls the Unvordenklichkeit des Seins (the unprethinkable nature of being). By placing primordial nature “in God,” he accomplished a new kind of theodicy, one that essentially “excuses God” for permitting evil, insofar as it recognizes that God has had to make the same struggle that man makes: God too suffers the “unprethinkable” of his own existence. The darkness within nature is thus a darkness within the absolute itself. Just as he had once referred to nature as the “transcendental past” of human consciousness, he now views both nature and history as constituting what in God himself must be past, but which for us is the nightmare of the present. Not only temporality, but pain and evil are internal conditions that God had to overcome in order to “become” God. They are what Schelling calls the ground of God’s existence, what God quite literally had to “work through” in order to elevate himself into existence. The language of the absolute, the self-sufficient foundation of rational metaphysics, has given way to the new and more religious language of God, whose divinity has to be disentangled from the dark inscrutability of his origin. Through spiritual clarification, the primal will slowly frees itself from its blind craving. Because he envisions the ground of this craving as primordial nature (here his materialism is central), he is able to present the process of clarification in the language of alchemy. His boyhood reading of Oetinger finally bears fruit, expanded and deepened by his new encounter with the writings of Jakob Boehme, the seventeenth-century cobbler whom Schelling regarded as proving that a philosopher can be schooled in and by nature alone.

If the essay on Human Freedom represents a philosophy of will, not the autonomous will of Kant and Fichte, but a will rooted in the blind cravings and yearnings of nature itself, Schelling’s next project was to attempt to unfold this view

30. Ibid., 27.
31. Jakob Boehme (1575–1625) was the originator of the natural mysticism that was later revived by Bengel and Oetinger. Although he had no formal education, his works had a profound impact on the philosophy of German idealism and the entire tradition of Christian theosophy.
into a comprehensive system. From 1811 until 1820 (roughly the years in which Schopenhauer was writing the *World as Will and Representation*), he worked on a long narrative description of the life of God in what he envisioned as his main work: *The Ages of the World*. The word “narrative” serves as an indication that while Schelling aims at the comprehensiveness of a system, he is not trying to build a scientific system in the manner of Hegel. Whereas Hegel says that the name philosophy (as a desire for wisdom) should give way to the name science (as the possession of wisdom), Schelling very explicitly says the opposite, insisting that the word philosophy appropriately describes a scientific endeavor that is always more of a “striving toward knowledge than knowledge itself.” The outline of his work confirms its open-endedness. Divided into “past, present, and future,” it can be read as proposing a treatment of everything that happened before the creation of the world, everything that must happen until the world passes away, and, finally, everything that will happen after the end of the world. But the mode of that treatment varies as time itself varies (the “past is known, the present recognized, but the future is never more than divined”). Given the indeterminacy of the future, it is little wonder that Schelling never completed the project, which collapsed, leaving a long series of fragments, none of which were published until after his death. It was a monumental failure that can be traced in the several thousand pages that have survived (hundreds of additional pages were destroyed in a Second World War bombing of the University of Munich library). What we have is enough to secure the conception of a God who created a world to relieve his own “inner torment.” God separated himself from nature, leaving us stranded in a godless world. While he wrote very little on the epoch of the “future” (his *Stuttgart Seminars* from 1810 and his dialogue *Clara*), we have enough to see that his hope for a future reconciliation involves not simply the possibility of our own redemption, but the redemption of nature as a whole. Schelling’s “heaven” is a world inhabited by bodies, translucent bodies, a transfiguration that has been anticipated in our greatest works of art.

All of this is not quite as speculative as it might sound. Schelling has his own dialectic, his elaborate theory of powers or “potencies” (*die Potenzenlehre*), that enables him to traverse this much territory. The movement is threefold. In the beginning, there is pure potency, as that which is nothing in particular precisely because it could be anything whatsoever. This potency he calls the “will that wills nothing,” observing from the existence of our world that it must have succumbed to self-will, the “will to be something.” This is the catastrophic fall mentioned above, the inexplicable “fact” that cannot be deduced from pure potency, but can only be inferred from the existence of the world in which we find ourselves. In

other words, existence itself is primordially an accident (Urzufall). Indeed, this is what constitutes the “inner torment” from which God frees himself. The way he does this is by elevating himself to a higher potency (just as in mathematics, one elevates a number to a higher “power”). The will that “wills nothing” is now an embodied will, stepping forth in our own world as a Buddha or a Christ. But given the necessity with which our world must try to discard the higher potency (e.g. the crucifixion of Christ), a third potency is rendered necessary, promising an age in which humanity as a whole is delivered from the ravages of self-will. While a short description of this development reads like a philosophy of history, the movement that Schelling has in mind “preceded the world” and can be expressed in purely formal terms according to the formula:34

\[
\begin{align*}
\frac{A^3}{A^2} &= (A = B) \\frac{B}{A}
\end{align*}
\]

If \( A \) is the pure potency (or will that wills nothing), then \( B \) is its contraction into self-will. On the basis of this contraction, \( A \) is able to “step forth” as \( A^2 \). This can be likened to the emergence of the incarnate God. \( A^3 \) represents the God that reveals itself as \( A^2 \) sacrifices itself. As spirit it can infuse all things. To place the entire movement in the power of \( B \) is Schelling’s way of signifying the primordial accident of existence. It also gives expression to his fundamental materialism.

There is little question but that Schelling experienced self-will as an “inner torment.” In any event, while from 1794 to 1809 he had published steadily, he now continued to write as prolifically as ever – but he kept his output hidden from the public. His silence gave testimony to the darkness that had come to engulf him. Despite his marriage, in 1812, to Pauline Gotter, who bore him three sons (including K. F. A. Schelling, the editor of his complete works), Schelling’s mood was one of profound loneliness – and grief for the loss of Caroline. The tragic fall that he had always regarded as a function of the blind necessity at the heart of being had struck him personally. He did not experience this as the end of freedom, but as a confirmation of its finite nature. Freedom shows itself not as autonomous self-determination, but as struggle.

VII. THE LATE PHILOSOPHY

Fortunately, his silence was not complete: he preserved his lectures for posterity. In 1821, he delivered an important address, “On the Nature of Philosophy as Science,” at the University of Erlangen, where he began teaching again in

34. Ibid., 84.
1823. He remained there for four years before moving back to Munich where he received an appointment from King Ludwig I in 1827. He taught at the University of Munich until 1841, when, with much fanfare, he was assigned by King Frederick William IV of Prussia to Hegel’s old Chair of Philosophy at the University of Berlin, which he retained until 1846. He continued to present occasional lectures at the Prussian Academy of Science until 1852, at which point he withdrew from public life altogether and prepared himself for death.

“On the Nature of Philosophy as Science” is a profound and innovative philosophical exercise, a suitable gateway into the last phase of Schelling’s career. Its premise is that the will to system derives from an original asystaton or disharmony. The condition is tragic: the need for system derives from a conflict between equally legitimate systems that somehow must coexist. As in the Philosophical Letters of his youth, Schelling does not seek to reconcile irreconcilable differences, but instead seeks a restoration of health, which he describes as coming free of system. Just as physical health remains oblivious to the variety of organic systems that come together to constitute the organism as a whole, so the spirit must free itself from the idolatry of ideological thought structures.

Schelling regards this liberation from system as possible, precisely because he understands spirit as itself primordially free: it is one subject that, alive in the entire history of thought, is bound to no single one of its creations. Philosophical wisdom is a real possibility, but only in the form of that knowing ignorance, which we associate with the name of Socrates. Wisdom is Gelassenheit (release-ment), literally a letting go of every conceivable ideological certainty – a surrender that must ultimately extend to the religious belief in God.

That which Dante saw written on the door of the inferno must be written in a different sense also at the entrance to philosophy: “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.” Those who look for true philosophy must be bereft of all hope, all desire, all longing. They must not wish for anything, not know anything, must feel completely bare and impoverished.35

This is a kind of philosophical “dark night of the soul” that culminates in wisdom and health. The death of an individual’s convictions is the precondition for the ecstatic awakening, within the individual, of the absolute subject that lives through all individuals.

In the language of tragedy, Oedipus must be destroyed so that Dionysus can reveal his own freedom, which is the freedom to hide himself behind the mask of Oedipus – and the freedom to enter any other form once that mask is shattered.

Although the name “Dionysus” does not occur in the 1821 lecture, it does figure heavily in the primary project that occupied Schelling during the last twenty to thirty years of his life: the elaboration of a monumental philosophy of mythology and revelation, in which he sought proof of the emergence of divinity from darkness. By interpreting Christ as Dionysus’s entry into history, Schelling is able to bring the pagan impulses of his own youth in alignment with a Christianity freed from its own ideological biases. What is true of the variety of intellectual systems is true of the variety of religions in the world: they must be experienced as coalescing once the exclusivity of their various claims is overcome.

It is thus within history itself that Schelling found hope and overcame the melancholic tendencies of his middle period. While he made use of the Joachite idea of three ages (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), he was careful to present the third age in the language of eschatological hope rather than Messianic certainty. In this, he differed once again from Hegel. In fact, although the possibility of philosophical (or nonsectarian) religion had become the main focus of his later years, the Schelling of this period is remembered above all for his critique of Hegel.

When he was called to Berlin, there is no doubt that (despite his nonsectarian inclinations) Schelling was chosen as a representative of traditional religion. His appointment was thus viewed as a contribution to the spirit of Restoration. This misses much, however. First, his philosophy of history is much more oriented around the future than around the past. Unlike Hegel’s, it is essentially open-ended. This can be verified, moreover, in terms of the concrete impact of his lectures. Thinkers such as Bakunin, Burckhardt, Engels, Feuerbach, Humboldt, Kierkegaard, Marx, and Ranke were unified in rejecting Schelling’s dark theologizing. At the same time, they absorbed his implicit materialism, internalized his critique of Hegel, and understood this much of his distinction between “negative philosophy” and “positive philosophy”: the future belongs not to the philosophy of the concept, but to a philosophy that opens itself to history and transformation. Instead of encouraging our obsessive focus on what we can control and predict, a vibrant philosophy must set us free. The Kantian–Fichtean myth of autonomy is the last barrier to overcome, insofar as true freedom is the ability to stand face to face with tragic necessity.

This entails the avowal that the mystery of being always retains priority over its rationality. Reaching beyond Marx and Kierkegaard, Schelling looks forward to Nietzsche and Heidegger. Anticipating the latter’s talk of the “end of metaphysics” and the possibility of “a new beginning,” Schelling brought philosophy to the brink of epochal rupture. When reaching back to Plato and Aristotle, his purpose was to renew philosophy by appropriating the foundational energy of a lost, but retrievable origin.
The last period of his career was controversial in his own time (was it reactionary or revolutionary?). It remains so. But, given the contemporary “clash of civilizations,” this latest phase of his long career may be the most important for us today. For the idea of philosophical religion offers the possibility of freeing religion into its essence, which lies beyond sectarian division and is ultimately a matter of spirit and understanding. If much of Schelling’s vision seems dark and inscrutable, it is only because he was so profoundly committed to truth. To understand reality we have to free ourselves from the Hegelian tendency simply to define it as what is inherently knowable. True understanding has to break through to the recognition that reality is always yet “something more” – thus the early turn to nature, art, and poetry – and the subsequent emphasis on the unfathomable ground of the absolute itself. Schelling’s refusal to let the pursuit of truth turn into flight from reality is what makes him a philosopher of enduring importance. His tragic recognition of finitude is what keeps his spirit alive. Schelling died on August 20, 1854, in Bad Ragaz (Switzerland).

**MAJOR WORKS**


*Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie,* from *Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik,* edited by F. W. J. Schelling (1801), vol. 2. Published in English as “F. W. J. Schelling: Presentation of My System...”


BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

A very detailed (211 pages) multilanguage bibliography of works by and on Schelling can be found at www.philosophie.uni-bremen.de/uploads/media/Schelling-Bibliographie-2004.pdf (accessed June 2010).
Arthur Schopenhauer was one of the most cosmopolitan philosophers in history. He traveled extensively around Europe and mastered German, Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, and English. But he was also one of the few great Western thinkers to study, admire, and incorporate Hindu and Buddhist writings and topics into his philosophical system. He had a relatively lonely childhood, and his father's death in 1805 – probably by suicide – fuelled his pessimistic outlook on life and humanity. Contrary to his contemporary Hegel, whom he despised, he sees the world as the emanation of a blind, purposeless, and irrational will, which dominates the world, including human beings. Embittered by the lack of success of his own magnum opus, The World as Will and Representation, he chose to lecture at the same hour as Hegel at the University of Berlin, where Hegel was the celebrated Professor of Philosophy. Whereas Hegel's lecture was attended by hundreds of students, the unknown Schopenhauer was left with only a handful. He immediately decided to abandon his lecturing “career.” When cholera reached Berlin in 1831, however, Schopenhauer left for Mannheim, where he stayed only a few years, and then moved to Frankfurt, where he would spend the rest of his life. There the dawn of his fame (or what he himself called “the comedy of his fame”) would begin, while Hegel stayed in Berlin and passed away during the cholera

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1. Arthur Schopenhauer (February 22, 1788–September 21, 1860; born in Danzig, Poland; died in Frankfurt, Germany) studied natural sciences at the University of Göttingen (1809–11), and philosophy at the University of Berlin, where he attended Johann Gottlieb Fichte's lectures (1811–13), and completed his doctoral degree at the University of Jena (October 1813). In addition to Fichte, his influences included Buddha, Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Goethe, Fichte and Schelling, and he was appointed “Privatdozent” at the University of Berlin (1820).
epidemic. Thanks to John Oxenford – who anonymously published an article in *The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, entitled “Iconoclasm in German Philosophy” – Schopenhauer eventually received the recognition he had been seeking for so long. The philosophy faculty of the University of Leipzig established a prize competition on his philosophy, and by 1857 lectures were being delivered in many renowned German universities. The sculptor Elisabeth Ney came from Berlin to make his bust. Arthur Schopenhauer died peacefully in Frankfurt at age seventy-two on September 21, 1860, in his flat overlooking the river Main.

It is more or less a commonplace in the history of philosophy that Schopenhauer’s originality lies in his analysis of the self and the world as the product of an irrational, unconscious, and purposeless drive, called “will,” and in his fascinating – semi-Platonic and semi-Kantian – metaphysical account of how the will manifests itself in (or as) the phenomenal world, comes to realize the pointlessness of its own horrific manifestations, and finally abolishes itself into sheer nothingness. In Schopenhauer’s view, the whole organic and inorganic world is ultimately governed by an insatiable, blind will. Life as a whole is purposeless: there is no ultimate goal or meaning, for the metaphysical will is only interested in manifesting itself in a myriad of phenomena that we call the “world” or “life.” Human life, too, is nothing but an insignificant product or “objectivation” of the blind, unconscious will and because our life is determined by willing (i.e. by needs, affects, urges, and desires), and willing is characterized by lack, our life is essentially full of misery and suffering. We are constantly searching for objects that can satisfy our needs and desires and once we have finally found a way to satisfy one desire, another one crops up and we become restless willing subjects once again, and so on in an endless whirlpool of willing, suffering, momentary satisfaction, boredom, willing again, and so on. Life is not a good thing. The only way, Schopenhauer argues, to escape from these torments of willing is by “seeing the world aright,” as Wittgenstein would have it, that is, by acknowledging the pointlessness and insignificance of our own willing existence, and ultimately by giving up willing as such – which in fact really means abandoning our own individuality, our own willing selves – which is momentarily possible in aesthetic experiences of beauty and sublimity, and permanently achievable only in the exceptional ethical practices of detachment, mysticism, and asceticism, in which the will to life is eventually denied and sheer nothingness is embraced – either through harsh suffering or through sainthood.

I do not believe that his metaphysics of the will is the main reason why we should still read Schopenhauer’s truly inspiring account today. Nonetheless, there are numerous valid reasons why we should still study Schopenhauer’s philosophy, not least because of his lasting contribution to the philosophy of value, but here I set out to examine a perhaps somewhat lesser known part of his philosophy: his theory of perception and cognition. Acknowledgement of this
A strand of his thought moves Schopenhauer away from the German idealism of Schelling, Hegel, and other contemporaries and takes him back to the company where he (or so I contend) more properly belongs: the British empiricists, such as Berkeley, Hume, Locke, and Reid, and of course Kant, whom he revered with immense adoration. I shall first expound Schopenhauer’s thesis of the “intellectual” character of intuitive perception and the role of the senses, and then briefly contrast this with his account of aesthetic perception and cognition (ästhetische Anschauung und Erkenntnis).

I. PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING

The gist of Schopenhauer’s account of perception is that all intuitive perception (Anschauung) is intellectual, that is, only through the understanding’s application of the concepts of time, space, and causality can the world “stand out as perception extended in space, varying in respect of form, persisting through all time as regards matter.” The senses alone do not suffice to offer perception, since they “furnish nothing but the raw material, and this the understanding first of all works up into the objective grasp and apprehension of a corporeal world governed by laws, and does so by means of the simple forms … space, time, and causality. Accordingly, our daily empirical intuitive perception is intellectual.”

He emphasizes, however, that “This operation of the understanding … is not discursive or reflective, nor does it take place in abstracto by means of concepts or words; on the contrary, it is intuitive and quite immediate” (FR 78).

Schopenhauer uses this view of the “intellectual” nature of perception to argue for the ideality of the perceived world. He proclaims himself to be a true follower of Kant’s transcendental idealism from the first sentence of his magnum opus, The World as Will and Representation: “The world is my representation.” Many people have taken this to mean: “something does not exist unless it is mental.” However, this is not what Schopenhauer intends. Schopenhauer’s basic

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2. Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, E. F. J. Payne (trans.) (New York: Dover, 1969), vol. I, 12, see also vol. II, 19; hereafter cited as WWR followed by the volume and page or section numbers, some modifications to Payne’s vocabulary throughout.
4. Nevertheless, this misconception has had serious consequences for the reception of Schopenhauer’s thinking, especially in Anglo-American philosophy in the early years of the twentieth century, which was particularly squared off against the idealism studied in British universities up until the end of the nineteenth century. (Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore were both schooled in the Hegelian tradition, a tradition that they later repudiated.) The fate to which Fichte, Schelling, and also Schopenhauer fell probably had much to do with
idea is that there is “no object without a subject, and no subject without an object.” In the first paragraph of *The World as Will and Representation*, he writes that there is no truth more certain than the truth that states that the whole world is merely an object in relation to a subject. The subject is clearly the “supporter of the world, the universal condition of all that appears, of all objects, and it is always presupposed; for whatever exists, exists only for the subject” (WWR I, 5). The subject does not belong to the world, but is, as Ludwig Wittgenstein will say, the *limit* of the world, and can never become an object of consciousness. Like Hume, Schopenhauer suggests that the subject can never be encountered in the world, and praises Descartes, Berkeley, and especially Kant, as the first thinkers to acknowledge the crucial importance of the subject. He distinguishes his position from skepticism, realism (which he calls “dogmatic”), and idealism, which he accuses Fichte of.

Fichte held that the “non-ego” must be derived from the “ego,” “as the web from the spider” (WWR I, 33). Whereas Fichte’s idealism “makes the object the effect of the subject” (WWR I, 13), Schopenhauer argues that subject and object necessarily presuppose one another. Subject and object are not related to each other as cause and effect. The law of causality applies only within the world of representations and objects, and cannot be applied to explain the relation between object and subject. Fichte’s idealism unjustly turns the object into the effect (Wirkung) of the subject. This is unacceptable for Schopenhauer, because they both imply one other *a priori*: object and subject precede all cognition, and therefore also the causal knowledge based on the understanding’s principle of sufficient reason:

> [T]he perceived world in space and time, proclaiming itself as nothing but causality, is perfectly real, and is absolutely what it appears to be; it appears wholly and without reserve as representation, hanging together according to the law of causality. This is its empirical reality. On the other hand, all causality is only in the understanding and for the understanding. The entire actual, i.e.,

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5. “Therefore no truth is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof than this, namely that everything that exists for knowledge, and hence the whole of this world, is only object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver, in a word, representation” (WWR I, 3).
active, world is therefore always conditioned as such by the understanding, and without this is nothing. … The whole world of objects is and remains representation, and is for this reason wholly and forever conditioned by the subject; in other words, it has transcendental ideality. But it is not on that account falsehood or illusion; it presents itself as what it is, as representation, and indeed as a series of representations, whose common bond is the principle of sufficient reason.  

(WWR I, 14–15)

Unfortunately, instead of providing arguments, he seems to take this (basically Kantian) position for granted, and confines himself to arguing, against the skeptic, that objects of perception causally interact on us, and that this causal action exhausts their (empirical) “being.” As Schopenhauer puts it in the passage just quoted from *The World as Will and Representation*: “the perceived world in space and time, proclaiming itself as nothing but causality, is perfectly real, and is absolutely what it appears to be; it appears wholly and without reserve as representation, hanging together according to the law of causality.” (WWR I, 14–15). Schopenhauer maintains that complete causal knowledge of objects (of perception) is possible, and that this is all there is to be known about such objects: there is no essence, substrate, or whatever “underlying” them – at least not in the world as representation. The phenomenal world is ultimately nothing less than a series of perceptual objects, insofar as they causally act on us. Thus because the idea of causal agency and the concept of causality are furnished by the understanding, perception is always the product of the understanding, although it is obviously triggered by sensations.

Even more worrisome is that he does not merely fail to supply a convincing argument for his version of transcendental idealism but also regularly identifies the world as representation with a dream, which seems to lead him to precisely the kind of (Fichtean) idealism he absolutely wanted to avoid. In these passages, Schopenhauer is especially inspired by Plato, Calderón de la Barca,6 and Shakespeare: waking and dreaming are as pages from the same book.7 Although Schopenhauer tends to describe life as “a long dream,” by no

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6. Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681) was a Spanish Golden Age poet, writer, and dramatist. He is perhaps best known for his play *La vida es sueño* (Life is a dream), a philosophical allegory that turns on the conflict between free will and fate.

7. “Life and dreams are leaves of one and the same book. The systematic reading is real life, but when the actual reading hour (the day) has come to an end, and we have the period of recreation, we often continue idly to thumb over the leaves, and turn to a page here or there without method or connexion. We sometimes turn up a page we have already read, at others one still unknown to us, but always from the same book” (WWR I, 18).
means does he deny the existence or authenticity of empirical reality. Rather than maintaining that the whole of existence is a dream, Schopenhauer points out that there is no sufficient criterion that enables us to absolutely distinguish dream from reality, except for the empirical fact of waking up. His Kantian-inspired transcendental idealism, which assumes that the epistemic capacities of the subject determine the structure of the phenomenal world, is compatible with empirical realism. Just as in Kant, transcendental ideality is combined with the epistemic authenticity of empirical reality. As Schopenhauer puts it in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*: “In spite of all transcendental ideality, the objective world retains empirical reality. It is true that the object is not the thing-in-itself; but as empirical object it is real. It is true that space is only in my head; but empirically, my head is in space” (WWR II, 19).

Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that experience is dependent on the nature of the cognitive faculties and that the world of all actual and potential experience is dependent on the knowing subject, such that the world cannot exist by itself independently of the cognizing subject. Schopenhauer calls the theory of realism, which claims that our experience is a perfect copy of the world in itself, an “empty castle in the air,” in which serious philosophers cannot have any faith. That the objective world, the world of objects, would exist independently even if there were no subjects, seems perhaps prima facie acceptable; however, it is only thinkable in abstracto. As soon as one tries to imagine such a world, one ends up in the paradoxical view that what one is imagining is precisely the opposite of what one intends, that is, a world free from an imagining subject.

8. See WWR I, 16. Schopenhauer arguably offers a sound hypothesis, since he merely wishes to point out that there cannot be a logical refutation of the presupposition that the whole of life is a dream. For a similar line of reasoning, see Bertrand Russell: “There is no logical impossibility in the supposition that the whole of life is a dream, in which we ourselves create all the objects that come before us. But although this is not logically impossible, there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that it is true; and it is, in fact, a less simple hypothesis, viewed as a means of accounting for the facts of our own life, than the common-sense hypothesis that there really are objects independent of us, whose action on us causes our sensations” (*The Problems of Philosophy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 10).

9. “The only certain criterion for distinguishing dream from reality is in fact none other than the wholly empirical one of waking, by which the causal connexion between the dreamed events and those of waking life is at any rate positively and palpably broken off” (WWR I, 17).

10. “[P]hilosophy is essentially idealistic. Realism, which commends itself to the crude understanding by appearing to be founded on fact, starts precisely from an arbitrary assumption, and is in consequence an empty castle in the air, since it skips or denies the first fact of all, namely that all we know lies within consciousness.” (WWR II, 5).

11. “If accordingly we attempt to imagine an objective world without a knowing subject, then we become aware that what we are imagining at that moment is in truth the opposite of what we intended, namely nothing but just the process in the intellect of a knowing being who perceives an objective world, that is to say, precisely that which we had sought to exclude” (WWR II, 5).
Schopenhauer’s arguments are not really very convincing, though: he is right to hold that the representation of a world free from a subject presupposes a subject – for it presupposes an imagining mind – but not that the existence of a world independent of a subject also does. Schopenhauer unjustly relies on the (Berkeleyan) thought that what we can experience can exist only in relation to our experiencing of it.

Schopenhauer does not, however, simply endorse Kant’s famous statement that “intuitions without concepts are blind.” Although he praises Kant’s “Transcendental Aesthetic,” he is quite critical of the way in which Kant deals with intuitive perception. This becomes quite clear from the following crucial excerpt:

“Our knowledge,” he [Kant] says, “has two sources, receptivity of impressions and spontaneity of concepts: the former is the capacity of receiving representations; the latter is the capacity for knowing an object [Gegenstand] through these representations. Through the first an object is given to us, through the second it is thought.” This is false, for according to this the impression, for which alone we have mere receptivity, which therefore comes from without and alone is really “given,” would be already a representation, in fact even an object. But it is nothing more than a mere sensation in the sense-organ, and only by the application of the understanding (i.e., of the law of causality), and of the forms of perception, of space and time, does our intellect convert this mere sensation into a representation.

(WWR I, 438–9)

Schopenhauer aims to show that Kant starts with an empirical intuition that is given to us without telling us how this is done, and without clarifying how exactly the thought that a certain intuition is given can be united with Kant’s “Transcendental Logic,” which treats the understanding as the unifying factor of our intuitive perceptions (see WWR I, 437–51). Schopenhauer also takes offense at Kant’s rather confused usage of terms such as Anschauung, Perzeption, and Wahrnehmung. He is definitely right to criticize Kant’s vague and occasionally even ambiguous use of terms like this (see e.g. the use of “Perzeption” in Critique of Pure Reason, A 320/B 376–7). Nevertheless, Schopenhauer himself frequently uses the concepts “perception” and “intuition” interchangeably (see e.g. FR §21), and also obviously underestimates Kant’s explicit recognition of the role of the understanding in transforming sensation into perception. Kant further divides

12. See especially WWR I, 437: “The Transcendental Aesthetic is a work of such merit that it alone would be sufficient to immortalize the name of Kant.”
objective perception into intuition, which is always immediate, and concept, which is always mediate. Yet, from this, Schopenhauer wrongly concludes that, on Kant’s account, this must imply that the understanding (with its categories) has no crucial role to play in the constitution of perceptual objects.

Schopenhauer characterizes the understanding’s activity as phenomenologically “immediate” instead of inferential (or “discursive,” as he usually calls it) (FR 78; WWR I, 12). The understanding connects subjective sensations (Empfindungen) with an external cause. His essay On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason offers a subtle and detailed account of the distinct functions of the understanding. In the case of visual perception, for instance, the understanding sees to it that the visual image, which is basically an affection of the retina, is first reversed; then it is converted to only one perception, further broadened to three dimensions, and, finally, correctly situated in time and space. The most important task of the understanding is to ensure that the subjectively and successively experienced perceptions are held to be the effect of an external cause. This occurs on the basis of the sole category that Schopenhauer retains from Kant’s complex system of the twelve a priori categories, namely, causality:

[A]ccording to his [Kant’s] own and correct discovery, the law of causality is known to us a priori, and is consequently a function of our intellect, and is therefore of subjective origin. … Therefore the whole of empirical intuition thoroughly remains on a subjective ground and basis as a mere happening in us, and nothing from it that is completely different and independent can be brought in as a thing-in-itself, or demonstrated to be a necessary assumption.

(WWR I, 436)

On the basis of the a priori form of space, this affect or sensation in the organism is ascribed to a cause that lies outside the organism. Thus a world of objects is created by the activity of the understanding through the application of the a priori forms of time and space, and the category of causality. The understanding creates a world of objects with the aid of the raw materials that the senses provide. Thus, thanks to this – phenomenologically immediate – activity of the understanding, a world of objects, situated in space-time, emerges:

This operation of the understanding … is not discursive or reflective … on the contrary, it is intuitive and quite immediate. For only by this operation and consequently in the understanding and for the understanding does the real, objective, corporeal world, filling space in three dimensions, present itself [stellt sich … dar]; and then it proceeds, according to the same law of causality, to change in time
and move in space. Accordingly, the understanding itself has first to create the objective world, for this cannot just step into our heads from without, already cut and dried, through the senses and openings of their organs. (FR 78)

However complex this process may be, it nonetheless evolves unconditionally. The understanding does not have a merely synthetic function that brings together various sense impressions in an image or a bundle of sensations. Intuitive perception is a process, whereby the understanding makes sure that affects or sensations are connected with their respective external causes, so that we become conscious of a world of objects. Phenomenologically, we perceive the objects “immediately,” that is, without being conscious of the complex activity of the understanding’s supplying the category of causality. After all, many empirical experiments point out that, for instance, what we see is a reversal of the image that the rays of light deliver to the retina. For example, were seeing merely the subjective sensation of the rays of light on the retina, then we would have the impression that objects are turned upside down.

Although Schopenhauer’s account of perception and the role of the understanding is quite illuminating, the following critical remarks are called for. First, Schopenhauer unjustly identifies the (subjective) sensations with the physiological elements that he offers to explain their origin and nature. This move is far from evident and ultimately circular. Although the physiological aspects of his theory are interesting, Schopenhauer never actually makes clear how it is possible, for instance, that the manifold of the light’s affects on the retina can provide anything like an “image.” To conclude on the basis of the inadequacy of the sensory image that the activity of the understanding—which Schopenhauer identifies physiologically with the brain—is necessary, offers no solid argument against epistemological theories that do not appeal to the constitutive role of the understanding, but only a methodological detour with respect to Kant’s transcendental approach. As Paul Guyer has persuasively argued, Kant’s transcendental method has now been refined and supplemented by a phenomenological method.13 Schopenhauer’s thought that sense impressions, considered physiologically, do not correspond with the objective intuition of a world of physical objects, is not an argument for the a priori activity of the understanding, but may as well reveal the deficiencies of such a physiological approach. For that matter, it is important to note that Schopenhauer presupposes that the images in

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retina would be those that the physiological subject receives. This cannot be the case, since these “double images” (Doppelbilder), which, moreover, are “turned upside-down,” are available only to the scientists carrying out the research on visual perception but not to ordinarily perceiving subjects.

Furthermore, the physiological and optical theories that set out to explain what happens when rays of light pass through the eye’s lens do not imply that one somehow perceives upside-down images that one must consequently invert. The physiological issue “how can we see” cannot as easily be identified with the epistemological issue concerning the nature of specific abilities and achievements important for the execution of a specific activity, namely seeing, as Schopenhauer seems to suppose.

Finally, how can perceptual objects both be a construct of the subject and provide the causal ground for this subject-related activity? There is a whiff of paradox here again, which can perhaps only be weakened if: (i) the naturalizing tendency of this epistemology is abandoned, although Schopenhauer is clearly not inclined to do this; (ii) one accepts that the physical objects that provide the “raw” material for objective intuitions are fundamentally different from the intuitions constructed on the basis of sensory perception; or (iii) one is prepared to carry through a complete naturalization of the power of cognition and dispense with a priori structures altogether.

Schopenhauer would probably answer rather bluntly that the assumption of an empirical reality external to the subject is clearly “an empty castle in the air,” which serious philosophers cannot rely on (cf. supra). Through its physiological facets Schopenhauer’s theory is a meritorious supplement to Kant’s epistemology, but the strength of his naturalistic arguments is undermined by persistently defending the transcendental ideality of the world as representation.14

II. THE SENSES

Since he believes that Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason gives too much attention to pure intuition and abstract judgment and reasoning, Schopenhauer wants to offer a more detailed account of intuitive perception and the role that the senses play in this activity. It is to Schopenhauer’s credit that he develops several

14. As Ernst Cassirer claims. See: “Not the world, but the emergence of subjective eyesight in the world is the fact which he truly describes and for which he sets out to find a hypothetical interpretation. The merit of his doctrine lies in the preparation of physiological optics; but the price paid for this achievement in natural sciences is that it has yielded an arbitrarily narrow and limited characterization of the critical theory’s pure concept of a priority” (Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit, volume III [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1971], 433, my translation).
interesting physiological hypotheses in connection with sensory perception. Although Schopenhauer thinks that he thus mainly provides a critique of Kant's theory of perception, he primarily offers a phenomenological supplement to it, instead of preparing a real departure from Kant’s theory.\(^\text{15}\) Without fully admitting it, Schopenhauer’s account is clearly inspired by Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, and attempts to integrate these more psychological and physiological ideas into his own philosophy of the will. Before broaching his fascinating account of *aesthetic* perception, we shall first examine his hierarchy of the senses, which is remarkably close to the one Kant expounds in the *Anthropology*. Here, we shall focus on the senses that Schopenhauer considers to be the “most noble” of all: hearing and sight.

**The sense of hearing**

Schopenhauer was extremely sensitive to noise, and contends that the less noise one can stand, the more intellectually gifted one is. The amount of noise we can bear is inversely proportionate with intelligence. Schopenhauer says that, “therefore, when I hear dogs barking unchecked for hours in the courtyard of a house, I know what to think of the mental powers of the inhabitants” (WWR II, 30).

The relation between intellectual talent and the inability to bear noise – which he perceives in Goethe, Kant, and Jean Paul,\(^\text{16}\) – is not merely anecdotally interesting. In the first place, this is evident in the pains Schopenhauer takes to corroborate this view with scientific arguments:

[T]he sensation of hearing does not originate in the labyrinth or in the cochlea, but only deep down in the brain where the two auditory nerves meet, through which the impression becomes single. But this is where the *pons Varolii* encloses the *medulla oblongata*, and thus at the absolutely lethal spot, by injury to which any animal is instantly killed, and from which the auditory nerve has only a short course to the labyrinth, the seat of the acoustic perception. It is just because its source is here, in this dangerous place, from which all movement of limbs also arises, that we start with a sudden bang. This does not occur at all with a sudden illumination, e.g., a flash of lightning. … From this origin of the auditory nerve is also explained the great disturbance that the power of thought suffers through sounds. Because of this disturbance, thinking minds, and

\(^{15}\) As Paul Guyer argues. See note 12.

\(^{16}\) Jean Paul, born Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763–1825), was a belletrist renowned for his *Vorschule der Ästhetik*. Schopenhauer refers to him frequently.
people of great intellect generally, are without exception absolutely incapable of enduring any noise. (WWR II, 29)

Schopenhauer spares no effort to corroborate his philosophical ideas through scientific insights. Much less effort does he take to inform the reader about the rather peculiar position that hearing occupies in his account. On the one hand, hearing is, along with sight, the noblest sense; on the other, unlike sight and touch, hearing is not capable of creating an objective intuition with the aid of the understanding. Moreover, hearing is the sense of language and of reason, the faculty of abstract reasoning, and it distracts great minds very easily from their noble art of thinking. This is rather puzzling, and the confusion is only enhanced by Schopenhauer’s assertion that “tones can excite pain immediately, and can also be directly agreeable sensuously without reference to harmony or melody” (WWR I, 200). Yet being immediately pleasant or unpleasant is the criterion by which smell and taste are branded as merely subjective senses. Why would this “sense of reason” still be called objective and even “noble,” if it immediately brings an affective response along with it?

The sense of sight

Together with Goethe, Schopenhauer carried out important scientific experiments on visual perception and color, and he even wrote an intriguing but little read work on that theme: On Vision and Colors. In his theory of knowledge, but also in his aesthetics and his ethics, sight and intuition play an incredibly important part. Schopenhauer is without doubt a philosopher of the eye: not only the eye in the biological sense, but also of the mind’s eye. Moreover, visual metaphors abound in his discourse. Metaphors and other figures of speech connected with the eye, with mirrors and mirroring, with images and imaging, with intuition and (in)sight, are a true obsession.

Schopenhauer does not, however, offer a consistent and unproblematic account of the nature of visual perception. Seeing is sharply distinguished from the rest of the senses, because the eye, in contrast to the other organs, is not directly connected with the will. In this sense, sight is the aesthetic organ par excellence, because it can be affected without this affection being experienced

17. “Sight is an active, hearing a passive sense. Therefore, sounds affect our mind in a disturbing and hostile manner, the more so indeed, the more active and developed the mind. They can destroy all ideas, and instantly shatter the power of thought” (WWR II, 28). Reason is the abstract power of thinking that receives what the understanding and the senses deliver, and is thus bound to the perceiving ear. Reason transforms empirical intuitions into abstract concepts.
immediately as pleasant or unpleasant, as is the case in the “pure” pleasure experienced by the sight of beautiful colors:

The wholly immediate, unreflective, yet also inexpressible, pleasure that is excited in us by the impression of colours … as for example in stained glass windows, and even more by means of clouds and their reflection at sunset – this pleasure, I say, ultimately rests on the fact that in the easiest manner, in a manner that is almost physically necessary, the whole of our interest is here won for knowledge without any excitement of our will. We thus enter into the state of pure knowing, although in the main this consists in this case in a mere sensation of the retina’s affection. But as this sensation is in itself wholly free from pain or pleasure, it is without any direct excitement of the will, and thus belongs to pure knowledge.

(WWR II, 375)

Schopenhauer holds that visual perception is the easiest way to be able to experience purely aesthetic pleasure, which is – as we shall see – of a peculiar kind, since it is experienced without the will being stirred, that is, without affect. Unlike the other senses, and by its specific direct sensory activity alone, sight is incapable of calling up a pleasurable or nonpleasurable sensation in the organ; it has no direct connection with the will.18 Neither hearing nor touch, nor smell or taste, taken in themselves, seem capable of such a neutral affection, for they are too intimately connected with the will to be able to be affected without producing an affect, that is, a sensation of pleasure or displeasure. Apart from the disturbing paradoxes involved in this view, Schopenhauer also suddenly seems unaware of the common experience of the especially painful and unpleasant feeling caused by, for example, driving out of a dark tunnel directly into blazing sunlight. However, to Schopenhauer’s defense, one might argue that what Schopenhauer here describes as a neutral affection of the eye, is a possible but not a necessary result of the activity of our eyes. Seeing something may be neutral, in the sense that it is not pleasurable or painful, but that is not necessarily so. On the other hand, one might wonder whether the sense of hearing might not also be capable of producing the pure aesthetic pleasure that Schopenhauer describes, for instance, when listening to beautiful music.

18. “For sight, unlike the affections of the other senses, is in itself, directly, and by its sensuous effect, quite incapable of pleasantness or unpleasantness of sensation in the organ; in other words, it has no direct connection with the will. Only perception arising from the understanding can have such a connection, which then lies in the relation of the object to the will” (WWR I, 199).
The philosophically more serious predicament is how to distinguish sight in this manner from the other senses. The privileged position that he clearly ascribes to seeing is contradicted by a remark concerning touch in comparison with hearing:

In the case of hearing, this is different: tones can excite pain immediately, and can also be directly agreeable sensuously without reference to harmony or melody. Touch, as being one with the feeling of the whole body, is still more subject to this direct influence on the will; and yet there is a touch devoid of pain and pleasure.

(WWR I, 199–200, emphasis added)

In light of the above efforts to sharply distinguish the qualities of sight from the other senses, this is, to say the least, surprising. Here the sense of touch, which is so closely related to the feeling of one’s own body, seems as equally able to produce the kind of affectively neutral perception, which seemed at first sight to be the privilege of the sense of sight. Schopenhauer considers sight and touch as the only truly objective senses, because they are the only senses that are alleged to be able to create an objective intuition of the external world with the help of the understanding. This is not only confusing, as it threatens to disturb his hierarchy of the senses and especially seems to underestimate the sense of hearing discussed above, but also because an unprecedented privilege is attached to the transcendental form of space. Moreover, it is hardly clear why and how the activity of touching something, which is intimately connected to the experience of one’s whole body, can be genuinely neutral, and (phenomenologically speaking) it is even untenable in the case of the sense of sight (cf. the example of the harsh sunlight).19 Thus there is a striking ambiguity in Schopenhauer’s use of the term “objective”: now he uses it in the sense of “being capable of realizing an objective intuition, i.e., perception of an external object” and then it can also mean something altogether different, namely “not immediately connected to an affective stirring of the will.” To be able to properly ground his distinction between the value and the function of the sense, Schopenhauer would need to provide arguments for the idea that both senses of the term “objective” imply one other, which he does not.

Two final worries must be addressed. First, in Fourfold Root we read that “perceptions of sight ultimately refer to touch, and sight can be regarded as an imperfect touch extending to a distance and making use of the rays of light as long feelers (Taststangen)” (FR 81). Schopenhauer does not shy away from

19. This can be contrasted with Schopenhauer’s remarks about the especially favorable effect of sunlight on the aesthetic quality of buildings.
disturbing his own hierarchy of the senses. The activity of seeing is considered as a kind of touching, which uses the rays of light as *feelers*. If this is so, one might wonder how the sense of sight can still maintain its privileged position of being the only (or at least the ideal) sense capable of producing pure, will-less, aesthetic perception.

Moreover, Schopenhauer maintains that visual perception occurs unconsciously and is thereby inevitably accompanied by two systematic forms of “deceit” (*Täuschungen*). These are most strongly present in seeing. The first is the illusion of immediacy (time), and the second is the illusion of proximity (space). The first is arguably grounded in the fact that visual perception hardly needs time to take place or that there seems no time lapse between the stimulation of the eye and the experience of the perceived object. According to Schopenhauer this applies exclusively to seeing, because in the dark, for instance, one must touch an object for a long time before one perceives what kind of object one has before oneself. Seeing occurs “directly” or “immediately,” Schopenhauer says, since:

> the unconsciousness with which the transition from the sensation to its cause is brought about really occurs only with perception in the narrowest sense, with *vision* or *sight*. On the other hand, with every other perception or apprehension of the senses the transition occurs with more or less clear consciousness; thus in the case of apprehension through the four coarser senses, the reality of the transition can be directly observed as a fact. (WWR II, 23)

Is Schopenhauer’s claim that only sight falls prey to this illusion of immediacy correct? When one feels a pain in the index finger of one’s left hand from the sting of an insect, then one localizes this pain immediately in the index finger of one’s left hand, although here too quite a considerable physiological route will have been followed, for the pain cannot be localized without the intervention of the nervous and cerebral system. Although the place where one feels the pain is certainly the index finger on one’s left hand, still, one would not feel pain if the nerves of the finger were blocked, even though the insect had definitely stung the finger.20 There are also people who feel pain in limbs they no longer have. We can also still see objects that are no longer there, such as stars that were extinguished long before we were even born, but that we are nevertheless still able to perceive. Although the star that one perceives seems directly present, and

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20. Schopenhauer seemed aware of this phenomenon. See: “Moreover, the apparent immediacy of perception, resting on its entirely intellectual nature, by virtue of which, as Euler says, we apprehend the things themselves as lying outside us, has an analogy in the way in which we feel the parts of our own body, especially when they experience pain, as is generally the case as soon as we feel them” (WWR II, 25).
although one has the feeling that one has direct contact with it, this perception remains the same whether or not this same star is actually still “there.”21 This occurs in every (visual) perception, even that of the lamp on my desk: the lamp itself seems to be “out there” – just as the stars that I see when I am now looking out of my window, but the perceived lamp can only occur through the activity of the eyes and the understanding (the brain). Even the “starry heaven above me” is ultimately nothing but a brain phenomenon.22

For Schopenhauer, this “illusion … that the sensation itself gives us the objects directly” thus originates from the “perfection” of the eye and the “exclusively rectilinear action of the light.”23 Schopenhauer justly emphasizes the immediacy of visual perception, but one might again object that this is not the exclusive privilege of the sense of sight. Thus, for instance, the same can be said about the sense of touch, although it does seem harder in the case of olfactory perception. The pleasant stimulation caused by the perfume of someone passing by can make someone realize immediately that it is Acqua she smells, just as one could see on the basis of the shape of a bottle lacking a label that it is a bottle of Acqua. Yet that is not the kind of immediacy Schopenhauer refers to. What he wants to make clear is that there is no conscious inferential step made from the sensation (Empfindung) of the bottle through my eye to the objective intuition (Anschauung) of the specific bottle, whereas this does occur in the case of someone’s stimulated nasal organ, even if only through the activity of sniffing: someone’s olfactory system is stimulated by a certain odor, which one finds pleasant or unpleasant, and to which one consciously attaches the property “perfume, specifically, Acqua di Giò by Armani.” In a certain sense, the illusion of immediacy, which is strongest in visual perception, is also the most deceitful.

21. Bertrand Russell gives the example of our perception of the sun. The sun that I see at this moment is the sun of about eight minutes ago. “[I]t takes about eight minutes for the sun’s light to reach us; thus, when we see the sun we are seeing the sun of eight minutes ago. So far as our sense-data afford evidence as to the physical sun they afford evidence as to the physical sun of eight minutes ago; if the physical sun had ceased to exist within the last eight minutes, that would make no difference to the sense-data which we call ‘seeing the sun’” (Russell, The Problems of Philosophy, 16–17).

22. See, for instance, WWR II, 3, 24, 47, 286, 403.

23. “The fact that in the case of seeing the transition from the effect to the cause occurs quite unconsciously, and thus the illusion arises that this kind of perception is perfectly direct and consists only in the sensation of sense without the operation of the understanding – this fact is due partly to the great perfection of the organ, and partly to the exclusively rectilinear action of light. In virtue of this action, the impression lends itself to the place of the cause, and as the eye has the capacity of experiencing most delicately and at a glance all the nuances of light, shade and colour, and outline, as well as the data by which the understanding, in the case of impressions on this sense, takes place with a rapidity and certainty that no more allow it to enter consciousness than they allow spelling to do so in the case of reading. In this way, therefore, the illusion arises that the sensation itself gives us the objects directly” (WWR II, 24).
Schopenhauer’s position does not escape a certain circularity here: the epistemic importance of the understanding is derived from the complexity of the most significant type of sense, namely vision, which is itself only explained on the basis of the operation of the understanding. Yet Schopenhauer’s theory undoubtedly has the merit of supplementing Kant’s theory of knowledge with a gripping account of how perception occurs and what the specific roles of the senses are. It is, therefore, surprising that this rich conception of empirical cognition and perception plays such a dispensable part in his discussion of aesthetic consciousness, to which we now turn.

III. AESTHETIC PERCEPTION AND COGNITION

Schopenhauer holds that the intellect, which he identifies physiologically with the brain, is an instrument or tool of the will. The will has created brains to help organisms survive. As I have argued above, empirical cognition of the world is always within the forms of space and time, and the category of causality imposed by the subject. Following Hume instead of Kant this time, Schopenhauer holds that the subject’s intellectual imposition of space, time, and causality on experience is driven by human needs, interests, and affects. The intellect is governed by the will: it is merely the will’s tool.24

Again following Hume, Schopenhauer thus contends that one’s intellect can be and often is disturbed by the will, that is, by affects, urges, needs, inclinations and passions:

In our enemies we see nothing but shortcomings, in our favorites nothing but merits and good points, and even their defects seem amiable to us. … What is opposed to our party, our plan, our wish, or our hope often cannot possibly be grasped and comprehended by us, whereas it is clear to the eyes of everyone else; on the other hand, what is favourable to these leaps to our eyes from afar. What opposes the heart is not admitted by the head. … Thus is our intellect daily befooled and corrupted by the deceptions of inclination and liking.

(WWR II, 217–18)

The will affects our judgments and clouds our thoughts, and our intellect always functions in the service of the will. Everything that takes place without the intellect – an organism’s procreation, development and preservation, the healing

24. For the intellect as the instrument or tool (Werkzeug) of the will, see WWR I, 292; II, 205, 214, 215, 220, 225, 229, 398, 641.
of wounds, the critical stage that brings about salvation during an illness, the instinctive skills of animals, and so on – turns out infinitely better than what happens with the help of the intellect. Thus Schopenhauer distances himself completely from the “ancient and universal error” of the Western tradition, which reveres intellect and reason as the most perfect hallmark of humanity.

For Schopenhauer, however, the intellect is “at bottom tertiary, since it presupposes the organism, and the organism presupposes the will” (WWR II, 278).

Still, Schopenhauer believes that cognition that is not in the service of the will remains possible. Schopenhauer calls this kind of cognition aesthetic, for it occurs when we are touched by the beauty (or sublimity) of an object: a landscape, a sunset, a painting, a poem, and so on. Aesthetic perception entails that one becomes conscious of oneself as a pure, will-less, timeless subject of knowledge. In aesthetic consciousness, the “real self” – that is, the self as willing – appears to have vanished and has been replaced, as it were, by a “better” or “higher” consciousness. This:

consists in knowledge turning away entirely from our own will, and thus leaving entirely out of sight the precious pledge entrusted to it, and considering things as though they could never in any way concern the will. For only thus does knowledge become the pure mirror of the objective inner nature of things. (WWR II, 367)

I lose myself entirely in the perceived object and the ordinary rules about experience and knowledge need no longer apply. “Everything is beautiful only so

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25. “If the intellect were not of a secondary nature, … then everything that takes place without it, in other words, without the intervention of the representations, such, for example, as generation, procreation, the development and preservation of the organism, the healing of wounds, the restoration or vicarious repair of mutilated parts, the salutary crisis in diseases, the works of animal mechanical skill, and the activity of instinct in general, would not turn out so infinitely better and more perfect than what takes place with the aid of the intellect, namely all the conscious and intended achievements and works of men. Such works and achievements, when compared with those others, are mere botching and bungling” (WWR II, 269).

26. “The remarkable phenomenon that in this fundamental and essential point all philosophers have erred, in fact have completely reversed the truth, might be partly explained, especially in the case of the philosophers of the Christian era, from the fact that all of them aimed at presenting man as differing as widely as possible from the animal. Yet, they felt vaguely that the difference between the two was to be found in the intellect and not in the will” (WWR II, 199).

27. On the pure will-less subject of knowledge, see especially WWR II, 367–75.

28. “[We] sink ourselves completely therein, and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present. … We lose ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression” (WWR I, 178). See also: “Only through the pure contemplation described above, which becomes absorbed entirely in the object, are the Ideas
long as it does not concern us” (WWR II, 374), that is, it does not concern our “real self,” for in aesthetic contemplation our willing self has been discarded. The ordinary operations of our perceptual and cognitive faculties are suspended and we reach a superior state of mind.

We usually discern the objects around us by means of (empirical) concepts: this is how we ordinarily perceive external objects and become empirically aware of the world. Aesthetic consciousness or awareness is superior, for we enter a state of unusual tranquility, in which individual striving, suffering, desiring, and worrying no longer occur. The sight of the aesthetically pleasing object makes us “objective,” Schopenhauer says, “that is to say, in contemplating it we are no longer conscious of ourselves as individuals, but as pure, will-less subjects of knowing” (WWR I, 209; see also WWR I, 195 and passim). This heightened, “objective” state of consciousness discards the embodied, willing self and frees us from the pressures and torments of willing and from what Plato calls the “desires and fears and all sorts of fancies and a great deal of nonsense” caused by the fact that we are embodied creatures (Phaedo 66a–b).

Nevertheless, although Schopenhauer’s idea of the “better consciousness” is obviously reminiscent of Plato’s pure knowledge of the soul, there are striking differences in their analyses of the nature of beauty and aesthetic experience. For Plato, an experience of beauty is a festive celebration of Being: it is to feel alive. Plato holds that beauty ultimately satisfies eros, whereas Schopenhauer provides a quite different account of the aesthetic experience. Instead of soothing the will by satisfying it, aesthetic perception is purified of all willing, that is, of our interests, passions, affects, and needs. Aesthetic experience cannot occur without an awareness of the disappearance of the willing self, and “with it its suffering and sorrow” (WWR II, 371). Thus a will-less, aesthetic experience is by definition pleasurable, for it occurs only when the sufferings, caused by the will, disappear from consciousness. Aesthetic perception offers no fulfillment of our personal desires, but is detached from our desires, and therefore offers freedom from the thralldom of our endless willing, striving, and, by implication, our suffering. Hence, the aesthetic state of mind cheers and comforts, as our will is momentarily stilled:

30. In this respect, Kant’s analysis of beauty is closer to Plato’s than Schopenhauer’s. See Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, §1, Akademie-Ausgabe V, 204.
31. A more extended account of the differences between Plato’s and Schopenhauer’s views of the experience of beauty can be found in my “Schopenhauer on Aesthetic Understanding and the Values of Art,” European Journal of Philosophy 16 (2008).
The storm of passions, the pressure of desire and fear, and all the miseries of willing are then at once calmed and appeased in a marvelous way. For at the moment when, torn from the will, we have given ourselves up to pure, will-less knowing, we have stepped into another world, so to speak, where everything that moves our will, and thus violently agitates us, no longer exists. (WWR I, 197)

Schopenhauer does not, however, consider aesthetic perception merely as a heightened state of awareness, but also as a superior kind of cognition: “we have given ourselves up to pure, will-less knowing,” and “the colour and form of things stand out in their true and full significance” (WWR II, 373, emphasis added). Aesthetic experience has no mere therapeutic value, but also a high cognitive value. Since ordinary empirical cognition is always guided and even determined by personal needs, affects and interests – in short, by our will – it is, Schopenhauer holds, necessarily inferior to cognition that occurs independent of them. Ordinary people are usually confined to the inferior, distorted kind of knowledge. By contrast, it is a sign of “the gift of genius” to be able to attain (and maintain) the superior state of dispassionate, “pure perception” and cognition:

the capacity to remain in a state of pure perception, to lose oneself in perception, to remove from the service of the will the knowledge that originally existed only for this service … the ability to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard entirely our own personality for a time, in order to remain pure knowing subject, the clear eye of the world.

(WWR I, 185–6)

This kind of superior cognizance, freed from the will’s urges, automatically implies that we “relinquish the ordinary way of considering things … and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation” of the object, and “continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object” (WWR I, 178). Yet it also yields knowledge of what the object truly is: aesthetic consciousness is not merely an escape from the torments of willing and, hence, suffering, but also (and perhaps more importantly) an insight into what things really are. As Schopenhauer puts it, “we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the what” (WWR I, 178). Aesthetic, will-less perception – which Schopenhauer identifies with Spinoza’s notion of knowledge “sub aeternitatis specie,” that is, from the standpoint of eternity – offers insight into the timeless kernel of things, that is, the universal essences of the perceived objects, beyond mere appearance. Schopenhauer calls these eternal essences the (Platonic) Ideas, the “eternal forms” behind the mere
appearances of common empirical cognition. Although Schopenhauer here clearly moves beyond Kant’s analysis of aesthetic disinterestedness, and adopts the more Platonic vision of knowledge of eternal forms or Ideas, identifying Schopenhauer’s conception of the Ideas with the Platonic original may be too hasty.

Two considerations seem to stand in the way of identifying Schopenhauer’s Ideas with their Platonic counterparts. First, whereas Plato held that knowledge of the eternal forms of things involves conceptual thought and ratiocination, Schopenhauer maintains that reason is an instrument of the will that helps us survive as living organisms in the natural world. For Schopenhauer, the timeless Ideas are not known through abstract reasoning, but in and through perception (Anschauung) of natural objects or works of art, combined with an idealizing act of our imagination. Whereas “the common, ordinary man … can direct his attention to things only in so far as they have some relation to his will,” and “always demands only knowledge of the relations, the abstract concept of the thing is sufficient”; in aesthetic cognition, however, one “strives to grasp the Idea of each thing, not its relation to other things” (WWR I, 187–8). Thus the Ideas – that is, the alleged objects of aesthetic cognition – are known by a peculiar type of imaginative perception, which does not involve any concepts at all. This statement clearly echoes Kant’s thought that a pure aesthetic judgment cannot be based on (determinate) concepts, but also radically departs from Kant, for Schopenhauer claims that an aesthetic experience is first and foremost a kind of objective insight, whereas Kant argues that it is based on a reflecting judgment, which is grounded in a disinterested feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and does not contribute to cognition at all.32 Although the gap between Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s aesthetics may not be as big as some commentators suggest,33 Schopenhauer’s discussion of the will-less, timeless state of consciousness – which is purportedly the essence of the aesthetic attitude – is definitely more Platonic than Kantian. Still, as noted above, Schopenhauer’s so-called “(Platonic) Ideas” appear less Platonic than Schopenhauer is prepared to admit.

A further worry about a hasty identification of Plato’s and Schopenhauer’s theories of Ideas is that, for Plato, the Ideas are not merely the eternal universals behind the mere empirical appearances of things, but also the ontological foundation of the whole world, whereas in Schopenhauer’s view, the Ideas are situated metaphysically “between” the thing-in-itself (the will) and the empirical

32. “[T]he presentation is referred solely to the subject and is not used for cognition at all, not even for that by which the subject cognizes himself” (Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, §3, Akademie-Ausgabe V, 206). See also ibid. XX, 222–3.

33. See, for example, Christopher Janaway: “The vision behind Schopenhauer’s theory of aesthetic experience is Platonic, not Kantian” (Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche’s Genealogy [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 194).
appearances. The Ideas are not the fundamental components of reality, but the most adequate objectivations or manifestations of the one ultimate essence of the world, namely will. Schopenhauer argues that, since the forms of space and time, and the understanding or intellect (operating according to the principle of sufficient reason), ground and even “construct” the world as representation, this world is divided into numerous distinct objects, and is therefore characterized by plurality. Those categories do not apply to the thing in itself, which belongs to the noumenal world, hence (Schopenhauer argues) the thing-in-itself cannot be characterized by plurality. Schopenhauer reasons as follows:

1. the forms of space, time and the categories of the understanding – the principle of sufficient reason – create the objective world (the world as representation);
2. the world as representation therefore consists of multiple representations or different objects;
3. the principle of sufficient reason is limited to the world as representation;
4. the principle of sufficient reason does not apply to the thing-in-itself (the noumenon);
5. the thing-in-itself beyond all phenomena cannot be characterized by multiplicity;
6. the Ideas are characterized by multiplicity;
7. the Ideas cannot be the noumenal thing-in-itself.

These claims face a number of problems, not least because they are further enmeshed in Schopenhauer’s basic metaphysical view that the thing-in-itself is the will, which automatically implies that the will ought to remain unknowable, and Schopenhauer does not (always) recognize this. Moreover, his analysis of empirical perception is combined with and, I would add, unnecessarily clouded by his semi-Platonic account of the Ideas, which he argues to be the adequate objectivations (or manifestations) of the metaphysical will. Schopenhauer seems rather confused when he contends that the Platonic Ideas reveal the antagonistic nature of the metaphysical will, which they express by struggling to conquer their spot in the universe and by fighting the other Ideas to be able to manifest themselves as clearly as possible in the empirical world.

For the purposes of his aesthetics, however, it is quite unnecessary to think that the Platonic Ideas are the “adequate objectivations” of the thing-in-itself, that is, the will. Instead, what might ground aesthetic cognition is the idea that, although we are confronted with empirical objects, it is possible to view those

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34. An exception can be found in WWR II, 198, where he concedes that “being known of itself contradicts being-in-itself.”
empirical objects in a way that transcends their merely empirical characteristics. The thought would then be that aesthetic cognition requires an impersonal “universal standpoint” through which not only the perceived object but also the self or “I” is viewed, as it were, from nowhere. The individual object does not vanish, but is – as Robert Wicks aptly puts it – “perceived in light of its universal significance.” How this universal point of view is to be attained by creatures whose nature is essentially willing, which inclines them to perceive, think, and judge from their own egocentric (and even egoistic) viewpoint, remains nonetheless puzzling. The doctrine about the Platonic Ideas is rather extravagant and may even be superfluous, but to dismiss it does not automatically dispense with an aesthetics founded upon will-less contemplation and “objective” cognition.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Even without thorough scrutiny of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of the will, his accounts of (ordinary and aesthetic) perception offer a critical supplement to empiricist and Kantian theories of cognition and perception. His analysis of the role of the understanding in perception may be closer to Kant’s than he conceded, yet his subtle analysis of the role of the senses, expounded above, nonetheless adds a more scientifically plausible and physiologically corroborated account to Kant’s transcendental conception of perception and understanding.

Schopenhauer also makes a radically un-Kantian move, when he suggests that the intellect is driven by human willing, that is, needs, urges, affects, and desires. The understanding is no mere transcendental faculty, but a so-called natural phenomenon: the cerebral system helps the organism survive, and express (and fulfill) its desires, needs, and wishes. The brain helps the will appear in the phenomenal world. In aesthetic perception, however, the cerebral system gives up, as it were, this subservient role and now operates detached from the will. This will-less, aesthetic cognition is pleasurable, not merely because it offers relief from the sufferings that inescapably trouble the “willing self,” but also because it procures a heightened state of awareness that transcends ordinary cognition of the phenomenal world and, moreover, generates a deeper insight into the timeless universals behind the mere appearances of things. Thus Schopenhauer not only moves beyond Kant’s transcendental epistemology, supplementing it with an illuminating account of ordinary perception, but also overcomes Kant’s

36. See my “Schopenhauer and the Objectivity of Art,” in A Companion to Schopenhauer, Vandenabeele (ed.).
aesthetics by showing that the value of an authentic aesthetic experience cannot be reduced to the value of the (disinterested) pleasure it affords.

MAJOR WORKS

German editions


Translations

Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde, 1813, 1847. Published in English as On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, translated by E. F. J. Payne. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974.
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel\(^1\) was born in 1770 in the southern German city of Stuttgart. The members of the generation into which Hegel was born – he shared his birth year, for example, with Ludwig van Beethoven, Friedrich Hölderlin, and William Wordsworth – found themselves in a world perched on the edge of upheaval. Because of rising populations, increasing literacy rates, and economies that were not keeping up with the expectations engendered by these movements – and because this generation grew up in the middle of a movement that came to be known as “the Enlightenment” – very early in their lives they came to interpret their own prospects in terms of the idea that they themselves would be living unprecedented lives, that the lives of their parents and grandparents, for example, would offer them no particular guidance for the shape their own lives would take. The French Revolution, which occurred during their late teenage years, was the cataclysmic social and political event that would shape much of the world around them; it confirmed their view that they were a new generation in history destined to perform revolutionary acts of which their predecessors could not have dreamed.

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1. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (August 27, 1770–November 14, 1831; born in Stuttgart, Germany; died in Berlin) studied philosophy and theology at the University of Tübingen (1788–93). His influences included Aristotle, Fichte, Goethe, Hölderlin, Kant, Rousseau, Schelling, Schiller, and Spinoza, and he held appointments as: a private tutor in Bern (1793–97) and Frankfurt (1797–99); Privatdocent at the University of Jena (1801–1806), where he was named Professor Extraordinarius in 1805; editor of the Catholic newspaper *Bamberger Zeitung* (1807–1808); headmaster of the Aegidien-Gymnasium in Nuremberg (1808–16); and a professor at the University of Heidelberg (1816–18) and the University of Berlin (1818–31).
Hegel's parents determined fairly early in his life that their academically gifted son was destined for the Protestant ministry in the duchy of Württemberg (where Stuttgart was located). However, instead of being sent off to a “cloister school” (a boarding school to train young men to attend one of the Protestant seminaries in Württemberg), he was allowed to attend the local Stuttgart Gymnasium (a university preparatory school). The Stuttgart Gymnasium had a more humanistic and Enlightenment oriented curriculum than any cloister school, and this offered the young Hegel an education in the arts and sciences he could not otherwise have had.

It thus should not have been surprising that almost immediately on arriving at the seminary in Tübingen, Hegel himself decided that he did not want to become a minister, but he was prevented from transferring to studies in law by his father. Importantly for him, though, while at Tübingen he shared a room with two other budding seminarians who had also decided that they too would never become the Protestant ministers they were supposedly destined to be: Friedrich Hölderlin (who was to go on to become one of Germany’s most famous poets) and Friedrich W. J. Schelling (who was to compete with Hegel for the title of Germany’s leading philosopher). The three shared not only their distaste for their supposed future careers, but also an enthusiasm for the French Revolution, together with a passion for both ancient Greek literature and philosophy and the new philosophy being developed by Immanuel Kant. In their friendship and companionship, each of the three profoundly shaped the intellectual futures of the others.

I. JENA 1801–1807

Unlike his friend Schelling, who staged a meteoric rise to intellectual fame almost immediately after graduation from the seminary, Hegel had a rather difficult time in getting himself established. He was a house tutor for well-to-do patrician families, first in Bern and then in Frankfurt, and after a painful decision to abandon a projected career as an independent “man of letters,” he joined Schelling at Jena in 1801. There he became an unsalaried teacher working on some common projects with Schelling, who was by then a fully paid full professor. His financial support at the time consisted in a small inheritance he acquired after his father’s death in 1799 and the meager fees he could charge students for attending his lectures. Hegel began developing his own views in Jena, first as a follower of Schelling’s own program in post-Kantian philosophy, and then increasingly taking an independent direction as the years went by. After Schelling’s departure from Jena in 1803, Hegel was increasingly under pressure to produce a book so that he could manage to find a salaried position as
a professor somewhere in Germany. He wrote out several drafts of such a book, only to put each new draft aside as ultimately unsuitable to what he was trying to say. In 1807, he published his first great work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a long book that he seems to have written virtually as a first draft in the year of 1806.

II. PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT (1807)

Hegel claimed that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* was to be the “Introduction” to his whole system of philosophy, which was supposed to follow immediately after the publication of the *Phenomenology* (but which in fact had to wait for several more years). Later on, his students noted that he always referred to the *Phenomenology* as his “voyage of discovery,” the book in which he found his own voice and which launched the distinctively Hegelian philosophical outlook.

The book was controversial from the date of its publication, and it has never ceased to be so. Not merely was Hegel himself inspired by it to go on to flesh out his whole system from its basis, countless others since then – from Marx to Cassirer to Heidegger to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, to name just a handful of people affected by it – have taken it to be the work in terms of which one had to fashion one's own thought. Not unsurprisingly, the book itself has spawned all kinds of different and often inconsistent interpretations (since it has, also unsurprisingly, given rise to Marxist, neo-Kantian, existentialist, and hermeneutical-Heideggerian interpretations of its content). Hegel claimed, rather ambitiously, that his book was not merely another philosophy book responding to problems in academic philosophy but in fact that modern European life after the French Revolution itself required such a philosophy book for it to make good on its own aims and promises. To that end, Hegel began the book with a set of densely argued chapters having to do with the kinds of issues one normally encounters in a graduate seminar in the philosophy faculty. In the chapter labeled simply, “Consciousness,” Hegel argued that all attempts at locating a kind of firm starting-point for thought in any kind of direct awareness of the world, something that would be self-sufficient on its own and that required nothing else to secure its own authority, all failed because of internal contradictions and failures within those attempts themselves. This was one example of what he took to calling “dialectical thought,” where a position is rebutted not by showing that it fails to take into account certain facts nor by its failing to match up with,

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1. See [G. W. F. Hegel](https://www.example.com/egel).

2. These figures are all discussed in detail elsewhere: Marx in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*; Cassirer in the essay on neo-Kantianism in *Volume 3*; and Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty in essays in *Volume 4*.

3. For a discussion of Hegel’s first French interpreters, see the essay by John Russon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
say, widely held beliefs or common sense, but by virtue of the way it inherently generates within the terms it has set for itself mutually contradictory results that cannot themselves be resolved or accommodated within those terms. Thus, all attempts to show that we could know certain truths about the world or ourselves by way of an unmediated direct acquaintance with those things or truths (and on which we could supposedly then build a more complex edifice of thought) rested on a promise that could not in principle be fulfilled.

What, therefore, the chapter on “Consciousness” is supposed to have shown is that all such putatively direct awareness is itself necessarily bound up with a kind of self-consciousness, a way of taking ourselves to be involved in setting the bounds of normative authority instead of having it, as it were, automatically set for us by the objects of direct experience. Or, to put it in more Hegelian terms, the kind of immediacy we find in our ordinary experience of the world turns out to be itself mediated by a more complex way of understanding ourselves and our place in that world.

**Self-consciousness**

The next chapter in the book was thus labeled simply “Self-Consciousness.” There Hegel argued that the entire context of all our intentional acts and our cognizant awareness both of ourselves and the world has as its normative fabric a set of acts of recognition among agents.4 There Hegel argued, first, that all forms of self-consciousness inherently involve our consciousness of others as also self-conscious – that all our subjective perspectives on things inherently involve seeing others as also having such subjective perspectives – and thus all self-consciousness is inherently social; and, second, that there is no “natural” or automatically given set of social rules that structure such recognitions, so that there is, at least at the outset of human history, always a struggle over such recognition, which amounts to a struggle as to who is to set the rules that are to have the authority to structure such recognition. Since there is no natural way to resolve such a dispute, the conception of human self-consciousness as inherently social begins with a conception of the very struggle itself over such authority. When one of the participants in the struggle shows himself willing to make this into a life or death struggle, and one of the participants out of fear of death (and not from any more rational or universal grounds) submits to the authority of the other, one has the familiar human relationship of mastery and servitude.

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4. “Recognition” is here the translation of the German term Anerkennung, where it means something like “bestowing a normative status,” such as when one country diplomatically recognizes another, and not the more usual English sense of “recognition,” where it has the meaning of psychologically identifying something as what it is, as when one says that “I recognized you as among the people in the audience.”
(This is often called the dialectic of “master and slave.”) However, such a resolution of the struggle is as unstable and self-undermining as was the resolution of the more abstract questions raised in the “Consciousness” chapter. The master demands recognition of his authority from the slave, but it is precisely because the slave has no such authority to bestow such recognition that he cannot fulfill the master’s demands for it. Likewise, the master claims a self-sufficiency for himself, but he then becomes completely dependent on the labor of the slaves forced to work for him. The slaves, on the other hand, acquire a more nuanced view both of themselves and their world since they have to learn to submit their own, more immediate set of desires, to the purported normative authority of the master. This gradually leads the slaves to a new consciousness of themselves as only contingently and not authoritatively subject to the commands of the master: to the realization, that is, that the masters rule only by force and not by reason or divine right.5

Hegel finished his chapter “Self-Consciousness” by showing how the ancient Greeks and Romans found themselves gradually compelled to take up the philosophies of stoicism and skepticism as ways of affirming the kind of “inner” freedom that the slaves had discovered in their work for the masters. This led, so Hegel argued, to a kind of “unhappy consciousness” in which the people of late antiquity and early Christian Europe came to understand themselves as under the “mastery” of a divinity that had withdrawn from them. In that condition, they thus experienced a profound alienation of themselves from their own organic embodiment, from the source of the authority of their self-conscious lives, and from their own political communities. However, in learning to construct the perspective of a “God’s eye” view on things, they also managed to recreate for themselves a newer version of the more ancient Greek conception of reason as being “all reality,” and with that, they laid the building blocks of modern European life.

Reason

Hegel followed the chapter “Self-Consciousness” with a very long chapter titled simply “Reason,” in which he took on various developments in the sciences since the Renaissance, which he finished off with a somewhat humorous examination of the emerging pseudo-sciences in his own time of physiognomy and phrenology (that is, attempting to come up with lawlike relations between character

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and moral dispositions with the shapes of the face or bumps on the skull). Such crudely naturalistic reductions of human mindedness (or “Geistigkeit,” as Hegel called it) were themselves illustrative of how the more serious and subtle naturalistic reductions of human life all go wrong. The naturalist reduction in effect says that all things are to be explained as events instantiating causal laws, and that only natural scientific method is adequate to carry out such explanation; such reduction, in effect, only says in more subtle ways what the phrenologist says more crudely, namely, that “consciousness is a bone.” They all fail to explain how it is that one would ever have the normative authority to make such explanations in the first place.

The rest of the “Reason” chapter explores various ways in which attempts at constructing a more rational (in the modern sense) way of life in early modern Europe each dialectically broke down, that is, each defined itself in terms that were at odds with itself and which made such ways of life unlivable for their participants. Strikingly, almost all of Hegel’s examples of these come not from philosophy texts or history textbooks but from various literary sources, some of which Hegel had to have been reading as he was composing the chapter itself. In that series of subchapters, Hegel illustrates various failures of modern ways of life that understand themselves to be taking an individualist view of the relation between agents and reasons and among agents with each other. A Faustian view of knowledge as the power to get what one wants turns out to result in a tragic, unintended submission to a kind of unforeseen necessity. A way of life that understands itself as a collection of agents finding their destiny in what the “hearts” of each compel each individual to do ends in a kind of madness wherein each ends up thinking that it is the world around him that has gone insane. A moralistic, aesthetic self-understanding of oneself as a knight of virtue in an otherwise self-centered individualist world ends in the self-discovery of the self-styled knight of virtue that he is just as self-centered as is his opponent. Finally, an overly theatrical conception of one’s own self-sufficiency and authenticity that puts one’s own subjective sincerity and interiority at the top of the normative ladder itself ends up with a realization of how such a view not only invites a deception of others about one’s real motives (and thus also invites hypocrisy) but even more disastrously leads to a self-undermining self-deception about who one is in the first place.

The chapter ends with a short and often criticized dispute with what seems to be an overly formalistic interpretation of Kant’s conception of morals. Hegel’s point, as he makes clear at the end of the chapter, is that any such attempt at making individuals the prime legislators of moral principles — any attempt to make moral principle a matter of individual human autonomy — falls apart in the very terms by which it explicates itself to itself. Reasons for action must have an independence from the agent for them to be reasons; yet, so it seems, the
demand for individual autonomy – so successfully put on the table by Rousseau and Kant – is itself also a non-negotiable condition of modern agency. Modern life itself thus seems trapped in a competing set of demands that cannot, at least on first reading, be negotiated.

*Spirit*

That provoked Hegel into introducing a new chapter, which was even longer than the preceding one, titled simply “Spirit.” In “Spirit,” Hegel makes the case for what it would mean to say that reasons are relative to a form of life and still have a status that is independent of any individual act of will. The chapter is overtly historical in its movement, and its basic theses are central to Hegelianism. First, there is his view that “shapes of spirit,” that is, “forms of life” (two alternative formulations of the same phenomenon that Hegel often gives) are differentiated by what they take to be normatively authoritative for themselves (or, to put it more loosely, by how they understand their ground-level commitments about what it means to be a human agent). Second, such “shapes of spirit” change over historical time. Third, the development and changes in such “shapes of spirit” can therefore be comprehended as a kind of progress within that movement which is marked internally to the historical succession of such shapes.

To show this, Hegel begins with an account of ancient Greek life in which in the ancient polis each individual, in a manner analogous to that of a Leibnizian monad, understands himself or herself to be mirroring the whole within his or her own limited spheres and as thus having the authority to carry out the unconditional demands of his or her own sphere because of the very authority of that whole mirrored within his or her own station in life. The result of each acting in such a way was thus understood by the ancient Greeks to result in a spontaneously produced and beautiful harmony of social life. The problem with such a form of life, so Hegel famously and controversially argued, was that for it to work, it both had to produce “individuals” who did what they had to do and who could brook no negotiation over such unconditional demands, and it had to destroy the very individuals it demanded of itself when they became the individuals they were required to become. Sophocles’ tragedy *Antigone* perfectly illustrated this, so Hegel claimed. In the play, Antigone’s uncle, Creon, has taken rule of the city and has forbidden anybody to perform the required burial rites on Antigone’s dead brother. This brother had attempted to take the crown that he thought was rightfully his (which Creon had already assumed) and had died in doing so. As his sister, Antigone finds herself unconditionally compelled to perform the required burial rites and at the same time unconditionally compelled to obey her ruler (who is also a male relative with the right of command over her), and she is forced to choose which of the two duties she is
to fulfill. She is apprehended by Creon’s forces and condemned to death by him, a decree that brings a whole set of tragic incidents down on Creon’s own family. The chorus tells Antigone near the end of the play that her downfall lies not merely in her having defied Creon but in her assumption of a kind of autonomy for herself that is strictly forbidden to all Greeks and especially to women.

The rest of the chapter consists in a dazzling and, admittedly, obscure analysis of why, first, Roman life – which understood itself as the successor to Greece – undermined itself by way of its own contradictory demands on itself, then of how early modern and modern European life in its own cultivation of individuality and aristocratic glory generated a new set of self-imposed contradictions and tensions. This is followed by an analysis of how Enlightenment ideals of a rational life failed to make themselves livable by imposing very abstract ideals on its adherents that were themselves at odds with themselves. The internal collapse of this order into the chaos of the French Revolution cleared the way for a new and more adequate self-understanding for modern Europeans. At the same time, these abstractions also necessarily resulted in the Jacobin Terror, since in undermining all the claims that “tradition” or “nature” had made, they at first had nothing with which to replace the older order except for the competing claims of different factions as to who “really” spoke for the nation. Pushed to its logical conclusion, the abstractly formulated ideal of “being rational” offered no more guidance than that of a kind of abstract utilitarianism that could only understand individuals as eliminable parts of a whole, not as creatures with dignity on their own.

In fact, even though the French Revolution found its social expression in the revolution itself, it found its best articulation, so Hegel went on to claim, in Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy, where the ideals of the “absolute freedom” that had ended up with the zealots of the guillotine were shown in fact to issue in the ideal of a kingdom of ends in which each individual was both sovereign and subject. However, orthodox Kantian principles were themselves also too abstract to function as genuine guides to action, and the rigorist demand by Kantians that one do duty for duty’s sake (mirrored by the rather cruel rigorism of Robespierre’s version of how true virtue required a crass utilitarian sacrifice of individuals for the good of the whole) inevitably led to a kind of hypocritical “play-acting” about what one’s “real motives” were. The harshness of the demands of both Robespierrian and Kantian virtue provoked a modern kind of withdrawal from the demands of morality itself, in which “beautiful souls” maintained their own self-styled integrity by combining the refusal to act with a harsh judgmental moralism about those around them who did. Hegel ended the chapter with a kind of dramatic narrative of how two such beautiful souls come to see this as an impossible way of life and, in a secular reenactment of Christian morality, each forgives each other for their
own one-sided condemnation of the other and reconciles himself to the fact they are all, as it were, sinners.

Religion

“Spirit” was followed by an even longer chapter with the title “Religion.” In that chapter, Hegel sketched out what it would mean to think of religious life as a kind of collective reflection on what absolutely matters to humans and what they understand themselves to be in the terms of such reflection. As with the other chapters, a short summary necessarily fails to do even faint justice to what Hegel has to say there. He ambitiously sketches out a program for understanding how humans take the divine at first in their prehistory as something ineffable in nature, then as “out there” beyond nature, and then in terms of how divinity is to be understood anthropomorphically in Greek religion (the one phase in human history where beauty and truth coincided). In Greek anthropomorphic religion, the union of the conceptual ideals of divinity and the reality of religious practice matched up with each other in the sensuous depiction of the Greek gods in poetry and statuary. Greek religion was thus an “art-religion,” but it in turn provoked a kind of inward turn that issued in the new conception of the subjective point of view of individuals as having more authority than before and therefore not in principle being fully and exhaustively expressible in sensuous, artistic shapes. With its idea of God becoming flesh, Christianity became the religion that brought the demand for the expression of subjective individuality into concrete religious practice, and Hegel took the Christian idea of Kenosis – of God emptying himself of his divinity in order to take on human shape – to be the appropriate metaphor for thinking about how “spirit” had emptied itself of its Greek ideals only finally to take on a reconciled, more human shape in modern life. Christianity was thus the “revealed religion,” the end of the line of the development of human religious self-understanding.

But just as Christian religion – as the religion of a God-Man who spoke in parables and who, through his disciples, left his words behind for others to contemplate – inevitably required theology to make sense of itself, likewise in turn theology, by submitting the claims of religion to the tribunal of reason, inevitably required philosophy to make sense of itself. With the Kantian assertion of the autonomy of the philosophical faculty from the theological faculty in universities, the appropriate understanding of the final religion, Christianity, was thus subordinated to that of modern philosophy, which itself (and not religion) embodied and exemplified what Hegel rather portentously called “absolute knowledge,” the title of the last and very short chapter of Hegel’s book.

The book was immediately recognized as a major and original contribution to the already overheated philosophical and cultural debate swirling around
Germany at the time of its publication. (Hegel himself claimed to have written
the last chapter on the eve of the battle of Jena, where Napoleon humiliatedly
defeated the vaunted Prussian army in about a half hour and thereby put to rest
the dreams on the part of many Germans of ever restoring the rather humor-
ously named Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.) Indeed, an early
reviewer of the *Phenomenology* noted that if Schelling was, as many had taken
to calling him, the “modern Plato,” then in light of his new book, Hegel should
be called the modern “German Aristotle.”

Unfortunately for Hegel, this did not lead to any job openings for him, and
with his inheritance now finally exhausted, he was forced to take a job editing
a pro-Napoleonic newspaper in Bamberg from 1807 until 1808, when an old
friend managed to land him a position as the rector and philosophy teacher
at a college preparatory school in Nuremberg. Hegel settled into his new life,
but he never gave up hoping for a university position. He even married into
the Nuremberg patriciate while living there, and he became quite a figure in
Nuremberg social life.

## III. SCIENCE OF LOGIC (1812–16)

Between 1812 and 1816 he managed to write and publish the second part of
his system, *The Science of Logic*, which helped to further cement his reputa-
tion as one of Germany’s leading thinkers. The book is as obscure as is his
*Phenomenology*, and it is rendered even more murky by the fact that it self-
consciously deals in logical and metaphysical abstractions rather than in the
richly characterized “shapes of life” that were the backbone of the earlier work.
In his first few years in Jena, Hegel had written several drafts of such a “logic”
in which he had tried to show how everything depended on how one came to
grips with two issues that exercised philosophy since at least the time of Socrates
and Plato. First, there was what he called in Jena the “original relation,” that is,
what seemed like the fundamental, ground-level distinction between thought
and what thought was about (or “thought” and “being” as he called it). Without
that distinction between thought and what it is about, which is independent
of thought, there can be no such thing as truth. By the time he got around to
writing his published *Logic*, he argued instead that such an “original relation”
was in fact not so fundamental and that the more fundamental thought, as it
were, was that of *truth* as the world being the way we *say* it is. Such a “thought”
of the unity of thought and being itself was perfectly captured by the category
of “being” itself, that is, of the most general concept we have of the world as it
is when we think of it truly. Since we potentially go wrong when we think it
as being one way as opposed to another, the only adequate expression for this
most primitive conception of truth is simply the thought of being as what simply “is” and nothing more (an idea articulated thousands of years before by the Presocratic Greek philosopher, Parmenides, when he comments that “Thinking and being are the same” [fragment III]). However, in its very articulation, that rather simple conception of “being” turns out to be equivalent to the thought of “nothing,” and since it cannot be true that being is different from nothing and is the same as nothing, the original category of all logic, indeed, of all conceptions of truth itself, is therefore thrown into motion as thought attempts to re-establish its harmony with itself and to deal with the contradiction it has just incurred on itself. The dialectic that had been shown to be at work in human self-understanding in the Phenomenology thus also made its appearance in the Logic in, as it were, pure thought’s attempt to grasp what it is for it, thought, to be true. As the Logic develops, each potential unconditional grasp on the part of thought of itself as having this or that structure – that is, of having given an exhaustive account of itself that had no other conditions outside its account – illustrated, so Hegel argued, Kant’s claim in the Critique of Pure Reason that reason, when it pushes itself to such unconditional accounts of itself, issues forth in contradictions, or “antinomies” as Kant called them. Kant’s mistake was to think that reason could not overcome those basic contradictions in a richer, more fully dialectical account of itself, and Hegel took his Logic to be the proof that it was capable of doing so.

Hegel divided his Logic into three books. The first one, “Being [Sein],” was the exposition of how an account of thought and being in terms of individual existents was itself self-undermining when it took itself as absolute (or “unconditional” in Kant’s sense). Such an nominalist (or “individualist”) account of thought and being itself concluded in an account of an infinity of individuals that itself made no sense in the terms in which such an infinity had to be expressed with that limited kind of “logic.” The second book, “Essence [Wesen],” treated the logic inherent to the complex unity of thought-and-being-as-held-together-in-one-thought-of-that-unity, and it resulted in various accounts of the relation between the two as consisting in the relation between appearance and reality, or of superstructural appearance as explained by substructural reality and the like. Such a “logic” culminates in something like a Spinozistic conception of the absolute as “substance” and of appearance as something like Spinozistic modes of that substance.

However, such an account in “Essence,” so Hegel argued, contradicted itself when it tried to explain how it was that Spinozistic thought could ever possess the normative authority it needed to show that such an account was true and not simply something that a thinker was caused to think. For that kind of absolute account, one needed another “logic,” which formed the third book, titled “Concept [Begriff],” in which the traditional Aristotelian logic finally made its
appearance (rather late in a book with the title *Science of Logic*). There Hegel came to terms with the second issue that had vexed philosophy since the time of Socrates and Plato. Since its inception, logic treated the relations among concepts, particularly as they had to do with inferences, and the entire structure of Aristotelian syllogisms was meant to bring out the structure of those conceptual relations as they appeared in judgments. However, in many judgments, if one were to judge truthfully, one had to determine if a certain particular “fell under” the concept. (If one said, “the rose is red,” one had to determine if the particular was indeed a rose and if indeed it was red.) Since logical compulsion was a matter of relations among concepts, it followed, so it seemed, that the relation between a concept and a particular falling under it could not in principle be a matter of logical compulsion, and if it was not logical compulsion, then it was not rational compulsion, and if it was not rational compulsion, then the ideas of truth and falsity could not apply. To that, Hegel responded that it therefore had to be the case that something similar to Kant’s infamous idea of a “schematism” of categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason* had to be at work in our dealings with the world, and that besides the formal “subjective” logic of syllogisms, there had to be a material “objective” logic of how we understood in the most general terms what it meant for our concepts to have particular instances. (In Kant’s “schematism,” Kant argued that in order to apply the pure categories to experience, we needed to have a set of principles by which to make the application, and this set of principles had to be such that it did not find itself trapped in a vicious regress of having to apply rules to apply the rules, *ad infinitum*.) To have a grasp of a concept is thus not merely to be in possession of something like a rule of inference but also to be in possession of something like an ability to see what it is required of us to be truly grasping what the world is like when we make a judgment (a kind of logical reworking of the Aristotelian doctrine of *phronēsis*, good judgment, in Aristotle’s ethics). The grasp of how both these “subjective” and “objective” logics work together is itself the grasp of how norm and reality fit or do not fit together, or what Hegel called the “absolute Idea,” which in his terms, was defined as the “unity of concept and reality.”

IV. ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCIENCES (1817–31)

In 1816, as the third volume of the *Logic* was appearing, Hegel finally got what he had long yearned for: he was offered the professorship of philosophy in Heidelberg. While there, he published in 1817 another book in which he finally provided at least the outline of his entire system. (Hegel intended it to be an abstract overview of his entire system that he could use as a textbook for his lectures; the abstract examples could then be fleshed out orally.) He called it the
Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, and it was divided into three sections. The first was an outline of his newly published Science of Logic. (The Encyclopedia version of the “logic” has come to be known as the “lesser logic” and the longer, prior Nuremberg text as the “greater logic”; the small differences between the two texts have agitated Hegel scholars ever since.) The next was titled, “Philosophy of Nature,” and the third simply “The Philosophy of Spirit.” Puzzling to followers of Hegel’s thought at the time was the omission of the Phenomenology from this system, and the way the first three chapters of the earlier Phenomenology reappeared instead as very short sections in the middle of the third section of the Encyclopedia. In an expanded edition of the book in 1825, Hegel even noted, without much explanation, that the 1807 Phenomenology was “no longer” the introduction to the system and had been replaced by the new introduction to the Encyclopedia itself. But Hegel never disavowed the Phenomenology, and to this day, the relation of the 1807 Phenomenology to the post-1817 “System” remains a matter of no small dispute among Hegelians and Hegel scholars.

V. ELEMENTS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT (1820)

In 1818, Hegel moved to Berlin to assume a professorship there in philosophy (as Fichte’s successor). It was at this point that he became the intellectual celebrity known simply as “Hegel.” His lectures were attended by hundreds of students and by notables from around the city, and he came to exercise a kind of intellectual authority of which probably many professors dream but that close to zero ever achieve. He also became a highly controversial figure, since there were those in Berlin who saw him as bordering on being a dangerous subversive whereas there were others who saw him simply as an obsequious toady to the authoritarian Prussian government. Which one of those was the real Hegel itself became a matter of heated historical dispute, whose fervor is only recently cooling down.

The argument about the “real Hegel” came to its flashpoint in 1820, when Hegel published his Philosophy of Right, the mature statement of his political philosophy. The 1807 Phenomenology, which offered itself as the statement of the genesis and justification of modern life, had been silent on that matter, and the 1817 Encyclopedia had only hinted at the outlines of Hegel’s own thoughts on the matter (although in fact Hegel had laid out the 1820 book in some lectures given at Heidelberg before he came to Berlin). In that book, Hegel divided his theory, as was typical, into three parts. He began with an introduction that argued in good post-Kantian fashion that the only unconditional claim on the will was that it be free, that is, that it can only be obligated by a law that it can comprehend as having been given to itself by itself. However, such a free will should not be conceived in more Kantian terms as the will of an autonomous individual abstracted out
of the fabric of mutual recognition (*Anerkennung*), nor should it be taken in Kantian terms as exercising a kind of special causality that somehow escapes the constraints of the causality of the natural world. Rather, it should be construed as acting in light of reasons that are both “one’s own” and which can be legitimated by appeal to reason itself and not by appeal merely to tradition, nature, or ecclesiastical authority. To be free, Hegel said, was to be “at one with oneself” (*bei sich*) within the fabric of recognition by others; it was, that is, to combine a kind of modern reflectiveness – a willingness to submit any claim to scrutiny – together with a kind of absorption in a daily life structured around social facts that offered individuals satisfying and rationally defensible plans of life that oriented them in shaping their lives in terms of their temporal limits (birth, maturation, aging, death) so that the shape of life could be acknowledged as “their own.”

The first such division was that of “Abstract Right,” where Hegel gave his own dialectical explanation about why the now familiar triad of modern rights to life, liberty, and property were in fact required as ways in which such freedom as “being at home with oneself within the fabric of recognition by others” could be made more specific and concrete. The next division was that of “Morality,” in which Hegel reiterated his criticisms of Kantian ethical theory as being too formalistic and in which he also argued that such a “moral point of view” had tensions and contradictions internal to itself that meant that it would inevitably fail as any type of exhaustive account of an individual’s or a community’s ethical life. The post-Christian and post-Kantian system of “morality” as the appeal to one’s conscience and to one’s own insight in grasping the rational compulsion of a moral principle (rather than blindly having to accept it out of the duty of “obedience” to an ecclesiastical or political authority), necessarily, so Hegel argued, led to a system of moral impasses, such as “lifeboat” examples where one has to decide whether to sacrifice an individual for a greater good. Thus, Hegel thought that within the modern system of “morality,” there could be no moral theory, strictly speaking, that reconciled these competing claims.

The reconciliation could come about, so Hegel argued, by showing how these ineliminable tensions and contradictions in “moral” life could in fact be made livable by understanding their place in a larger framework of institutions and social practices which he called “ethics.” Such institutions and practices form

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6. Such examples in contemporary philosophical discussions are called “trolley car” cases, where one has to decide how to prevent a runaway trolley car in a way that involves foreseeable deaths as a result of one’s actions; Hegel’s own use of such examples occurs in his lectures on the subject and not so much in the text of the *Philosophy of Right* itself.

7. The actual term Hegel used is the ordinary German term, *Sittlichkeit*, which was to supplement *Moralität*; the usual term of art for rendering *Sittlichkeit* as Hegel uses it into English is “ethical life.” In ordinary German, the two mean roughly the same thing (as do “morality” and “ethics” in English). The slight difference between them has to do with the idea of *Sitte* as the
the “living good,” as Hegel describes it, a set of social facts that provide individuals with very specific goods (involving both maxims and ends of action). Such social facts provide individuals with independent ways of imagining and judging the lives they are to lead. As modern goods, they establish the conditions under which individuals can be “at one” with themselves by providing them with a plan, as it were, for how life is lived out over time (from childhood to adulthood, from being a child to being a parent), and they thus function as realizations of freedom in the modern world. 

Such social, “ethical” facts are to be thought of as instantiations of the “Idea” in Hegel’s sense. The “Idea” in Hegel’s sense is, as we noted, the supposed concept of the unity of concept and reality, that is, the union of norm and fact that is authoritative or “unconditional” for a form of life. In the ethical sense, it is the concept of how our ideals mesh with how we take the world to be (that is, with whether the world is to be understood as fundamentally thwarting the realization of our ideals, of being neutral to their realization, or of assisting in their realization). Part of Hegel’s very ambitious and complicated thesis in the Philosophy of Right is that modern social institutions and practices in fact make the realization of the modern ideal of freedom not only possible but actual: that the natural and social world of modern life fully cooperates, as it were, with the realization of the unconditional demand to be free.

To that end, Hegel argued that the status of the modern family functioned as such a realization of freedom in the way the partners to the marriage were to choose each other freely on the basis of mutual compatibility and emotional complementarity (instead of the union being something more like an economic or dynastic arrangement among the families of the wedding partners) and with its equal emphasis on the raising of children to be independent and to make a life for themselves. Likewise, the rise of a modern civil society with careers open to talent, a market organization held in check by various regulatory agencies, and a set of professional organizations that hold their members to ethical standards function as a way in which the modern aspiration to being “one’s own person” is actually and not just ideally realized in day-to-day life. Finally, the modern constitutional state, with a figurehead monarch and a set of representative institutions, provides the social space for a conception of citizenship that

mores or ethos of a form of life. Hegel drew on the idea of ethos embedded in Sittlichkeit to indicate the distinction between what he thought were two different concepts. Unfortunately, this makes rendering the distinction in English all the more difficult. A more literal rendering of Sittlichkeit would be “moreness” or “ethos-hood,” both of which are painfully and obviously unsuitable.

8. The term “Idea” – a translation of the German Idee – is almost always capitalized in English translations so that it may be distinguished from the more common use of “idea” in English, which captures some of the German sense of “Vorstellung.”
both realizes a way of being “at one with oneself” in the modern nation-state and revivifies the ancient Greek ideal of civic participation in a context much larger and more expansive than the face-to-face dealings of the ancient polis (the city-state) could manage.

Hegel’s Philosophy of Right was clearly a defense of the emerging “bourgeois” order in nineteenth-century European life. (Karl Marx was right about that.9) It also had little to no room for the emerging claims of feminism (which Hegel rather haughtily dismissed), and it had no overt room for democracy of any recognizable modern type (which, under the conditions of modernity, Hegel thought would amount to mob rule and the dominance of demagogues). Hegel did, however, argue for representative government (which he thought would be fulfilled by bringing in the early modern Estates and professional organizations known in Germany as “Corporations,” a prediction on his part that turned out to have little historical currency). Hegel also dismissed the American example as too young, too small, and too far away to serve as a model for Europe. His main points were that the unconditional demand of modern life was that of freedom itself, that freedom had to be understood not as the exercise of a non-natural causal power but as the capacity to lead one’s life in terms of reasons with which one was at one with oneself in social space with others, and that it was only through an examination of practices and institutions that we could find a way in which the competing claims of “Abstract Right” and “Morality” could be reconciled and fashioned into a livable form of life.

Unfortunately, Hegel brought down the wrath of people who might otherwise have been sympathetic to him with two unfortunate claims in his “Preface” to the book. First, he took a potshot at an old nemesis of his, Jacob Fries (1773–1843), who had been released from his professorship at Jena in 1819 because of his political views; Hegel expressed more or less a kind of satisfaction that this fate had befallen Fries. Hegel and Fries had basically held each other in mutual contempt since they were both in Jena, and although some of Fries’s views were indeed abhorrent – he was an atrociously fierce anti-Semite, even though he was also a kind of weakly communitarian liberal – many felt that this was kicking a man when he was down, and this hardened some of their suspicions about Hegel’s own commitment to reform movements in Germany. More importantly, Hegel insisted in the “Preface” that his philosophy was centered on the proposition that “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational.” The assertion involved much Hegelian jargon (such as the claim about something being “actual,” or wirklich), but its point was Hegel’s major thesis in the

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9. For a discussion of Marx’s response to Hegel, see the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich, in this volume, as well as the essays by William Clare Roberts and Terrell Carver in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
book, namely, that the modern world of social institutions and nature as we now grasp it through the progress of the natural sciences not only make it possible to actualize freedom in the modern world (where “actualize” in that context would mean roughly making a kind of normative ideal into reality) but that the modern social and natural world promotes this. Nonetheless, a great number of reviewers and readers took it to mean what on the surface it looks like it means, namely, that everything that currently exists is right, and what is right is what currently exists, which would certainly be as clear a statement of a reactionary and almost Pollyanna-like view of the world as anything could be.

The criticism personally stung Hegel, and he tried to correct the impression, but the charge stuck for a long time, and it continues to be a bone of contention today. The worry over what Hegel meant by this later divided the groups that came to be known as the “Left Hegelians” from the “Right Hegelians.” This idea of Left and Right Hegelianism came from a quip made by Hegel’s student, David Friedrich Strauss* (later to become famous for his own rather atheistic-Hegelian Life of Jesus) when he joked that Hegel’s school had divided itself analogously to the way that the initial leaders of the French Revolution had divided themselves according to those who sat on the left of the table (the Jacobins) and those who sat on the right. The “Left Hegelians” tended to take the proposition of the rational being the actual (and vice versa) as stating that the world had to be remade in light of the rational demands of philosophy, whereas the “Right Hegelians” tended to take the view as a restatement of the goodness of God’s providential order.

VI. THE POPULAR BERLIN LECTURES: 1818–31

After the publication of the Philosophy of Right, Hegel published no more new books, contenting himself with expanding his Encyclopedia (which went into two more editions), with writing numerous articles on various topics, but mostly with devoting himself to his lectures. The “lecture” at Berlin during this period was part and parcel of the Romantic reinvention of the university. The professor was to give his audience the cutting-edge summary of where research on his topic stood at the present moment, and he was to present, more or less, to the audience an embodied picture of ideas working themselves out in the personality before them. Hegel’s own dialectical approach to philosophy – of building ideas out of the seemingly incompatible claims of other ideas – was well suited for this end, and Hegel, who was a stuttering, mumbling, and otherwise difficult

*10. For a discussion of Strauss, see the essay by William Clare Roberts in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2, as well as that by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in this volume.
lecturer, found that his Romantic audience instead took his fumbling hesitancies as the very manifestation of genius itself struggling to give itself expression.

Hegel’s lectures were never published in his lifetime, but student notes of them soon began to circulate as a valuable commodity in Germany. After his death, his students and friends gathered up as many of those lecture notes as they could along with Hegel’s own rather fragmentary notes to himself for use in his lectures, and they published them as separate volumes in Hegel’s posthumously published *Collected Works*. Those published versions of the lectures hardly meet the philological standards of our time. In them, there is no distinction made between what is a student note and what is Hegel’s own text. Moreover, since these lectures were given in different forms over different periods of time, they sometimes involve changes of mind and developments that do not appear in the published versions as changes or developments at all but simply as part of a supposedly unitary text that is supposed to read as if it had all been composed by Hegel himself all at once.

However, the texts based on Hegel’s lectures at Berlin on various aspects of his system did as much, if not more, to add to his fame as did any of his published works. His lectures on the “Philosophy of World History” attracted huge crowds, and both his “Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion” and his “Lectures on Aesthetics” continue to be among the seminal texts in the field. (The twentieth-century art historian Ernst Gombrich, himself a staunchly anti-Hegelian figure, even credited the lectures on aesthetics with more or less inventing the discipline of art history itself.)

In his lectures on the philosophy of world history, Hegel returned to the case he had made in his 1807 *Phenomenology*, but he was now outfitted with the ideas he had developed since that time. Thus, he argued to his audience that we must understand forms of life as succeeding each other in history, that each form of life is distinguished from another by how it thinks of itself, that how it thinks of itself can be expressed as its “Idea” (as the view of what the unconditional relation between norm and fact was for that form of life), and that with the advent of historical consciousness itself in ancient Greece, there was progress to be marked in the succession of forms of life in history, which could be seen as progress in understanding the “Idea” itself. Taking Aristotle’s formula for differentiating political regimes – roughly, the rule of “one” in monarchy, the rule of “some” in aristocracy, the rule of “all” in democracy – Hegel argued that the way we mark progress when we philosophically examine the succession of forms of life in history is something along the lines of Aristotle’s distinction. The East, he claimed, recognized only “one” as free (the emperor, the pharaoh), ancient Greece and Rome recognized “some” as free (male aristocrats), but the modern Christian world in principle recognizes “all” as free. Moreover, the development of history in Europe since the advent of Christianity is the successive and
painful attempt to work out the institutions and practices that would actualize
the abstract Idea of the freedom of all.

Hegel thus argued that we should understand the civilizations of the East
(China, India, and Japan) as in effect “stalled” forms of life. Their “Idea” remained
too abstract to provide any impetus for further development, and thus they
were unchanging, seemingly forever mired in the same conception of norma-
tive authority that they possessed when they first made their appearance on the
world stage. The civilizations of the Near East peaked with the Egyptian de-
velopment of its own “Idea,” which both brought the abstract “Ideas” of the East
to fulfillment and thereby brought itself down by making the contradictions in
them manifest. In good Romantic fashion, Hegel argued that the so-called Greek
miracle consisted in taking up those Egyptian ideas and incorporating them into
itself, which in turn necessitated their changing them into a more dynamic reli-
gious and political conception of the reality of human freedom. However, since
the “Idea” behind Greek life was still undeveloped, the Greeks also maintained
a commitment to slavery, and the type of individuality that Greek conceptions
of heroism demanded could find no place in the small, tight and enclosed world
of the polis. Suffering under its own contradictions, ancient Greece finally gave
way to the more imperial and legalistic power of Rome. However, Rome, like
Greece, could only recognize “some” as free, and the demands for full citizenship
in the Roman Imperium put stresses on its institutions that it could not handle.
The increasingly inward turn brought on by the Roman inability to deal with its
own contradictions led it finally to collapse under the rule of the religion it had
itself provoked, namely, Christianity.

Modern Europe was in effect the result of trying to work out in more concrete
terms the Christian message that freedom was the “essence” of all human beings,
and it came to the fore in the French Revolution’s complete and violent over-
throw of the ancien régime together with the rather rapid replacement of the
instability of the revolution by a more stable set of modern institutions (those
discussed in the Philosophy of Right).

Hegel’s views in his philosophy of history were undoubtedly Eurocentric,
and he sometimes displayed in his lectures on the subject not merely both his
prodigious learning and his capacity to synthesize large amounts of dispar-
ate material but also an unattractive tendency to make non-European ways
of life look even worse than the already tainted accounts of them on which he
was drawing made them out to be. (This was especially true of his lectures on
African civilization, where he exaggerated the already exaggerated aspersions
on African culture made in the literature available to him at the time.) He also
apparently used the phrase “the end of history” at least once in his lectures
(although not in his own notes on the subject), meaning by such a phrase that
in outline the main “headline” of history was now finished: history had moved
from the recognition of the freedom of one, to some, and now to all, and what thus remained to be done was not itself a particularly philosophical task but the hard labor of fashioning social and political institutions that would in fact adequately realize that ideal.

In his lectures on art, Hegel argued similarly. Just as forms of life change, so do styles of art, and it matters to us that there are such changes in style because art itself matters to us. Art matters to us because it is one of the three ways in which human beings reflect on what it is to be a human being, which in modern parlance we have come to see as being “minded,” that is, as geistig. Art presents in singular sensuous works various interpretations of what it is to be a minded creature and of what ultimately matters to such minded creatures, and like all other human artifacts, it can be understood only historically. Each work of art appears as the way in which a certain “content” – a view of what it means to be “minded” – appears in a certain “form,” and when the content “shines through” the form in a way that is adequate to the content, we have a beautiful, irreplaceable work of art. There are thus three and only three forms of art, Hegel argued. There is the symbolic form of art, in which the content that is seeking expression is itself so indeterminate and murky that its expression in any particular form is somewhat arbitrary; all the arts of the East and Near East, so Hegel claimed, are symbolic in this sense. There is the classical form of art, where the content seeking expression can find its perfectly adequate expression in particular forms; such is ancient Greek art, where the gods can be presented perfectly in statuary as embodiments of beauty (that is, as beautiful humans who never age or die) and where the heroes can be presented in poetry as the embodiment of what it means to be a perfectly free agent at one with oneself. However, since the dynamic of Greek life pushed it into taking on a conception of subjectivity, of the “infinite” interiority of each human life, their art eventually comes to realize its own shortcomings within itself. The dynamic of Greek life led it to a set of very basic civilizational problems for which there could be no purely aesthetic answer to the question: how can we be free? That demanded a real answer, not a new form of art. Romantic art, Hegel’s term for all Christian and post-Christian art, is taken up with the impossible project of representing mindedness in purely sensuous form, and the dissolution of such a Romantic project, which Hegel thought to be taking shape in his own day, made the status of appropriately modern art all the more up for grabs.

Because of his thesis about the very real difficulties a modern form of art has in being art, Hegel was said to have enunciated an “end of art” thesis analogous to his “end of history” thesis. However, Hegel never speaks of the “end of

*11. Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics are also discussed in the essay by Gary Shapiro in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
art,” although he does say that in terms of its normative authority, art will never again possess the status it had for the Greeks (about which he seems to have fully accepted Herodotus’s claim that it was the poets – Homer and Hesiod – who gave the Greeks their gods). One of the very striking features of the lecture series is Hegel’s in-depth discussion of the particular arts – architecture, sculpture, music, painting, and literature – where Hegel’s own rather spectacular critical talents are on display.

In his lectures on the philosophy of religion, Hegel also replayed the themes of his earlier *Phenomenology*. There are changes in the history of religion that trace the changes in forms of life, and we can thus be said to be marking progress in religious consciousness just as we are marking progress in politics and art. Religion, like art and philosophy, is a mode of “Absolute Spirit,” Hegel’s jargon for the practices through which people reflect on what it means to be human in general. Although politics is also such a reflection, it is more limited and particular in its scope since the themes of politics are often quite local and bound to the tradition or geography of a people (and it thus belongs to what Hegel calls “objective spirit”). There are thus always political issues that are of great interest to locals but of no real interest to humanity at large, whereas the themes of art, religion, and philosophy are always of universal human interest even though, of course, the particular works of art are always mediated by the very specific ways of life, times, aspirations, and details of the form of life out of which they emerge.

The lectures on the philosophy of religion helped to cement Hegel’s fame both in his own time and in our own, and they remain a source of controversy. Interpretations of them run the whole gamut of possible positions. They have been taken as a synthesis of Protestant religious views that corresponds to Aquinas’s equally comprehensive synthesis of Catholic views, and they have also been taken as an expression of how atheism is the culmination of all religious views. Although Hegel himself always and sometimes rather vehemently maintained that he was to be regarded as a Christian, and he took particular affront at those who would label him otherwise, this has not stopped people since his own day from accusing him of exactly the charge he denied. He rather famously spoke of the death of God in relation to the Christian ideas about Jesus of Nazareth, and he specifically denied the idea of personal immortality (claiming instead that immortality belongs to humanity as a whole, not to individuals). If nothing else, this made him an unorthodox Christian. Moreover, Hegel’s God seems to be Aristotle’s God as Aristotle speaks of him in the last part of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This is a God whose life is that of the contemplation of eternal truths, and we emulate him most closely and are therefore closest to the happiness of the gods when we pursue philosophical contemplation itself. It is this God that Jesus of Nazareth embodied, and it is his glory that
his crucifixion revealed. (On the last page of his *Encyclopedia*, Hegel even cited a passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* to the effect that the life of God consists in mindedness contemplating its own structure.)

Hegel’s own wife even claimed to be shocked when she read the lectures in their posthumous form, and she claimed that the views she found in them were not the views of the man with whom she had lived so long. Hegel’s own complicated reinterpretation of Christian theology quickly became part of the Hegelian aftermath, as the “Young Hegelians” (among them, Friedrich Engels) took Hegel to have announced the “end of religion” just as he had supposedly announced the “end of history,” whereas some of his other admirers defended him as Christianity’s greatest thinker.

Hegel’s least influential series of lectures had to do with the “philosophy of nature,” even though the subject was near and dear to him. Nature *per se* has no history, even though our “Ideas” of nature quite obviously have such a history. Nonetheless, any “Idea,” as the concept of what the union of norm and fact would be, must incorporate a specific conception of the natural into itself. Against the Romantic “natural philosophers” of his own day, Hegel argued that a close inspection of the actual results of the natural sciences of the time showed that the Romantic conception of nature was wrong, and that there was nothing in nature itself, as understood by the results of the natural sciences, to undermine any of the claims made by the line of thought in his own version of post-Kantianism. What the empirical natural sciences show to us is that there are three different types of explanation for what is going on in the natural world. First, there are mechanical explanations, where we explain the whole in terms of the causal interactions of its parts (each of which is identifiable independently of its place in the whole under consideration – such as that of a planetary system). Second, there are chemical explanations for how different substances have an affinity or lack of affinity for each other in various combinations of them and how those combinations can therefore produce new chemical bodies; the chemical “whole” thus plays an explanatory role different from what it does in mechanical explanation. Finally, there are biological explanations that are teleological, that is, where the parts cannot be identified as organic parts outside their place and their function within the organic whole in which they function, in the way that a liver cannot be understood as a liver without understanding the functional role it plays in an organism. In their contemporary results, the empirical sciences, Hegel happily concluded, mirror in a loose way the various divisions of the *Science of Logic*.

Hegel also had some rather quirky views on a variety of specific topics concerning the natural sciences – for somewhat odd reasons, he refused to believe, for example, that water really was just H₂O – and he often took sides in contemporary scientific debates with the rather unfortunate consequence that,
more often than not, he turned out to have chosen the losing side. He denied that there could be evolutionary explanations of the origin of life or the species, since he accepted by and large an idea prevalent at the time that each species was so perfectly fitted to its environment that any gradual change in its structure would cause it to die out. All these quirks along with his willingness to speak out on scientific issues made him less than popular with Berlin’s natural scientists, who somewhat resented Hegel’s fame and his claims for the primacy of his own philosophy of nature in the university curriculum. Hegel himself even joked to the students at his lectures on the subject about how nonseriously he was taken by the natural scientists, but he held on to the belief that in that field too, his day would come.

VII. THE HEGELIAN LEGACY

Hegel’s legacy in European philosophy is hard to overestimate. In his own lifetime, Hegel’s impact rapidly went beyond the confines of Prussia and reached into all areas of intellectual life. However, famous as he was, his influence quickly waned. Hegel died suddenly in 1831, during the so-called second cholera pandemic, and by the mid-1840s his influence had virtually collapsed. However, his presence in European philosophy never vanished, and his key ideas of the necessity of understanding things dialectically rather than presenting things as following quasi-deductively from some single master principle (such as the categorical imperative) has continued to show up in various European thinkers. Marx claimed to be inspired by him and even boasted that he found Hegel standing on his head (as an idealist) and he put him upright (made him into a materialist). Likewise, his insistence that we must understand matters socially and historically, and that we must show how ideas relate to the going concerns of our times (including those of the natural sciences) have had much more of a life in European thought than they have in anglophone philosophy, where the approach to philosophy has typically been inclined to the ahistorical and analytical rather than the historical and social. At various times, parts of his system have been declared definitively “dead” while other parts are supposedly “living,” but exactly what is dead and what is living has itself changed over the period of the twentieth century. It is probably no surprise that Hegel has never really vanished from philosophical thought. He has remained a presence in Heideggerian, Gadamerian, and Derridian philosophy12 in our own time.

and he is now making a reappearance in what can broadly be called analytical philosophy.\textsuperscript{13}

If anything, what has inspired European philosophy since Hegel is the rejection of one of Hegel’s key claims about his entire philosophy. Hegel claimed that his system amounted to a true statement of “infinity,” that is, of the unconditioned, which Kant thought reason sought but could never achieve. For Hegel, on the other hand, true “infinity” is to be found in the normative structure of reason itself as it underwrites its own claims to absoluteness in giving accounts of itself, something that is supposedly illustrated or even enacted by the Hegelian system itself. For modern thought, so Hegel claimed, he had constructed a system in which nothing has to be simply “given” or simply taken on authority. Likewise, as a form of life, modern life is self-authorizing, and Hegel’s system thus claimed to be the paradigmatically modern system of thought. However, from Marx to Heidegger, the opposite – and perhaps peculiarly, even more Kantian – claim has prevailed. We are irreducibly finite, so they say, in our orientation; we always start from somewhere, and that “somewhere” will always be something “given” that we must simply accept without being able to give any further authorization for it. For these thinkers who have put “finitude” at the center of their thought, Hegel is the philosopher who shows us most clearly where we go wrong when we aim at such self-authorization, and we study Hegel to learn from his mistakes and to learn about the temptations that lead us there. Contra Hegel, these thinkers assert that there is no such self-authorization and that searching for it carries a distinct danger within itself. (This has been especially pronounced in the lines of thought represented by Heidegger, Schmitt,\textsuperscript{14} Foucault, and Derrida.) More recently, Hegelians have started to reply to that charge, but the jury is still out on whether their replies are convincing to what Hegel would describe as the shape that “spirit” has now assumed, a mode of thought that rather forcefully insists on its own finitude over and over again.

**MAJOR WORKS**

*Complete works in German*


\textsuperscript{13} For an overview and analysis of the analytic reception of Hegel, see Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

\textsuperscript{*14} For a discussion of Schmitt, see the essay by Chris Thornhill in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*
Translations


In 1815, after the defeat of Napoleon, the victorious nations of the “Holy Alliance” met at the Congress of Vienna to determine the future of Europe. It intended nothing less than the restoration of the political order that had existed in pre-Napoleonic Europe. In France, the Bourbon Monarchy was soon restored, and in the various states of Germany, the old stabilizing union of church and state was revived. Thereafter, and not unexpectedly, the established clerical and political aristocracy saw any reform movement as a dangerous threat to their traditional hold on power. In Germany, the forces of restoration, to insure that there be no return of the disruptive reforms embodied in the “Napoleonic Code,” relied not only on censorship and prison, but on the support of a conservative clergy whose own fortunes depended on political stability. However, and again not unexpectedly, this intransigent fixation of clerical and political conservatives generated even further resentment among those who sought to discard the obsolete residue of the medieval world. Prince Metternich, who had presided over the Congress of Vienna, was clear enough about what the proceedings foretold: that “Old Europe was at the beginning of its End … and a New Europe was coming into being.” Finally, in March of 1848, the long suppressed anger of the “Vormärz” generation broke forth in open rebellion. What had began as a restoration ended in revolution and the emergence of what we now term “modernity.”

In 1815, in that same year of the Congress, a small group of students at the University of Jena, where Hegel had once taught, gathered into a league set on

establishing the goals of German unity and democratic freedom. They called themselves the “Burschenschaften” (“student fraternities”), and in late 1817, having expanded into several thousands, these “Patrioten” gathered to celebrate the victory over Napoleon at Leipzig and the three-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. A noisy celebration took place at the Wartburg Castle, where Luther had translated the Bible into German. Within several days, the students replaced their patriotic speeches with more active displays of nationalistic excitement. As Luther had burnt the Papal letter, so the students set about burning books they considered as opposed to German freedom and unity. Hegel, then Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, was quite critical of the whole hectic affair, and let it be known.

I. HEGEL AND HIS STUDENTS

During this time of unrest, Hegel had published a small work: The Proceedings of the Estates Assembly in the Kingdom of Württemberg 1815–1816. In it, and quite fitting to its rather noncommittal title, Hegel set forth a temperate and mediated opinion regarding the reconciliation of individual freedom and state unity, of the new forces of reform and the old order, or, as the students had it, of “democracy and aristocracy.” The Proceedings, along with his complaining of the excesses of the Wartburg Festival, could not but please the more liberal officials in Berlin, who had long sought his appointment to the Chair of Philosophy at the university. In their hopes that Hegel’s reasonable approach would help calm, at least among the students, their disruptive mood, they again offered him the position. Earlier, in 1816, he expected to be offered the appointment, but it was delayed by the then Minister of Culture who seemed to have had reservations concerning the “obscurity” of Hegel’s philosophy. This time, it being offered, Hegel accepted. In the fall of 1818, the Chair, which had remained vacant since the death of Fichte in 1814, was given over to Hegel. For his admirers among the liberal officials in Berlin, such as the new Minister of Culture, Karl von Altenstein, and the Minister of Education, Johannes Schultz, the appointment insured that a temperate and respected academic voice would be heard – and so it was.

It was true that Hegel’s voice would be moderate, as his whole philosophy was based on the reconciliation of opposites, and for him the most prevalent error of thought was to engage in the futile and endless play of polar opposites: of taking one exclusive side in an “either/or” debate. For anyone acquainted with Hegel,

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the mantra “Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis” comes to mind. Although Hegel did avoid the formula, labeling it “a lifeless schema [geistloses Schema],” it does nevertheless represent the central principle of all his philosophy, which has the overall intention of overcoming and reconciling contradictions. Philosophy is, but the movement of reason, the act of fully self-conscious thought that in its act reveals the contradictions latent in ordinary or natural understanding – of what Hegel termed “healthy common sense.” In his schemata, the first act of reason, of dialectical reason, was a negative and critical act, one that merely revealed the contradictions concealed in ordinary thinking. This first critical step was then followed by the reconciliation of the contradictions that had come to light; this reconciliation was the act of “speculative reason.”

For Hegel, the uncritical acceptance of any “one-sided proposition … can never give rise to a speculative truth.” No one-sided, either/or judgment, no definitive and exclusive statement presented as either true or false, can be accepted as a “speculative” truth – which is to say, a philosophical truth. Since philosophical or speculative truths cannot be cast into simple disjunctive propositions, they cannot be adequately expressed in common language, into judgments wherein either one side or the other is taken as either exclusively true or false. Such exclusive truths can serve only as the dialectical beginning of what, finally, can be developed into speculative truths. Truth is a consequence of reconciling contradictions rather than finding truth in one or the other of exclusive alternatives, it is the result of an inclusive “both/and” manner of thought rather than asserting exclusive “either/or” statements. Indeed, Hegel well realized the difficulty involved in presenting a speculative truth: “Speculative truth … means very much the same as what, in special connection with religious experience and doctrines, used to be called Mysticism.” This “mystical” truth, in all of its reconciliatory ambiguities, seemed to make Hegel’s philosophy, at least among the liberal officials in Berlin, well fitted for the role of mediating the political debates that disturbed Germany after 1815. But it was not until shortly after Hegel’s death in 1831 that the full influence of this ambiguity was openly expressed, an expression that was not in the least intended or desired by the officials in Berlin.

But there is also another fundamental principle underlying Hegelian thought that, once again in its ambiguity, allowed for the justification of either a conservative or a liberal worldview. It is cast in his famous formula, “What is reasonable is real, and what is real is reasonable [Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und

5. Ibid., 121.
was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig].”6 In effect, this formula allowed Hegelians to decide whether or not the present state of affairs, cultural and political, was or was not rational. If not, then the present state was “unreal.” If, however, the present social circumstances were considered “real” then they were also rational, were justified. It all depended on what one would take as the basic criterion: what was real (actual) or what was rational (reasonable). Needless to say, there were more than a few who doubted the reasonability of the Prussian monarchy.

On arriving in Berlin, Hegel immediately began to compose his Philosophy of Right, which was published in 1820. In agreement with his earlier views as they were expressed in The Proceedings of the Estates Assembly in the Kingdom of Württemberg, he wrote:

The state is the actuality of concrete freedom …. The principle of the modern states has prodigious strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme of self-subsistent personal particularity, and yet at the same time brings it back to the substantive unity [of the state].7

In sum, the “modern state” is the reconciliation, the synthesis, as it were, of two apparent opposites: “self-subsistent personal particularity,” or autonomous individuals with the “substantive unity” of the state – a compromise between anarchy and totalitarianism. However, the ambiguity of this particular reconciliation became evident when it was later asked if the Prussian monarchy was indeed a “modern state”: in short, whether or not it was a “true” or “rational” state and so deserved to be taken as a “real” state. Those whose roles were legitimatized by that state thought it was. But there were others, drawn mostly from the young and unemployed academics, who did not think so. How these liberal Hegelians viewed the matter of the relationship between the real and the rational is clearly set forth in an example given by Friedrich Engels (1820–95): “In 1789, the French monarchy had become so unreal, that is to say, it had been robbed of all necessity, so non-rational, that it had to be destroyed by the Great Revolution – of which Hegel always speaks with the greatest enthusiasm.”8

It was not long before the young, and to use a modern term, the “disenfranchised” Hegelians, soon understood that “the conservatism of this mode of

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outlook [Hegelian] is relative; its revolutionary character is absolute – the only absolute it admits."9

But if there was a potential political revolution concealed within Hegel's philosophy, there were also heretical possibilities. Certainly the Pietistic Christians suspected that he covertly intended to have the “Absolute Idea” or even human self-consciousness accepted as a new God,10 and that his philosophy might well be nothing more than an atheistic humanism – or, if pressed for more specific labels, perhaps a modern form of Valentinian Gnosticism.11

Adding to the dangerous aspect of his philosophy, the younger faculty at the university, as well as a growing body of students, began to look on Hegel as being a spiritual leader. The force of his “mystical” doctrines, such as the present actuality of the Absolute Spirit, which could be taken as God, literally “converted” his students into disciples. For them, “to become an authentic Hegelian,” it was necessary that “a person had to undergo an existential transformation, a philosophical ‘rebirth.’”12 An example of this “rebirth” is evidenced in the testimony of Bruno Bauer: “Hegel alone has given back peace and certainty to my unsteady spirit. From the first moment I heard them, his lectures held me chained and seemed to present nothing new but only the explanation of that of which knowledge is inherent in each of us.”13

Wilhelm Vatke (1806–82), later a theology professor at the university, was even more impressed by Hegel's lectures. As he wrote to his brother, “You will think I am insane when I tell you that I see God face to face, but it is true. The transcendent has become immanent … Oh, if I could only describe to you how blessed I am.”14

Confronted with this new “blessedness,” the leading Pietist, Ernest Hengstenberg (1802–69), warned his fellow clerics that it was very possible that this devotion to “Hegelian philosophy will in the near future develop into a much more diabolical force than the declining rationalism … It is our holy duty to watch out and to attack immediately.”15 Even before Hegel's death, one of his followers, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), revealed the effects of that

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9. Ibid., 12.
“diabolical force” in his work *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (1830). As one commentator noted, the work is simply “a straightforward denial of the Christian belief in personal immortality, a plea for recognition of the inexhaustible quality of the only life we have, and a derisive assault on the posturing and hypocrisies of the professional theologians of nineteenth-century Germany.” However, the work was hardly noticed, since the press run was confiscated by the state censors, and its young author abruptly dismissed from his teaching post. And so, despite this early sign of how Hegelianism might be read by a Hegelian, the philosophy retained its official reputability.

On the day of Hegel’s funeral, almost all of Berlin’s leading figures, both academic and political, heard and seemed to agree with what was said of him. There were two official eulogies. In the first, the theologian Philipp Konrad Marheineke (1780–1846), rector of the university, proposed that absolute reason had indeed been rendered incarnate in Hegel, and that it was his philosophy alone that finally resolved the ancient contradiction between the infinite God and the finite world:

In a fashion similar to our savior, whose name he always honored in his thought and activity, and in whose divine teaching he recognized the most profound essence of the human spirit, and who as the son of God gave himself over to suffering and death in order to return to his community eternally as spirit, he also has now returned to his true home and through death has penetrated through to resurrection and glory.

The second eulogy, by Professor Friedrich Förster (1791–1868), followed the same tenor and meaning as the first: “Indeed, he [Hegel] was for us a helper, savior, and liberator from every need and distress, for he saved us from the bonds of madness and selfish egoism.” As a recent biographer of Hegel writes of these final words: “It was now clear that Hegelianism … had become something more than just an academic doctrine.”

It was not long after the funeral that the conservative Hegelians, without the personal and powerful support of Hegel, found themselves faced with the difficult task of demonstrating that his philosophy could indeed justify the

rationality of the Prussian state. After the French Revolution of 1830, German authorities were less inclined to fully validate a philosophy that might well prove to be a source of social unrest.20

For a brief time, there had been hopes among the conservative Hegelians that their academic world might accommodate speculative philosophy with the official world ruled by orthodox religious and political conservatives. But this was not to be. The delicate ambiguities within Hegelianism, which, for a time, allowed accommodation, proved too fragile to endure a sudden and open shock which clearly revealed to the Prussian authorities that Hegelianism could well serve as the philosophical basis for both atheism and socialism.21

II. DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS

In 1835, a brilliant theological study was published, with the rather innocent title of *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined.*22 It was written by the young and little-known theologian David Friedrich Strauss,23 a recent graduate of the Protestant Seminary in Tübingen. Today it is difficult even to imagine the wave of public and political anger that erupted on the appearance of Strauss's work.

Thrown like a fire-bomb into the tinder-dry pietistic forest of Württemberg, it was indeed not surprising that the *Life of Jesus* ignited a conflagration which quickly spread through the whole of Germany. What in fact roused the anger of the orthodox was not the Hegelian conclusion … but the fact that Strauss’ book – if its conclusions be accepted – would demolish the whole historical foundation of the Christian faith. The bastion of which the Reformation had been built now seemed to have been completely undermined, and the mighty fortress about to collapse. Those who had set their faith on the biblical Christ now learnt that practically nothing could be known about the historical Jesus. God, Christ, the Bible – all

*21. Many of the figures and issues discussed in what follows are also treated in the essay by William Clare Roberts in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.*


23. David Friedrich Strauss (January 27, 1808–February 8, 1874; born and died in Ludwigsburg, Württemberg, then Germany) was educated at the University of Tübingen (1825–30) and the University of Berlin (1831–32). His influences included Hegel, Kant, Schleiermacher, and Spinoza, and he held appointments at the University of Tübingen (1832–33) and the University of Zurich (1839).
appeared to have been overthrown by the intensity of the daring frontal assault, so that like the temple of Jerusalem, not one stone remained upon another.\(^{24}\)

But of all those disturbed by Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, few were more disturbed than the Hegelians who held academic posts – the “accommodationalists.” Unhappily, the suddenly notorious Strauss had candidly admitted that “From the beginning, my critique of the life of Jesus was closely tied to the Hegelian philosophy.”\(^{25}\) This was enough for Hegel’s detractors to prove what they had always suspected – that he was a serious danger to the established order – and it signaled the beginning of the end of official support for Hegel’s philosophy.\(^{26}\)

Strauss’s work had indeed the markings of a Hegelian. The famous triad appeared in his reconciliation of the antithetical views regarding the gospel narratives, in particular the treatment of the miracle stories. On one side stood the “naturalists,” such as Heinrich Paulus (1761–1851), who maintained that the miracles could be explained by recourse to purely natural causes. On the other side stood the “supernaturalists,” orthodox believers who took the miracle stories as literally true. But for Strauss, neither faith (which was in itself no rational explication) nor strained attempts to explain putative miracles as merely the effect of natural causes, were satisfactory. The key to his Hegelian reconciliation of the two antithetical views was found by taking each of the “miraculous” episodes in turn and demonstrating that in every instance they were ultimately the products of a fusion between a real natural event and the subjective religious inspiration of the one who took the event as a miracle. The product, the miracle, Strauss termed a “Myth.” Myths were not falsehoods, but merely a form of religious perception. Naturalistic attempts to explain miracles, as with Paulus, had been encouraged by the success of empirical science since the Enlightenment, which took “objectivity” as its normative stance. However, this very objectivity had led to the discounting of the important role that religious subjectivity played in creating the miracle stories. Strauss, who proceeded to critically examine every episode in the life of Jesus, concluded that the whole of the gospel narratives were fundamentally mythic creations grounded in the Messianic expectations of the Old Testament authors, and generated under the press of religious

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enthusiasm. The basic stories were fictional, but “without evil design.” As Strauss had it, “In ancient times, and especially amongst the Hebrews, and yet more when this people was stirred up by religious excitement, the line of distinction between history and fiction, prose and poetry, was not drawn so clearly as with us.” The result was a mythic history. Neither supernatural nor a misunderstood natural happening, the Christian miracle stories were merely natural events that had been elevated into a supernatural history by an expectant religious mentality.

But there was something even more important in its consequences than Strauss’s employment of the triadic formula to reconcile the seemingly contradictory opposition between natural and supernatural arguments regarding the miracle stories. This had to do with the very nature of God, and it was also an attempt to reconcile the traditional contradictions between the finite and the infinite. Strauss was the first to clearly argue that Hegel’s philosophy had given reason for apprehending the Christian God, even in the person of Christ, as inherent in human nature. His proposal, once its conclusion was accepted, became the fundamental rationale for atheistic humanism, a conclusion that could not but undermine, if not finally destroy, the established political and religious forms of his day. In Strauss’s argument, the Hegelian mediation between the infinite and the finite meant, when used as a paradigm for the relationship between God and Man, that the infinite simply could not be contained within a singular finite being (Christ), and would of its nature disperse itself as the human species.

Humanity is the union of the two natures – God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude … It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven, for from the negation of its phenomenal life there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life; from the suppression of its mortality as a personal, national, and terrestrial spirit, arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens.

In sum, if “the key to the whole of Christology” was to be found in simply understanding that the miraculous events marking the life of the historical Jesus were but mythic representations of the actual history of humanity, then the proper object of devotion was not the God-Man but rather the Human God, humanity.

28. Ibid., 777.
29. Ibid., 780.
The Leben Jesu provoked a “panic-stricken terror” among orthodox believers, and “Strauss became a notorious celebrity overnight, and was everywhere regarded as the arch-fiend of the true Christian faith.” Insofar as the ancient link between church and state seemed threatened by Strauss's work, he was further damned as an anarchist and a danger to political stability. It was a combination of curses that would soon apply to all of those Hegelians willing to accept Strauss’s evaluation of the gospels and the reduction of God to Humanity.

III. BRUNO BAUER

Under increasing pressure, and wishing to distance themselves from Strauss’s radical reading of Hegel, the “Old” Hegelians looked to a brilliant young professor, the recently appointed Bruno Bauer. He had displayed his ability not only having earlier received, from Hegel himself, a prize for a writing on aesthetics, but in a series of well-regarded articles on biblical theology, which were published in such journals as the Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik (Yearbook for Scientific Criticism), which was sometimes humorously referred to as the “Hegel-Gazette.” But as it turned out, the Hegelians had made a very bad choice in selecting Bauer as their champion.

Bauer immediately embarked on a series of articles in the Jahrbücher that had the impossible task of attempting to prove the logical inexorability of the Virgin Birth. The extremely complex and abstruse argument that Bauer presented had little consequence, and it was not long before Strauss responded. Not only did Strauss dispose of Bauer's effort to explain the Virgin Birth in Hegelian terms, but he went on to create the well-known classification of Hegelians “using the traditional analogy” as “Right,” “Center,” or “Left.” Bauer was, in taking the historical Jesus as a historical fact, justified by speculative philosophy, placed on the “Right.” For Strauss, the categorizations were not a matter of politics, but rather how the life of the historical Jesus might be taken in the light of Hegel’s absolute reason: as either fully in accord with it, or partially in accord, or not at all. In time, the ambiguous “center” was discarded, and the classifications were

30. Harris, David Friedrich Strauss, 86.
31. Ibid., 41.
33. Bruno Bauer (September 6, 1809–April 13, 1882; born in Eisenberg, Saxe-Altenberg; died in Rixdorf, Germany) was educated at the University of Berlin (1828–34). His influences included Hegel, and he held appointments at the University of Berlin (1834–39) and the University of Bonn (1839–42).
34. Strauss, In Defense of My Life of Jesus, 38.
simply reduced to either “Right,” which was identified with the conservative “Old Hegelians,” or the more radical “Left” or “Young Hegelians.”

Bauer, whose efforts Strauss publicly dismissed as “nothing but a trite and childish play” and privately ridiculed as a “foolish piece of pen-pushing,” was not long in coming to realize that Strauss's views were grounded in a correct reading of Hegel's philosophy. Within the decade Bauer had transformed himself into the opposite of what the Old Hegelians had expected, and by the late 1830s had become the “leader of the Young Hegelians in Berlin.” In 1839, while still at the University of Berlin, he found a student, and then a friend in the young Karl Marx (1818–83). Together they planned to edit a “Journal of Atheism” but Bauer was suddenly transferred to a new, and hopefully less sensitive teaching post at the University of Bonn. However, by 1842, his outspoken atheism resulted, after a debate among several German universities regarding the limits of academic freedom, in the revocation of his license to teach. The new Prussian monarch, the ultra-conservative Frederick William IV (1795–1861), who had ascended the throne in 1840, was not in the least tolerant of Bauer or, for that matter, any of the liberal Hegelian schools. Unhappily for Marx, whose name was closely linked with Bauer's, he saw his hopes for an academic career suddenly vanish. Needless to say, Bauer had lost all chance of a future teaching post, and so he shared the fate of many of his Young Hegelian colleagues: he spent the remainder of his life in a struggle against poverty.

Bauer's leading role among the radical Hegelians was greatly enhanced by his 1841 publication, *Trumpet of the Last Judgment Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum.* The anonymous author, seemingly a devout Pietistic clergyman, presented a case against the conservative Hegelians that went well beyond anything that Strauss, or anyone else, had undertaken – or perhaps ever has. It is an exhaustive, brilliant, and often vehement criticism of any reading of Hegel that would attempt to accommodate his philosophy to either orthodox religion or political stability.

As if ambitious to be even more the opponent of religious orthodoxy than Strauss, Bauer then embarked on a series of critical studies dealing with both the Old and the New Testaments. He ultimately argued that the historical Jesus had never existed, being nothing more than a Jewish Messianic fiction. As to

35. See Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, 50ff.
37. Harris, *David Friedrich Strauss*, 80.
Bauer’s quality as a biblical scholar, Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) noted that: “Bauer’s Criticism of Gospel History is worth a good dozen Lives of Jesus, because his work, as we are only now coming to recognize, after half a century, is the ablest and most complete collection of the difficulties on the Life of Jesus which is anywhere to be found.”

In his biblical studies, Bauer had more in mind than a simple critique of accepted religious belief; rather, he was interested in establishing the theoretical foundation for the exercise of total human freedom. In taking note of Strauss’s unrestrained treatment of that most sacred subject, the life of Jesus, Bauer embarked on a total and complete critique of all given religious and political principles, a critique that he termed “The Terrorism of Pure Theory.” This unimpeded and irreverent critical rejection of all that claimed to be either holy or traditional was the true expression of human life. Freedom was to think as one desired, “without preconditions [Voraussetzunglos].” This “Theory” seems to have been inspired by his reading of such earlier Enlightenment philosophes as the atheist Johann C. Edelmann (1698–1767). In any case he “felt himself to be Edelmann redevivus.” For Bauer, it seemed absolutely necessary to rid human consciousness of any trace of reverence toward the present practices of religious and political life, both of which were the expressions of obscure thoughts and simple ignorance. Together these forces had collapsed into the present oppressive false synthesis known as “The Christian State.” To leave this manifest contradiction unexposed and unquestioned insured the continued suppression of human self-consciousness and freedom. In short, adherence to the present state of political and religious thought was fundamentally inhuman. Nevertheless, Bauer, despite his admiration for the atheistic mind of the Enlightenment, never accepted the claim of that age that posited mathematical and empirical knowledge as superior to speculative reason. Bauer remained, as did all of the Young Hegelians, fundamentally a Hegelian.

Bauer’s commitment to the theory of radical criticism gave him little reason to practically engage in any actual and immediate attempt to revolutionize or rationalize the then existing state of religion or politics. His chosen role as “Critic” entailed only that he reveal the inhuman and alienating doctrines inherent in religion, and thereby, with that revelation, critically dissolve them. This purely cognitive action stood over and against any practical engagement to recast the given reality, and:

Thus the critic renounces all joys of society, but its sorrows too remain distant from him … The philistines who still throw stones at him, misinterpret him, and attribute impure motives to him … are not ridiculed by him, for it is not worth the effort, but are calmly looked through and sent back to their insignificant significance.44

His cynical passivity allowed him to avoid taking part in the failed revolution of 1848, although his radical doctrines, as those of his fellow Young Hegelians, had contributed to the foundations of that revolution. However, being sensitive to the charge that his theorizing was simply an impotent academic exercise, Bauer defended his “Terrorism of Pure Theory” by maintaining that, in time, it would generate a new and modern consciousness, one totally free from the stifling irrationality of the old religious belief. To this end, and to the end of his life, he devoted himself to writing a series of theological and political studies directed to the destruction of the “inverted world [verkehrte Welt]” in which he lived. His believed that his studies would ultimately prove to be a true “Philosophy of Action”: “Theory, which has helped us so far, will always remain as our only help in freeing ourselves and others … In time the illusory being [of religion] will be overthrown, and freedom, which Theory has given us, will be raised into a power which will give the world a new form.”45

As early as 1843, Marx had turned away from the “theoretical” revolution of his former teacher, Bauer, and had aphoristically noted that “It is clear that the arm of criticism cannot replace the criticism of arms. Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but theory itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses.”46 In that same year, Marx and his new-found friend Friedrich Engels wrote a lengthy and bitter satire directed against all theoretical criticism: The Holy Family; or, Critique of Critical Critique: Against Bruno Bauer and Company.47 Bauer, not intimidated, soon responded with an article that tied Marx and Engels to Feuerbach, and declaring them to be nothing more than covert religious believers.48

44. Mah, The End of Philosophy, 85.
IV. AUGUST VON CIESZKOWSKI

In 1838, the same year in which Bauer published his first critical study of the Bible, a short work was published that deserves the adjective “seminal.” It was entitled *The Prolegomena to Historiosophy [Prolegomena zur Historiosophie].* Its author was August von Cieszkowski (1814–94), a member of the Polish aristocracy who had emigrated to Berlin after participating in the abortive uprisings of 1830. Its importance rests on its effect in completely expanding the debate over Hegelianism from one of mere theological interest into one that would take it as a revolutionary doctrine set on changing the whole course of human history. Cieszkowski was quite clear as to his intentions: “We thus announce a new era for philosophy … The future fate of philosophy in general is to be practical philosophy or, to put it better, the philosophy of praxis, whose most concrete effect on life and social relations is the development of truth in concrete activity.”

Hegel, whom he considered “the hero of the newest philosophy,” had introduced this new era, one in which:

Mankind has finally reached that stage of self-consciousness where it no longer considers the laws of its normal progress and development simply as concoctions of zealous and self-deceiving scholars but rather as faithful portrayals of the absolute thought of God, as manifestations of objective reason in universal history.

Cieszkowski’s philosophy of history reflected that of Hegel insofar as God was no longer a distant and transcendent “Other” but was immanent in, and revealed within, the course of history. As Hegel had noted in his own lectures, “History is the unfolding of God’s nature.” However, for Cieszkowski, Hegel, for some inexplicable reason had not articulated that “organic course of its idea” in terms of the dialectical triad. Hegel had divided history into four ages: Oriental, Greek, Roman, and the Christian Germanic. But given this undialectical schemata, the central question as to the “end of history,” its final reconciliatory stage,
was not addressed: what of the future? These fixed sequential ages could hardly, for Cieszkowski, address the fullness of history, which evidently and without doubt did not cease with the state of actual affairs in Germany at the time. The problem was in Hegel's own failure to apply his own triadic dialectic toward comprehending God's meaning within history. For Cieszkowski, the stages or moments of human history which alone clearly and simply expressed the triadic dialectic were those most commonly used: past, present, and future. This triad, whose thesis was the past, and whose antithesis was the present, and whose synthesis was the future, was perfectly appropriate in expressing Hegel's "absolute thought of God." In short, Cieszkowski had recognized that which Hegel had ignored: the future. The history of the world was now to be recast into three grand ages. The past, which in history begins with Adam and ends with Jesus, was one of practice, of simple and unreflective engagement with the world. The second era was that of theory, of other-worldly concerns, and it reached from Jesus to Hegel. The third era, whose advent began with the death of Hegel and which will be of infinite duration, is one in which practice and theory, previously in the contradiction of past and present, would be resolved in the synthesis of "praxis." All that which had hitherto been accepted as true must now be put aside in the face of a new world coming into being, and this new world, in its eternity, will finally conclude the history of mankind. In this new period the ancient antagonism of theory and practice would be resolved, and a new era would emerge, an era informed by a "philosophy of praxis" whose task will be to produce "truth in concrete activity."

No doubt the effect the Prolegomena had on the Hegelians was enhanced by its subtle evocation of the "Third Reich," that "Kingdom of the Holy Ghost" announced by Joachim of Flores (1145–1202). Indeed, among almost all of the prophetic Young Hegelians, with the exception of Max Stirner, a new age did seem immanent, and they felt called on, as Feuerbach has it, "to found a Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Idea." This eschatological excitement pervades even in Marx's "scientific socialism." In this, revolutionary history is set forth in three ages: primitive communism, class society, and final communism. The new age will be one in which the utopian classless society will have displaced the alienating and evil age of capitalism – a "false consciousness" that perversely worships the "divine power of money." The persistence of this triadic and apocalyptic paradigm is not surprising, not only considering the great number of discontented students of theology in Germany at the time of the Young

55. Max Stirner (real name Johann Kaspar Schmidt) (October 25, 1806–June 26, 1856; born in Bayreuth, Bavaria; died in Berlin, Germany) was educated at the University of Berlin, University of Erlangen, and University of Königsberg, and was influenced by Hegel.
56. Towes, Hegelianism, 190.
57. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts of 1844, in Karl Marx: Early Writings, 192.
Hegelians, but also taking into account that this “fantasy of a third and most glorious dispensation had …, over the centuries, entered into the common stock of European social mythology.”

V. MOSES HESS

In 1841, a further enhancement of the triadic eschatological perspective was introduced by Moses Hess (1812–75), who has been taken as the “Prophet of Communism and Zionism.” In his influential work *The European Triarchy*, Hess proposed a union of the liberalizing elements found in the three most advanced nations of Europe: Germany, France, and England. This new international union of national cultures would press beyond the petty interests of nationalism and proceed to establish a new world order based on the shared principles of German philosophy, French politics, and English economics. In time, Hess’s vision of a unified world unhampered by the irrational drives of nationalism would find political reflection in the international aspirations of Marxism.

Hess, unlike Marx, never disowned his Jewish ancestry, and indeed saw in the history of Judaism the very center of European history. Just like Cieszkowski, he divided world history into three periods, but periods symbolically marked by Jewish history: the first being that of Adam, the second that of Jesus, and the third by Baruch Spinoza (1632–77). This third period was one that marked the advent of a spiritual revolution that would be brought forth by practical action. Spinoza, whom Hegel had rightly recognized as a central philosophical figure, had set forth his thought in the form of a guide for action, the *Ethics*. For Hess, Spinoza’s work would trace the theoretical path toward the rebuilding of the old order of nations, and serve as the spiritual rebirth of mankind. This would be the true reading of Hegel’s fundamental principle: “What is reasonable is real, and what is real is reasonable” meant not that the world as it exists is reasonable, but that reason will prevail – and the present age stands at that millennial threshold. In the new age, humanity will live, as inspired by Spinoza’s own amor

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58. There were around 1,600 theology students in early-nineteenth-century Germany; see Mah, *The End of Philosophy*, 53.
intellectus dei, according to a “law of love” in which “freedom and order do not collide with each other.”

Hess, like Cieszkowski, also admired Hegel's thought – but in much the same critical way. Both thought it too theoretical and speculative to be of any use in creating a world in which human alienation from self and other would be abolished. Hegelian philosophers had to turn their attention from theory to action, and to leave the realm of mere speculation in order to join in the construction of that future world. They should now realize that “German philosophy has achieved its task: it has led us to the total truth. Now we have to build bridges which would again lead us from heaven to earth” – it was time for praxis. The result would be the victory, through popular sovereignty, of a communism in which, as he proclaimed in his manifesto, *The Philosophy of the Deed*: “The majesty and sovereignty of the One has transformed itself into the majesty and sovereignty of Everyman … In place of hierarchy and class structure, in place of fettered individuals, representation and the competition of individuals come forth.”

Needless to say, just as Marx had dismissed Bauer’s “Terrorism of Pure Theory” as an exercise in mere thought, so he immediately rejected Hess's call for a “law of love” for a similar reason: it was nothing but the expected proposal of an all-too-idealistic German philosophy that was under the illusion that thinking was the same as acting. Hess's visionary proposals for a new age were labeled in *The Communist Manifesto* as “True Socialism.” With their usual scorn reserved for any proposals for social reform other than their own “Scientific Socialism,” the efforts of the “True Socialists” were rejected by Marx and Engels as but:

> a robe of speculative cobwebs, embroidered with flowers of rhetoric, steeped in the dew of sickly sentiment, this transcendental robe in which the German Socialists wrapped their sorry “eternal truths,” all skin and bone, severed to wonderfully increase the sale of their goods among such a public.

For Marx, any realistic revolutionary program, as opposed to an impotent philosophical idealism, could develop only when philosophy itself came to recognize

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63. See ibid., 48.
that the material world, the economic world, was the primary reality on which all else is based. In its final form, this became known as “Dialectical Materialism.”

VI. LUDWIG FEUERBACH

Feuerbach,\(^6^7\) whose early atheistic work *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* had cost him his university post, had nevertheless persisted in his task of recasting Hegel’s philosophy as a humanism, and in time became a regular and important contributor to the *Hallische Jahrbücher*. This radically liberal journal, founded in 1839 under the dedicated editorship of Arnold Ruge (1802–80), was set upon transforming the Young Hegelian movement into an effective political movement. The *Jahrbücher* was widely considered to be “the most eminent publication in German journalism and the most effective organ of that side of the Hegelian school that made the peaceful empire of absolute idealism into a fighting and conquering system.”\(^6^8\)

One of the most influential of the articles to appear in the journal was Feuerbach’s 1839 essay “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy.”\(^6^9\) It marked a decisive and definitive turn from Hegel's philosophy of spirit, and established the basis of what Feuerbach would soon term *The Philosophy of the Future*.\(^7^0\) In the essay, Feuerbach criticized Hegel’s philosophy not only because of its dismissal of the physical world, of empirical reality and sense perception, but also because of its claim to absolute truth. As to this latter point, “If the Hegelian philosophy were the absolute reality of the idea of philosophy, then it would have been necessary that reason stop in the Hegelian philosophy and time itself come to an end.” In that time has not come to an end, Hegel’s philosophical system did not exhaust the possibilities of philosophy. A new philosophy was needed for a new time, a philosophy of the future.

In 1841, the same year in which Bauer initiated his exhaustive critique of the biblical narratives, Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* was published. Many years later, Engels could still recall the excitement that followed its appearance:

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67. Ludwig Feuerbach (July 28, 1804–September 13, 1872; born in Landshut, Bavaria; died in Nuremberg, Germany) was educated at the University of Heidelberg (1823–24), University of Berlin (1824–26), and University of Erlangen (1826–28). His influences included Bacon, Hegel, Kant, Leibniz, and Spinoza.
With one blow it pulverized the contradiction, in that without circumlocutions it placed materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Nothing exists outside of nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence … we all became at once Feuerbachians.71

With The Essence of Christianity, the Young Hegelian movement passed beyond the confines of a debate over the historical truth of Christianity into a new realm that proposed that mankind was both its own creator and its own savior.

At first reading, it might seem that his work presents nothing less than a total rejection of Hegel’s philosophy, but this would be mistaken. Even on the personal level, Feuerbach always considered himself deeply indebted to Hegel, as it was “he who was my second father … Hegel was my teacher, I his student: I do not lie when I say that I acknowledge this fact today with thanks and joy.” And, on the philosophical level, although Feuerbach replaced the speculative idealism of Hegel’s philosophy with his own sensuous humanism, he always understood that “Hegelian philosophy is the culmination of speculative, systematic philosophy.”72 This culmination was the necessary dialectical base and prelude, the thesis as it were, of the future advance of philosophy – which Feuerbach had revealed.

Feuerbach directly begins The Essence of Christianity by rejecting “completely all absolute, idealistic, self-sufficient speculations – speculation that reflects only on itself.”73 He follows this by proposing that his “new” philosophy has revealed that it was not the “Absolute Idea” or the “God” of speculation and religion that was the true object of human worship and concern, but rather it was simply “Man” as experienced within the context of others, within the dialectic of the “I” and the “Thou.” Feuerbach’s radical humanism was the reverse of traditional theism. The distant and infinite God of traditional belief was simply an illusion, a projection of an alienated and magnified mirror-image of “Man”: “Religion is a dream, in which our own conceptions and emotions appear to us as separate existences, beings out of ourselves” (EC 204). The absolute God of religion is ultimately nothing more than the projected nature of man, for “The absolute to man is his own nature” (EC 5). Again and again, in finely crafted and often emotional arguments, Feuerbach sets out his fundamental thought: that

all which is found in traditional religion, in its beliefs and its God, finds its birthplace in the life of man, in the natural and actual world. It is only now that mankind has realized that it is itself the God that it has so long worshipped and loved. In the brief final chapter of his work, Feuerbach concludes his argument:

We have shown that the substance and object of religion is altogether human; we have shown that divine wisdom is human wisdom; that the secret of theology is anthropology; that the absolute mind is the so-called finite subjective mind. … The necessary turning-point in history is therefore the open confession that the consciousness of God is nothing else than the consciousness of the species; … that there is no other essence which man can think, dream of, imagine, feel, believe in, wish for, love and adore as the absolute, than the essence of human nature itself. … If human nature is the highest nature to man, then practically also the highest and first law must be the love of man to man. Homo homini Deus est: – this is the great practical principle: – this is the axis on which revolves the history of the world.

(EC 270–71)

But this “highest and first” law has long been concealed, and the alienated and all too hostile God of the Christian theologians has long dominated humanity, and if they seem unable to understand human love, it is because what they worship as God is nothing other than their own alienated being.74 This is the theological tradition that Feuerbach’s “new philosophy” would exorcise, a Christian theological worldview that is grounded in the exclusive “egoistic” mind of Judaism – which looks on the actual world as only a useful commodity:

Utilism is the essential theory of Judaism. The belief in a special Divine Providence is the characteristic belief of Judaism; belief in Providence is belief in miracle; but belief in miracle exists where Nature is regarded only as an object of arbitrariness, of egoism, which uses Nature only as an instrument of its own will and pleasure. … [T]hese contradictions of Nature happen for the welfare of Israel, purely at the command of Jehovah, who troubles himself about nothing but Israel, who is nothing but the personified selfishness of the Israelitish people, to the exclusion of all other nations, – absolute intolerance, the secret essence of monotheism.

(EC 113–14)

With this, Feuerbach joined in the general discussion of the “Jewish Question [Die Judenfrage],” which occupied, for a time, the work of both Bauer and Marx.75 In 1843, Marx took up Feuerbach’s description of Jewish “selfishness” and gave it an economic twist: “Money is the jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist.”76 In that same year, he also reviewed two of Bauer’s articles concerning the question, and adds a few questions and some answers of his own: “What is the profane basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money.”77

But for Feuerbach, if, as Christians maintain, their “love” has replaced Jewish selfishness, this Christian love is only a perversion of true love, a deflection of the real sensuous and actual love of the “I” and the “Thou.” Human love is “the middle term, the substantial bond, the principle of reconciliation between the perfect and the imperfect … the divine and the human. Love is God himself and apart from it there is no God” (EC 48). And so, only by this true idealistic love can humanity reveal itself to itself as the true God. It is this fully human love that “makes Man God, and God Man” (ibid.). Unlike true human love, Christian belief has misdirected love, has turned it away from its true object, Man, and has set up the abstract and unreal God of tradition as the only object of worship and love. And so, with Christianity, “even love, in itself the deepest, truest emotion, becomes by means of religiousness merely ostensible, illusory, since religious love gives itself to man only for God’s sake, so that it is given only in appearance to man, but in reality to God” (EC 274).

Love, as Feuerbach understands it, is not limited to mankind, but extends to all of nature itself, and comprehends that nature as “sacred.” To see that the sensuous world is, in its very being, “holy” is the key that unlocks the mysteries of the Christian sacraments. The revelation of the hidden truths within these sacraments emerges when the natural elements of the sacraments, such as water, bread, and wine, are taken as related to human need, as human objects, and not merely taken as the insubstantial symbols of another, and alien, reality. Christian sacraments, mysteries of faith such as Holy Communion, are but the displaced realities of human life taken from that life and given to God. The final words of The Essence of Christianity are: “let bread be sacred for us, let wine be sacred, and also let water be sacred! Amen” (EC 278).

The Essence of Christianity was shortly followed by two short works that were designed to clarify and restate its central themes. Preliminary Theses on the

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76. Marx, Early Writings, 37.
77. Ibid., 34.
Reform of Philosophy appeared in 1842, and Principles of the Philosophy of the Future in the following year. The first work consists of several dozen pages of brief aphoristic paragraphs concentrating on the one-sided idealisms of earlier philosophies, and of Hegel’s philosophy in particular. Its intention was to show that Hegelian philosophy was, fundamentally, a theology, a final and conclusive statement of Christian alienation:

The Hegelian philosophy is the last refuge and the last rational mainstay of theology. … The Absolute Spirit of Hegel is none other than abstract spirit, i.e., finite spirit that has been separated from itself; just as the infinite being of theology is none other than the abstract finite being.

The second work, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, has sixty-five numbered paragraphs, all devoted to the explication of the character of Feuerbach’s “future” philosophy: “The new philosophy makes man – with the inclusion of nature as the foundation of man – the unique, universal and highest objects of philosophy. It thus makes anthropology, with the inclusion of physiology, the universal science” (§70), or “The true dialectic is not a monologue of a solitary thinker with himself; it is a dialogue between I and Thou” (§72). By 1843, with these two works that summed up the central points in his The Essence of Christianity, Feuerbach reached the peak of his influence among the Young Hegelians.

His lucid and radical replacement of the alien Christ of faith, the “God-Man,” with the realistic and concrete “Man-God” of present humanity, found full agreement with the young Marx, who then held that there was “no other path to truth and freedom but through the Fiery Brook [Feuer-Bach]. Feuerbach is the Purgatory of the present.” Feuerbach’s writings were “the only writings since Hegel’s Phenomenology and Logic which contain a real theoretical revolution” and “The positive, humanistic and naturalistic criticism begins with Feuerbach.”

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80. Feuerbach, Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy, in The Fiery Brook, 168.
82. Marx, Early Writings, 64.
In 1844, Marx was considered a Feuerbachian, and he set about preparing a work based on this “philosophy of the future,” which, left unpublished until 1932, has been known as Marx’s *Early Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.* The work was first translated into English in 1961, and was welcomed by liberal Marxists such as Eric Fromm (1900–1980), who were uncomfortable with the identification of Marxism with Stalinism. The work provided them with a new discovery: a humanistic “Young Marx” quite different from the materialistic “Old Marx” of *Capital* and “Scientific Socialism.” The publication of the *Manuscripts* provided a means to “diminish the irrational and paranoid attitude that sees in Marx a devil and in socialism a realm of the devil.” Marx was now to be seen as a humanist, and his thought no longer set within a “purely economic category,” and it became “very important to understand Marx’s fundamental idea: man makes his own history; he is his own creator.”

Marx’s major contribution to Feuerbach’s philosophy, as found in the *Manuscripts*, was to propose that Money was the alienating God of the world. It had the perverting power of changing “fidelity into infidelity, love into hate, hate into love.” But if this alienating force, this “divine power of Money” were to be exorcized, “Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc.” In brief, what the inhuman God of Christianity was to Feuerbach, so the inhuman power of Money was to Marx.

But his admiration of Feuerbach was short-lived. By the spring of 1845, not long after he had drafted his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, he suddenly turned against Feuerbach. As Louis Althusser has it, there was a sudden “epistemological break” in Marx’s philosophy. Marx’s unexpected objections to Feuerbach were cast in the form of eleven brief statements later entitled the *Theses on Feuerbach.* They remained unpublished until, in 1893, Engels appended them to his own work *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*. The first sentence of the first thesis sets the tone of the whole: “The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach
included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice [Praxis], not subjectively." Marx’s inclusion of the term “Praxis,” derived from Cieszkowski, indicates that despite his turn from the epistemological idealism of the Young Hegelians, Marx nevertheless retained their moral idealism, which had as its goal the transformation of the given social reality into a “higher” and more rational world. This moral idealism found expression in his well-known final thesis: “The philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it.”

VIII. MAX STIRNER

It has been well argued that the sudden transformation of the Feuerbachian “Young Marx,” into the “Old Marx” of “Scientific Socialism” was effected by his reading of The Ego and His Own.91 As to Feuerbach, his inept attempt to refute Stirner’s critique92 was soon followed by a withdrawal from further debate over the “Man-God.”93 Stirner’s work, The Ego and its Own,94 had the singular intention of revealing that radical and atheistic humanism, such as that proposed by his contemporaries, was nothing more than an inverted form of religion, a form that in time would prove to be even more destructive of individual autonomy than orthodox religion itself. The principle intention of The Ego was to indicate that the ideals of liberal and radical reformers were nothing other than their own alienated ideas set over and against themselves as new objects of worship. Nothing had been gained by the atheistic and humanistic struggles against a transcendent God other than “bringing him down to earth in the guise of ‘Man.’”95 The “revolution” was but a rotation of divinity, with a new earthly God rising up to take the place of the old Christian God. It all depends upon how one thinks. A servile and unsure Ego cannot be the “Owner [Eigner]” of itself, but rather its ideas, and so ideals, will be merely “accepted” ideas, accepted from a more persuasive other. The revered “fixed ideas” that have long been accepted

95. Ibid., 246ff.
by unsure and nongoistic individuals, such as “humanity” or “Man,” have, in
traditional religion, been subordinated to the highest idea, which is “God.” It
is no advance in self-worth to replace, to revolve, this God of tradition with
another God, such as “humanity” or “Man” – individuals still do not own their
ideas, it is still religion. The “pious atheists” such as Feuerbach and Bauer, had
failed to realize this.

The human religion is only the last metamorphosis of the Christian
religion. For liberalism is a religion because it separates my essence
from me and sets it above me, because it exalts “man” to the same
extent as any other religion does its God or idol, because it makes
what is mine into something otherworldly, because in general it
makes some of what is mine, out of my qualities and my property,
something alien – namely, an “essence”; in short, because it sets me
beneath man, and thereby creates for me a “vocation.”

For Stirner, the whole course of Hegelianism after Hegel not only led to the total
alienation of the individual from himself, to the radical separation of one’s actual
unique individuality from its supposed “essence,” but has set up this abstraction
as a new object of worship. It is now requisite “that I must become a ‘real generic
being [wirkliches Gattungswesen].’” As Marx had used this same language, he
was also implicated in Stirner’s revelation of the profound religiosity concealed
within such Feuerbachian declarations as “Man is to Man the supreme being.”

Stirner’s detailed restatements of his central thesis confirmed his knowledge
of both the persons and the doctrines of Young Hegelianism – and his scorn of
them. Arnold Ruge, with his editorial experience, judged it to be “the first read-
able book in philosophy that Germany has produced.” As one commentator
had it, Stirner’s book was “calculated to unnerve,” and it did seem to “unnerve”
Marx.

In the fall of 1844, Engels received a press copy of the work from Moses
Hess. In the early 1840s, Stirner and Engels had been friends, “Duzbrüder,” in
Berlin. Both were then members of an informal group of writers and academics,
led by Bauer, and known as “The Free Ones” (die Freien). Engels was favorably
impressed not only by Stirner himself, who “had obviously, among the ‘Free
Ones’ the most talent, independence, and diligence,” but even recommended

96. Ibid., 158.
97. Ibid.
Jahren 1825–1880 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1886).
that his new-found friend Marx read *The Ego and Its Own*, as perhaps it might be of service to the communists. Marx, however, more insightful than Engels, immediately recognized that Stirner had written a work that effectively ended the logical course of the Young Hegelian reading of Hegel, and in particular Feuerbach’s “philosophy of the future.” As Marx was then identified with that philosophy, it meant that Stirner had to be dealt with. And so it was that both he and a corrected Engels decided once again “to settle accounts with our former philosophic conscience.”101 Once again they set about writing another diatribe against Young Hegelian theorists. Stirner, who had remained unmentioned in *The Holy Family*, which had been written in the fall of 1844, suddenly became the central target of a new polemic, written a few months later: *The German Ideology: Being a Criticism of Recent German Philosophy and its Representatives*. In the course of its 800 or so pages, there were more of them directed to the refutation of Stirner’s work than were contained in that work itself. Even Marx’s admiring biographer, Franz Mehring, had to admit that *The German Ideology* was of a “rather puerile character.”102 It remained unpublished until 1932.

Indeed, Stirner seems to have deserved such titles as “The last of the Hegelians,”103 “le dernier maillon de la chaîne hégélienne,”104 “The last offshoot of Hegelian philosophy,”105 or “The last metamorphosis of German Idealism.”106 His work can be said to have put an end to Young Hegelianism, and had terminated, as Engels had it, “the decomposition process of the Hegelian School.”107 Even Stirner considered himself to have put an end to the Young Hegelian school.108

IX. REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

In February 1844, shortly after Marx had read Stirner’s work, the first and last issue of the *Deutsch-Französische Jarhbücher* was published in Paris. It had two editors: Arnold Ruge, the former editor of the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, and Karl Marx, former editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*. The *Deutsch-Französische Jarhbücher* was a final attempt by Marx to reconcile theory and practice. It was

102. Ibid.
intended, as Ruge understood it, to encourage “the intellectual alliance between France and Germany,” in short to link French political action, as evidenced in such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65), with “the logical acumen” of Hegelian philosophy: “a sure compass in the metaphysical regions in which Ruge saw the French drifting at the mercy of wind and wave.”

The failure of the journal, financially and ideologically, was soon followed by an acrimonious divorce between the editors. Marx then became a contributor to the Vorwärts, a radical socialist journal being published in Paris edited by a group of expatriated German socialists and revolutionary communists. However, in January 1845, French authorities, pressured by the Berlin government, suppressed the journal and issued orders of expulsion to most of its contributors. Marx and Engels, along with such early communist leaders as Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76), were ordered to leave France immediately. Marx chose exile in Brussels, where he was soon joined by Engels. In the spring of 1846 and by 1847, the members of the communist colony in Brussels had reached “considerable proportions,” and a formal “Communist League” was established. Its declared ideal was the overthrow of bourgeois society, which was understood as completely dominated by class and capitalist interest groups, and then to form a classless society in which there would be neither class distinctions nor private property. As the league became more active, and founded or joined with other like-minded organizations throughout Europe, it became imperative to establish a clear statement of their common principles and goals. By late 1847, Marx and Engels had, by virtue of their writings and energetic roles in the various meetings of the league, gained some authority among the various factions. They were asked to prepare something on the order of a “catechism,” which soon became The Communist Manifesto. It was published in February 1848. And so, as Engels had it, the German working class became “the inheritor of German classical philosophy.”

In March of 1848, the long-anticipated revolution against the Prussian monarchy took place in Berlin. Unclear as to any object other than a general rebellion against the established order, it failed. None of the central figures of the Young Hegelianism school played any significant role in that particular revolution. But their radical philosophies, emerging from Hegel’s ambiguous speculations and reformed into ideologies, found their final expression in the universal revolution we call “modernity.”

109. Mehring, Karl Marx, 58.
110. Ibid., 135.
111. Ibid., 139.
In recent years Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Pierre Joseph Proudhon have not received the critical attention they deserve. This neglect is partly due to all three sharing the fate of being summarily categorized as “utopian socialists” whose ideas have little purchase on the “real world.”¹ François Dagognet suggests that their atypicality, the fact that not one of them was the product of a methodical, institutionalized education, also contributes to their being sidelined. Indeed, all three were unconventional autodidacts who, not having being trained in any systematic fashion, did not engage to any great depth with the history of philosophy.² This lack of formal academic credentials and their unconventional writing styles are possibly further reasons for their not having been taken seriously up to now. However, for us today in a society that may be in crisis, the time is perhaps ripe for revisiting these three thinkers whose ideas have not only historical significance, but also contemporary currency.

¹ This fate is mainly due to the largely dismissive analyses of Marx and Engels; for standard accounts of this critical reception, see Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Hemel Hempstead: Philip Allen, 1990), ch. II, and Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism* (London: Methuen, 1987), chs I, II.

The eighteenth century was “critical and revolutionary,” the nineteenth century will be “inventive and organizatory,” proclaims Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon in 1808 (I VIE 92). The previous century’s enlightened combat against the prejudices, superstitions, and inequalities of the ancien régime necessitated the divisive destruction of societal structures. Saint-Simon considers the task of the nineteenth century to be that of reconstructing society by combining and counterpointing the various forces of all those who produce, of all those who actively create and sustain social relations and exchanges (I IND 13; I LHG 111). Far from being a reactive restoration of things past, or a compromise with actual

3. Claude-Henri de Rouvray, comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), born in Paris, was the distant cousin of the Duke of Saint-Simon (the writer of memoirs at the court of Louis XIV). Despite his privileged background, Saint-Simon led a most unconventional life: he fought in the American War of Independence (1779–83); he educated himself by frequenting the teachers and students of hydraulics and hydrodynamics at École de Mézières (1783–85), those of physics and physiology at the École polytechnique (1798–1801), and of medicine at the École de medicine (1801–1805). In 1790, to demonstrate his revolutionary commitment, he publicly renounced his title and adopted the ordinary name of Bonhomme while also becoming very rich by speculating with cheaply procured church property that been confiscated by the republican state (1790–97). However, he did get in trouble with the authorities and was imprisoned at Saint-Pélagie, then in Luxembourg prison. From 1805 to 1816 he lived a materially precarious life having socialized exuberantly and lost the support of financial backers: as a result his former servant, Diard, gave him shelter and sustenance for four years but when he died Saint-Simon was again lacking basic resources to the point where he almost died of hunger. In 1823, while materially more secure and beginning to produce his writings, he nevertheless attempted suicide and lost an eye as a result. Despite this checkered existence his ideas had influence: he is the precursor of the positivist school of thought and of the social sciences. The Saint-Simonian movement was also founded on the day of his burial in Père-Lachaise cemetery by his so-called “disciples” Enfantin, Bazard, and Pierre Leroux. [*] For further discussion of Saint-Simon in relation to the emergence of sociology, see the essay by Alan Sica in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.

4. Abbreviations used throughout are explained in the major works listed at the end of the chapter. Saint-Simon’s works are collected in his Œuvres, E. Dentu (ed.), 6 vols (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1966), and are cited by volume number in the Œuvres, followed by the abbreviation and page number.

5. Saint-Simon’s political radicality is evident in his remarks about society being “upside-down” as those who exercise power do not have the “capacity” to be socially productive, but are instead economically parasitic on the work of others (II QUE 211–34, II ORG 17–26). See Pierre Musso, Télécommunications et philosophie des réseaux (Vendôme: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 126–33, for an analysis of how the French Revolution was perceived by Saint-Simon as having only changed political content but not having fundamentally restructured society: “the invisible force of those who produce” is still subordinated to the all too apparent and powerful state apparatuses and their profligate representatives.
postrevolutionary remnants, Saint-Simon’s project is dynamic and avant-garde; it both pursues and is energized by the immanent prospect of future happiness and well-being. Indeed, Saint-Simon announces that: “The golden age of the human species is not at all behind us, it lies before us; it is in the perfection of the social order” (I REORG 247–8; SW-SS 136).

For Saint-Simon, thinking the future is no self-indulgent or escapist exercise in social dreaming, as the future is deducible and its realization lies within our grasp. The term “utopia” is often employed, suggests Saint-Simon, when one “feels vaguely uncertain about the possibility or impossibility of the execution of a new system of social organization.” Consequently, “utopian” is not an applicable term for his vision of the future manifestation of society as he sees historiographic method lending form and force to his predictive analyses (II ORG 63). Instead of summoning a sense of where and who one is and of the general state of affairs in the world from the present time, which is “the least solid basis” for understanding anything (V TGU 287), the procedure he adopts consists of fixing his eyes on the distant “remnants of a past which is fading and the germs of a future which is coming to life” (III SI 69). By fostering a keen sense of society as a mutating movement through time, variously shaped by different methods for conceptualizing the world, structured by different dominant regimes and their underlying opposing forces, a “series of terms” emerges that provides the compositional elements of the future (I COR 122, V MSH 14). By situating ourselves along this tensile line of communication between historical periods stretching into the past and out to the future, we are given a better and clearer sense of ourselves as productive “capacities,” that is, both as the containers through which the “march of civilization” passes, and as potentialities that can actively contribute to the world to come.7

Just as it is impossible for us to change the “primitive impulse” that set our planet off and us with it on its rotating orbit around the sun, it is equally beyond

6. See V OS 137–8 for the avant-garde role of the “men of imagination” who, together with the scientists and industrialists will bring about “all the conditions necessary for the satisfaction of the moral and physical needs of society.” Saint-Simon’s reinvestment of these military terms (the avant-garde, standard, march) toward pacific ends is an important aspect of his thinking. In his “combined order” of the near future (after the “downfall of philosophy” when “amorous freedom” reigns), Fourier also mobilizes those militaristic energies to produce “beneficent armies,” which carry out the grand projects so dear to Saint-Simon such as bridge and canal building, draining marshes, leveling mountains, and so on (TFM 176). Proudhon was also an important thinker of peace as a future-oriented project for society; see for instance his analysis of confederation as a way of organizing people which precludes the dangers created by standing armies (FED 177).

7. See Musso, Télécommunications et philosophie des réseaux, 94–9, and Le Vocabulaire de Saint-Simon (Paris: Ellipses, 2005), 12–14, for this double meaning of “capacity” in Saint-Simon’s works.
our means to elude the “force” that “progress” exercises over us (II ORG 119). However, the great shift that the gradual acceptance of Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler’s discoveries represented was far from being just negative: to be sure, humans had to renounce their anthropocentric assumptions, but what they gained was the invigorating experience of what it means to be susceptible to “the force of demonstration” (II ORG 67). This “vivacious” force proved even stronger than the repressive powers of those whose vested interests were best served by the maintenance of the more immobile, geocentric model of the universe (ibid.). It also proved to be even stronger than our common senses, which seem to tell us that the earth is flat, static, and centrally positioned in relation to the other celestial bodies. Our susceptibility to scientific demonstration heralds a new age of “positive ideas” that have real – “palpable, certain, present” – bearing on this world (II IND 38). Rather than ideas remaining conjectural abstractions that are arbitrarily revealed to us from above, scientific ideas that have emerged from actual observation of the world solicit our active engagement with them and it (II ORG 154). Saint-Simon proclaims that the old static hierarchies have now been overturned and consequently people will no longer be regimented as they were under the ancien régime. Instead they begin to combine themselves into associations; they are no longer to be commandeered by military powers but need only to be benevolently led; no longer regarded as passive “subjects,” they can affirm themselves as “societary” producers (II ORG 150). The “general tie of social organization” now provides the base for a morality that is terrestrially informed instead of a religious belief that holds sway and impinges on humans from above. This grounding of spiritual power enables humans to evaluate things, actions, and ideas in terms of the contribution made to “general prosperity” (II ORG 86, 107). Galileo definitively proved that the earth is small and that it rotates along with many other planets around the sun. Good sense corroborates the implications of this astrological demonstration by telling us that nature has not been tailored to human needs (II ORG 100). The way is thereby cleared for our desires to be focused henceforth on how best to administer things (rather than to govern other humans), on how best to work with and against nature so as to produce social happiness for all. Similarly, realizing ourselves to be historically constituted by the “march of civilization” means that history can no longer be perceived as the exclusive biographical domain of “sovereign families” whose power is endorsed by theology (II ORG 72). History is no longer perceived as befalling a “passive” and for the main part “obedient” majority from above; it traverses society as

8. The influence of Saint-Simon’s ideas on the work of his sometime secretary, August Comte, is evident.
a whole. Instead of being “blindly pushed along” by this irresistible force of “progress,” we can “obey this law (our true Providence) in full knowledge of the facts,” consciously enabling the production of that which is of “positive utility” to society (II ORG 19, 119).

Scientific discoveries reveal that dynamic principles are everywhere at work in the world, whether this be in the form of the constant circulation of blood within living beings or the episodic darting of electricity from thunderbolts in the skies (II ORG 155). Saint-Simon was intensely interested in the general implications for society as a whole of this all-pervasive mobility, which he perceives as both consolidating the epistemological revolution of Copernicus’s cosmic investigations (the earth moves) and as reinforcing the general sense of history as a powerful mobilizing force to be appropriated. He realizes that societies too can be seen to move in various ways: he observes how mass movement is communicated from without when people are instrumentalized by governments, and how, by contrast, it can be generated from within when people, galvanized by a common “will, interest, and conviction,” spontaneously set themselves into motion. In the former case, the people “necessarily exercise an action which has no fixed and determined relation with the general course of things.” In the latter instance, however, people “infallibly steer themselves in the direction of the human spirit” and a powerfully combined momentum toward the future is created (I IND 106–7). The emergence of this synergetic force produces the hope of a healthier collective future.

When defining the “physiological salvation” of personal happiness, Saint-Simon writes: “No jouissance is equal to that of feeling oneself to be a virtual

10. See my comments below about how Saint-Simon’s ideas should not be seen as a defense of liberal laissez faire economics which bows down to so-called “market forces.” For his criticism of half-hearted liberals who make compromise deals with feudalizing powers such as Bonaparte’s, see II ORG 234–5.

11. For Émile Durkheim, Saint-Simon “was the first, to have understood, before Guizot, the full social importance of communal movement and the links between the Revolution and contemporary questions.” He therefore saw Saint-Simon as “the founder of socialism,” defined not only as a body of practical thought having as its aim the improvement of the plight of the masses, but also as a system that “goes beyond the question of the working class” in its advocacy of “a connecting of economic functions to the directing and conscious centers of society as a whole” (Le Socialisme [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971], 45, 49, 154; published in English as Socialism and Saint-Simon, Charlotte Sattler [trans.] [Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1958], 15, 19, 127). Bruno Viard, Anthologie de Pierre Leroux: Inventeur du socialisme (Lormont: Éditions Le Bord de l’eau, 2007), 11–12, points out that Durkheim is wrong to attribute the etymology of “socialism” to 1835 England and the world of Robert Owen (Durkheim, Le Socialisme, 59; Socialism, 30). The term itself should be attributed to the Saint-Simonian dissident, Pierre Leroux, who, in 1834, used it in a pejorative way to refer to the systems “of the so-called disciples of Saint-Simon and Rousseau,” which sacrifice individualism in their search for a quasi-totalitarian organicity.
force and of giving a harmonious impulse to the different parts which constitute the organized mass” (V MSH 67). Physiology, the scientific study of living things, offers to the dawning epoch the model for understanding the individual, and, by extension, society as a whole, as complex organizations (V MSH 37). Composed of interconnected networks, both kept alive and enriched by the fluid production, distribution, and consumption of various substances (blood, oxygen, nutritional matter), nervous and electrical impulses (sensations, ideas), and products ranging from the basic to the luxurious (II ORG), individuals and society as a whole are to be regarded as “industrial bodies” in movement. Personal happiness is social well-being and both are produced through industry: “Industry is one single and vast body whose limbs interact and which are, as it were, in solidarity with each other; the good and bad which affects each part, affects all the others; everywhere it is the same interest, the same need, the same life” (I IND 137; SW-SS 161).

The best social organization is that which renders the life conditions of the majority as happy as possible by procuring for them the maximal means and facilities to satisfy their needs (V QOP 56). The optimized social organization is therefore the one that promotes industry and those who do and can potentially carry it out. Saint-Simon coins the noun “industrialist” to signify all those who “work to produce or to make available to different members of society, one or more material means to satisfy their needs or physical tastes.” Therefore the industrial class embraces work activities as diverse as those of farmers, wheelwrights, locksmiths, hat manufacturers, merchants, scientists, and artists (IV CATE 3–4). Whereas parasitic idlers, such as the landed gentry who profit from hereditary property rights, siphon off what is produced by the work of others, all industrialists make a direct contribution to societary work; they make connections and facilitate the circulation of life-maintaining and -enhancing goods.

Saint-Simon suggests that the “march of the human spirit” has been enabled by two alternative sciences: the physics of unorganized bodies or brute matter (corps bruts) and physiology, the study of organized bodies that struggle against

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12. As Dagognet, in *Trois philosophes revisitées*, points out, physiology is *the* emerging science that greatly influenced not only Saint-Simon in his attempts to rethink social relations, but also Fourier and Proudhon. For Dagognet this common point of reference is one of several reasons for revisiting the recently much neglected work of all three.

13. See II QUE 211–34 for an analysis of the parasitic hornets that feed off the useful work of the worker bees. For Saint-Simon’s emphasis on “useful work” see III SI 178. Bearing in mind the stress placed by him on “useful work,” which positively contributes to the detailed life of society as a whole, his references to natural phenomena, his generous sense of “industry” and his aversion to the military, one would probably have to place Saint-Simon, perhaps rather surprisingly, closer to William Morris (see his “Useful Work and Useless Toil,” in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* [London: Penguin, 2004]), than to Edward Bellamy (see *Looking Backwards* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986]) in the utopian studies canon.
one another for ascendancy.\textsuperscript{14} For over a century the brutiers have hogged the post of avant-garde without discovering anything new. These “sad calculators” perceive the world as essentially composed of isolated bodies, and the only way they would be able to imagine something more constructive is by juxta- or superposition.\textsuperscript{15} Their approach to the world has nothing to offer an age plagued by fractious discontent and raging war (V MSH 36–40). The model proposed by physiology is potentially more conciliatory as it establishes complex links and pays attention to concerted efforts rather than “brutishly” breaking connections down or oversimplifying them. It can also contribute more to a pacific project for future society, concerned as it is with the existence of a general and organized well-being. Like physiologists, industrialists too must now take the lead as they also promote fluid interconnectivity; they must be positively encouraged to be innovative so that they produce artifacts that are qualitatively fine and enriching for society in general. For Saint-Simon, it is therefore no minor detail that society in the future will create as one of its vital organs a Chamber of Invention whose mission will be to stimulate projects that further social well-being. Such projects include the large-scale public works of land reclamation and the construction of roads and canals. However, these operations are not solely considered as essential means for facilitating global commerce and communication; they are also esteemed as vital sources of pleasure. Newly built thoroughfares will cross the nation’s most picturesque landscapes and these terrains will be set aside as “places of rest for voyagers and of pleasurable sojourn for neighboring inhabitants.” These gardens will house museums of local produce as well as the industrial products of surrounding regions. They will also contain residences for artists, and musicians will inspire inhabitants with the passion needed to develop “the greater good” (II ORG 51–3). Luxury was once reserved for the privileged few and it therefore functioned just as an aggravation of social injustice and instability. In the nineteenth century, the “progress made by the exact sciences and the fine arts” means that “present circumstances” are ripe for “making luxury national.” Saint-Simon states that luxury will become “useful and moral when it is enjoyed by the whole nation” (II ORG 53). In addition to producing luxurious pleasures, the Chamber of Invention also bolsters society’s sensibility of the passage of time by organizing public festivals of hope and memory. Such collective festive occasions are crucial for maintaining a dynamic sociopolitical system that continues to think about itself in terms of its “capacity,” that is, not only as containing the past, but as a potential force for positive future change.

\textsuperscript{14} See Musso: “every phenomenon can be reduced to the history of the struggle of its elements … every phenomenon is genesis; every fact is constructed” (Télécommunications et philosophie des réseaux, 81).

\textsuperscript{15} See V PHY 177, and Juliette Grange, Saint-Simon (Paris: Ellipses, 2005), 18–30, on not seeing society as an “agglomeration” of separate units (nor as a vitalist whole).
Saint-Simon’s valorization of the production of “industrialists” in his new society should be understood neither as a celebration of unbridled productivism as somehow good in itself, nor as an advocacy of laissez faire deregulation of “market forces” at all costs so as to maximize the “free” circulation of goods. Industrial activity that does not think the future, that is oblivious to its long-term social, or indeed environmental, impact, is just movement lacking direction.\textsuperscript{16} It is a machine turning in the agitated space of the present, which is, as we have seen, the “least solid basis” for constructive thought and action, being highly “vulnerable to the influences of the smallest circumstances” (V MSH 287). Like his disciples, Saint-Simon certainly envisaged grand engineering projects, whether they be the construction of the Suez Canal, a dam across the Nile, or long-distant railways networks, as contributing to making the globe into a terrestrial paradise for the “well being of all” (V QOP 82; V OS 137–8).\textsuperscript{17} But simply to classify him as the advocate of technocracy,\textsuperscript{18} to associate him merely with the institutionalization of elitist meritocracy in the form of powerful technical experts who are dangerously disconnected from social and environmental issues and lacking in culture, would be a mistake, for his sense of “social utility” is broad and rich and all those who actively contribute to the weaving of valuable social relations count for him (III SI 178). A friendly sales assistant,


\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} attributes the term “technocracy” to W. H. Smyth’s 1919 “Industrial Management.” It further cites \textit{Mind} LVI.164 (1947): “Such notions as social and economic planning, technocracy … the denial of natural rights and individual liberties, etc., are due to them [sc. French utopians, St. Simon etc.] more than to Godwin or the utilitarians.” See also the entry for 1965, taken from H. G. Armytage’s \textit{Rise of Technocrats}: “St. Simonians were the first technocrats: apostles of the religion of industry.” See also: “Sociologically the future society is a society of scientists, artists, managers and technicians – something, in fact, very close to the ideal industrial society imagined by Saint-Simon and his disciple Comte, as Wells acknowledges. But it does not share their dangerous predilection for administration over creativity” (Krishan Kumar, “Introduction,” in H. G. Wells, \textit{A Modern Utopia} [London: Dent/Everyman’s Library, 1994], xxxvii–xxxviii). Kumar’s reading is not only unsatisfactory as a reading of Saint-Simon, for whom administration’s prime function was to enable creativity, but also as a presentation of the relationship between him and Comte. Saint-Simon explicitly objected to Comte’s reduction of his ideas to the “scientific” to the exclusion of the spiritual, that is, communally shared “moral ideas” (see, e.g., Musso, \textit{Saint-Simon et le saint-simonisme}, 80–82). For other critical revalorizations of Saint-Simon work as being nonreducible to technocratic thinking, see Dagognet, \textit{Trois philosophes revisitées}, 161, and Musso, \textit{Télécommunications et philosophie des réseaux}, 194.
an attentive bus driver, an inspiring song writer, or a communicative scientist would all be seen by him as doing useful “industrial” work.¹⁹ Not only do they carry out essential tasks on which the work of others depends, but they have also made human affects, happiness, and general well-being (which includes being stimulated by ideas and implicated in the world around us) their business. Accordingly, far from lauding the drilled performances of rather anonymous and ascetic action men, Saint-Simon devotes much thought to the cultivation of simple human pleasures and passions through artistic creation (III NC 161).

Keenly aware of the social sclerosis inflicted by self-perpetuating institutions such as academies that become worlds unto themselves,²¹ Saint-Simon advocates the celebration and recognition of independent “men of genius” who provide inspiring focal points for all (I LHG 14, 16). He also speaks out forcefully against another form of “tradition” – hereditary property relations – which often fix land forever in the hands of those who do not actually work it (II IND 170). This institutionalization of the “right of increase” is a recipe for disorder.²² Indeed, the social and economic neglect of the agricultural worker, exposed to the precariousness of tenancy, greatly preoccupied him (II IND 85). Society should learn to respect those who produce social wealth rather than be impressed by those who personally just have it (I IND 186). Investing in agriculture as the

¹⁹. For an analysis of the reduction of the definition of “industrialists” to engineers and bankers by the disciples of Saint-Simon, see Musso, Saint-Simon et le saint-simonisme, 183. See also Musso for the decreasing emphasis placed by the Saint-Simonians on the social in their promotion of networks (ibid., 178).

²⁰. Saint-Simon's pacifism, an absolutely fundamental and interesting aspect of his system, rules out any connivance with the formatted products of an “industrial army.” See I REORG 150–248 for his peace plan for Europe and analysis of Abbé Saint Pierre; II IND 149 for his suggestion that the army is already becoming politically and socially redundant; II ORG 60 for his injunction to the Chamber of Invention to take into account the eventual phasing out of the military altogether. See also Pierre Musso, La Religion du monde industriel (Gémenos: Éditions de l’aube, 2006), 217.

²¹. Given Saint-Simon's critique of the deadening effect of institutionalization, it is ironic that his “disciples,” most of whom had not been directly acquainted with him, were closely associated with L'École Polytechnique and L'École des Ponts et Chaussées, which have become, along with the other grandes écoles, significant impediments to social change. For the Saint-Simonian movement, see Picon, Les Saint-Simoniens.

²². Saint-Simon caustically remarks that property rights have become so ingrained that even during the severe food shortage of 1794, when the people were starving to death, the property of the well-fed rich was respectfully left inviolate (II ORG 146). However, in the long term, social unrest is bound to erupt owing to this lack of connection between the land and those who are intimately invested in it as a source of nutrition for all. Saint-Simon therefore calls for property relations to be “reconstituted and founded on the bases which can render it the most favorable to production” (II ORG 59). Proudhon's work on property and the abuses that the landlord's “right of increase” (droit d’aubaine) entails can be seen as following on from such remarks by Saint-Simon (even if he repeatedly criticizes Saint-Simonianism on property relations, see, for example, Qu’est? 336, WisP? 150).
most important industry would mark the shift from powerful humans abusing their subordinates, to humans in brotherly solidarity exploiting the planet (II IND 107): “The desire to command men has gradually transformed itself into the desire to make and remake nature as we like” (II ORG 127). However, this “exploitation” of nature has to strive for sustainability as the direction we are heading toward is the future, and for Saint-Simon, who makes constant reference to fluidity, the prospect we ultimately face is the drying up of water reserves on earth. He hauntingly evokes the predicament of the last man to drink the last drop of water on this planet who is nightmarishly conscious that, when he finally swallows it down, his imminent death will also be the death of his whole species (V MSH 295–6). The importance accorded to water in the work of Saint-Simon probably also informs his choice of the beaver (rather than the ape) as the animal closest to the human in his outline for a “science of man” (V MSH 49–50). Beavers move between land and water; they are fluent in both environmental media. They also demonstrate group intelligence as their work – their grand projects of sophisticated dam building – is social, being carried out for the colony as a whole. The “mutual aid” necessary for group work requires more intelligence than single acts of individual significance only (V PHY 179). Their high level of intelligence arises from their complex organic organization:

The animal which is the best organized, i.e., the most organized, is the most intelligent. The animal which is the most organized is the one into whose structure enters the most tubes, with the most variety of dimensions, which are placed respectively in the greatest number of positions and containing in circulation fluids with different densities. The more an animal is organized, the more its organization is composed of distinct apparatuses … (V MSH 49–51)

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23. As will be demonstrated, both Fourier and Proudhon have much to add to Saint-Simon’s concerns about the future of natural resources. Proudhon, in particular, can contribute to this specific consideration of the precious nature of water and its relation to property rights (see e.g. WisP? 70–71; Quest? 216–18).

24. See Musso, Télécommunications et philosophie des réseaux, 381; Saint-Simon et le saint-simonisme, 7–8, 10, 14–15, for Saint-Simon’s spiritual and intellectual engagement with water and rheology.

25. The term “mutual aid” evokes the work of the anarchist Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), who regarded this principle to be the active and evolutive agent within nature as a whole, rather than the reactive and rather deadly fight for survival emphasized by many social Darwinians; see Peter Kropotkin, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2006).

26. As we will discuss below, Proudhon will define “order” along these lines. “Order” for him is far from being something uniform, fixed, united; instead it presupposes “division, distinction, differentiation” (CREA §2). Chaos is “homogenous, identical, undifferentiated” (CREA §21).
The pluralistic world of industrious beavers, nowadays an endangered species, provides us with an image of what Saint-Simon had in mind for the society of the future.27

II. CHARLES FOURIER

Saint-Simon communicated his vision for the future up to his last breath, gasping to his faithful disciples the following parting words: “to do great things, one must be impassioned … my whole life can be summarized by one thought: to ensure for all men the freest development of their faculties.”28 For Charles Fourier29 also the passions were potential forces of radical social change to be nurtured, not repressed as is the wont of so-called “civilization.”30 Indeed he wrote:

27. Beavers also figure prominently in Fourier’s thinking: they represent a “practical hieroglyph” of association (while peacocks feature as association’s “visual hieroglyph”) (TFM 282). That is to say that, if we understand beavers “analogically,” we can see them depicting “families rallying together for combined large-scale works” (TUU I, 436). As free creatures, beavers delight in work (along with bees, wasps and ants), unlike humans, for whom work is drudgery (TUU I, 516). Everything in beavers’ (and ants’, bees’, and wasps’) existence “is romantic” as they work “uniquely by attraction” (TUU I, 211). For not just industry, but also art as beginning with animals such as beavers, see Jacqueline Duhême and Gilles Deleuze, L’Oiseau philosophique (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), 38. Even more than Saint-Simon, Fourier makes a strong case for a re-evaluation of our relationship to animals, and of ourselves as animal-relational (or becoming-animal): “Let’s open the great book of nature. If it is true that everything is related [lié] in a system of movement, how do chickens and ducks relate to our passions? What effects do they depict?” (TUU I, 237). See also Proudhon (TdeP 177) for how, while living among his fellow creatures, in the midst of the “organized milieu” that is nature “with all [its] sorts of animal, vegetal, mineral creations,” the “free man” can nevertheless still lay claim to his own inviolability.


29. The son of a rich cloth merchant, Charles Fourier (1772–1837; born in Besançon, France; died in Paris) developed a damning critique of mercantile capitalism and led a life of compelled frugality and self-inflicted solitude. Perhaps surprisingly, given the colorful nature of his exuberant ideas, his life was in general rather unremarkable. He lived in Lyons, the city of the radical silk-workers (les canuts) during the revolutionary period 1789–93, an experience that included his losing a large part of his inheritance owing to requisitioning by the government; and he became a traveling salesman, which involved attending the major European trade fairs, an experience which increased his insight into commercial practices. Fourier’s theories were the product of his experience and imagination and not the result of any formal education (his studies finished at sixteen) or sustained independent reading. As from 1815, thanks to an annuity he acquired after his mother’s death, he was able to devote himself entirely to the elaboration of his ambitious projects for economic and social reform. Gradually his ideas attracted followers who were determined to put them into practice, most notably Victor Considérant (1808–93) and Jean-Baptiste André Godin (1817–88).

30. Rejecting the notion of “scientific socialism,” Durkheim instead places “passion” at the source of the socialist movement: “Passion has been the inspiration of all these systems. They were
The philosophers say that the passions are too lively, too fiery; in truth they are weak and languid. All around one sees the mass of men endure the persecution of a few masters and the despotism of prejudices without offering the slightest resistance … their passions are too weak to permit them to derive audacity from despair.

(quoted by Simone Debout in TQM 25)³¹

The passions are the live wires combining the bodily and the cerebral, which permit us not just to have a body (and to think about what that object might mean or how it might communicate with the head) but to be a body, or several (Raoul Vaneigem in HPA 9, 11).

According to Fourier, when enlightened philosophers appeal to an abstract, disembodied notion of reason that all humans are supposed to have in common, they are in effect thwarting qualitative social change as they stultify those very mechanisms, the passions, that exist to combine us into social harmony. A creatively dynamic social whole is produced, not in spite of the passions, but in a finely tuned concert with them as long as they are expansively developed in what he calls a “progressive series” (TQM 128; TFM 15). Indeed, Fourier flouts “civilized” society’s logical certainties when he claims that whereas one cannot associate three families, one can easily associate three hundred (TUU I, 25).

³¹ Those involved in the events of May 1968 shared Fourier’s conviction that the passions are forward-moving forces that demand, and are maybe even capable of bringing about, what “reality” rules to be “impossible.” All were convinced that one of our major problems is that we desire too little (NMI&S 57) and that the little “we” desire is manufactured for us by dream factories. Hence the 1968 slogan: “I take my desires for reality because I believe in the reality of my desires” (cited by Philippe Darwin, Le Petit livre rouge de mai 1968 [La flèche: City Editions, 2008], 41). For the connection between Fourier, 1968, radical politics, and the definition of the human as homo passionnel rather than (the Marxist) homo oeconomicus, see Réné Schérer in Réné Schérer and Geoffroy de Lagasnerie, Après tout (Paris: Éditions cartouche, 2007), 42, 124–5, 131. For the importance of “not at any moment renouncing the affirmation of oneself as author of oneself and of one’s acts [and one could add, of one’s hopes and dreams] so as not to become a larvae and an object,” see Schérer and Lagasnerie, Après tout, 161. Proudhon would no doubt have agreed fully with Schérer on this crucial issue of self-affirmation.
As a consequence, “the moment an association is formed, the stronger and more numerous the passions are, the more easily will they harmonize with each other” (TQM 126; TFM 13). Social harmony cannot arise from a commonality of stock characteristics that “we” are all supposed to share. Instead it emerges from the proliferation of intensely divergent passions through which the individual unit, itself an artificial and egotistical construct of a brutalizing world of commercial speculation and social exploitation, is refracted as if through a prism. Nature, including humans, was originally no monoculture (NMI&S 113). The colorful, multifaceted embodied personality that is therefore able to re-emerge in Fourier’s radical social experiment, is predisposed to, and can “intermesh with” (engrener), a range of people with and against whom they can nurture their diverse, sometimes bizarre and hybrid tastes, interests, and predilections.

What is crucial to the workings of passions as agents of social combination is the scale of the association: the bringing together of “1,500–1,600 persons of graduated inequality of fortune, age and characteristics, of theoretical and practical knowledge” to live in a phalanstery would provide the optimal condition for the cultivation of the passions in all their enlivening variegations (TUU II, 316). Smaller social groupings – especially that of the nuclear family, that breeding ground for emotional regression, formatted thinking, and institutionalized inequality – would not provide enough contrasting elements for a sufficiently detailed refinement of the passions into a range of groups and

32. For the unnatural nature of monoculture, see: “the earth itself wants to be sowed variously, to alternate its productions: plants want to alternate what they reproduce in the form of seeds, seedlings and runners, etc; the soil wants various exchanges and transports of earth; all of nature therefore wants variety” (NMI&S 113). See my remarks below about the standardization of nature by the agricultural food industry.

33. Fourier remarks that “primitives” in the barbaric age enjoyed more freedom than “civilized” humans, or rather the men did, for women the situation was far less propitious (TUU I, 38). As will be addressed later, Fourier was acutely aware of “women’s issues” and his views on the liberation of women were most progressive.

34. A “phalanstery” is the large building in which the utopian community, or “phalanx,” would live.

35. Elsewhere Fourier gives the figure of 800–810 people (TQM 271; TFM 160).

36. On one level, Fourier is not against social “inequality”; rather the opposite. Indeed, he states that the progressive series should be “unequal in every way” (TQM 398; TFM 290). However, he is definitely against the social (including sexual) discrimination against women, the aged, and children. He is a staunch believer that all should be able to live passionately. For this to be possible it would therefore be more correct to say that he favors social differences but attacks those (economic, social psychological) factors that result in the exclusion of many (the poor, women, the young, old, infirm, and so on) from material and sensual well-being. In time, because of the universally transformed living conditions in Fourier’s world, fundamental material inequalities will in effect have ceased to matter.
For contrast and coordination, intersplicing and grafting, to take place, shaded multiplicities of individualities are required. This radically different notion of what order can consist of necessitates not only an extended and more generous notion of social grouping than that of the nuclear family, but also a more substantially structured, less abstract principle of social organization than that bestowed by the overgeneralizing and nondynamic term “rights of man.”

Societary order, which implies well-being and happiness (Fourier is adamant that only disorder can arise from poverty and unhappiness), is produced through the proliferation of “exceptions,” not generalities. Nature demonstrates this operation in its use of “twilight” forms and substances that both provide instances of graduated transition and create, through their interstitial interjections, difference. Fourier gives the examples of “lime as the link between fire and water; amphibians, the link between fish and quadrupeds; the nervous system, the link between body and soul.” Just as the “exception” is the general law behind nature’s order, so too must it become the organizing principle of human society (TUU I, 304).

Consequently, whereas in so-called “civilization” the passions are “unleashed tigers” that furiously devour society and the individual (TUU I, 354), in Fourier’s societary order they feature as forces that can be refined, nuanced, and articulated for human happiness and well-being and for social “compacity” (NMI&S 18). It is therefore important for Fourier to differentiate carefully between them so as to reveal how their pent-up complexity and sophistication is wasted in today’s “civilized” society. Accordingly, he categorizes twelve basic types of passion: five “material,” four “affective,” and three “distributive.”

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37. Fourier’s criticism of Owen’s philanthropic projects stems from this consideration: New Lanark represented for him a “half association” based on small households, wherein there was no scope for “mixed series,” which are indispensable for social harmony. Other criticisms concerned Owen’s preaching of egalitarianism, a “political poison in Association” in Fourier’s eyes; this went hand in hand with his ascetic moralism (whereas Fourier’s promoted luxurious living for all). Another weakness was Owen’s neglect of agriculture, “the principal social lever” (TUU I, 109–11, 344).

38. For the lack of connection (hence lack of dynamic) between the well-meaning but nonseeing words of universal “human rights” and the actual situation of those people who are rightsless and home-less, see Duhême and Deleuze, L’Oiseau philosophique, 36. For the resonance of many of Fourier’s preoccupations with those of Deleuze and Guattari, see Réné Schérer, L’Écosophie de Charles Fourier (Paris: Anthropos, 2001), and “Le Séjour de l’errance,” Chimères 25 (1995); and Franck Malécot, “Charles Fourier et l’utopie,” in Charles Fourier, Du libre arbitre (Paris: Editions des Saints Calus, 2003), 109–38.

39. “Compacity” is the putting into play of a minutely distinguished variety of subtle shades of tastes (NMI&S 246). Contrary to egalitarian presumptions, this hot-house culture of refinedly nuanced tastes does not destroy the social, but it is rather the “bait” or “lever” that instead furthers social cohesion inasmuch as, in this extreme proliferation of difference, an individual’s “free will” will necessarily be able to find its social complement.
The five “material” passions, or sensory appetites, cultivate and intensify the particularities of the five senses. The passions of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, each one exquisitely developed in its particularity and in its affinities with the others, are united as luxurism (TQM 197; TFM 84). As was the case for Saint-Simon, luxury is reprehensible only when it is an aggravating factor of social injustice and disorder that is distributed only to the few. However, when propagated for society as a whole to varying degrees and actively nurtured as a source of well-being, luxurism is a crucial mechanism since wealth and pleasure appear to all.\footnote{40} Morality preached the virtues of frugality, the need for ascetic self-constraint. Ideologues tried to coerce their citizens into becoming revolutionary converts by means of dematerialized ideas.\footnote{41} By contrast, the society of the near future will attract its associates with the charms of opulence to its ways of living and being. It should be noted, though, that the material luxury that Fourier celebrates is not to be equated with the excesses of today’s consumer “culture,” excesses that are explicitly criticized by Fourier.\footnote{42} For instance, he distinguishes between his societary gourmands, who practice a sophisticated “gastrosophy” that permits their highly sensitized palate and stimulated digestive tract to appreciate five meals and two snacks per day without losing their appetite, and “guzzling gorging gluttons”\footnote{43} such as Vitellius and Nero (TFM
Gastroosophy is not the art of eating a lot; instead it is the celebratory cultivation of the culinary art, which is the most revered form of aesthetic expression in Harmony, the era of universal happiness which he discerned to be within our reach. It provides the pivot for agricultural work. It can also whet the appetite for learning about, for example, the chemical, biological, and cultural processes at work within us and at large in the world around us. In Fourier’s phalanx those varieties of produce would be cultivated that have been wiped out by an economy driven by standardization (the drive towards simplisme) and profit margins.

As we have already seen, Fourier’s economy favors sectarian tastes and pursuits. Accordingly, those agricultural workers who are, for instance, pear growers, would divide into specialized subgroups to cultivate such varieties as butter pears, bergamots, russets, and hybrids such as quinces (neither pear nor apple, but both, as well as being something else). Pears would also be nurtured for their sensual qualities, for their flourishness, compactness, softness, crispness, hardness. The rivalries and emulation that flourish between the various varieties of taste, affinity, etc.”

In his *Essay on Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969), Herbert Marcuse envisages a “passing from Marx to Fourier,” seen as signaling a move away from state – toward libertarian – socialism (ibid., 22). A (not negligible) aspect of this momentum would be that: “art would capture some of its more primitive ‘technical’ connotations: as the art of preparing (cooking!) cultivating, growing things, giving them a form which neither violates the matter nor the sensibility – ascent of Form as one of the necessities of being, universal beyond all subjective varieties of taste, affinity, etc.” (ibid., 32).

Like Saint-Simon, Fourier thinks that “civilization” has woefully neglected agriculture; indicative of its general neglect of socially productive work (TQM 397; TFM 289). Scathing of pastoral attempts to romanticize the rustic, Fourier states that one must be clear: agricultural labor in “civilization” is horrendous and repugnant (TUU II, 812). Indeed, Fourier is far from advocating a simple and basic “return to nature.” The phalanstery is no primitivist retreat. He is not averse to employing sophisticated technology to render work less unattractive: for instance, he states that, in laundry-rooms, “numerous arrangements will be made to shorten the work by means of mechanical devices of all sorts” (UV 327). For Proudhon also the importance of agriculture (and of small-scale industry) must be reinvented – not just returned to – so as to have a more just, and therefore more pacific and happier, future for all.

For more on pears, apples, and quinces see TQM 398–400; TFM 290–93; see also UV 47 for the "Pear-Growers’ Series.”
subgroups of pears growers would nourish their passionate zest for their tasks, which have been transformed into attractive pursuits. This motivating combination of pleasure and useful work substantially helps to produce finely cultivated, high-quality ingredients that are in turn prepared by various culinary groups with penchants for particular preparations side by side in collectivized kitchens (TQM 275–6; TFM 164). The gastronomic meal therefore will consist of an array and assortment of exquisite dishes. The social arrangement of the phalanx means that at each meal there is a graduated variety of dining guests (TQM 270–71; TFM 159). This residential variety guarantees that the dining hall is always filled with the sounds of lively discussion and the gaiety of social exchange.

Variety nourishes and thereby increases variety, beginning with the differentiated production of the various ingredients right through to its appreciative consumption. The societary meal thereby becomes a fully fledged festive occasion and creative event. By contrast to meals in the privatized spaces of the “civilized order,” Fourier reassures us that meals in the phalanx are always enlivening occasions, lasting no more than an hour, which energizes their consumers, increasing their collective appetites for further pursuits. He tells us that “the days will never be long enough to satisfy all the intrigues and joyous reunions of which this new order will be full. The body, by means of [dietary] hygiene and variety, will barely tire and from birth Harmonians will require little sleep” (TUU I, 193).

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49. That is to say, in Fourier’s world farming the fields has become a radically different activity from the grueling, back-breaking agricultural work of the past.

50. For the absurdity and waste (cultural and social as well as economic and ecological) involved in living in isolated households see TQM 236–7; TFM 123; see also UV 130 on the “prodigious saving of labor” by the “gathering together of minor domestic jobs.” Fourier’s ideas on waste are echoed in other key “utopian” texts such as Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backwards (1888) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short stories, for example, “Her Housekeeper” (1910).

51. Even at third-class tables in the phalanx, there will be “at least thirty or forty” dishes and “a dozen different kinds of drink” to choose from. A communitarian way of living and working makes this splendid variety possible. Fourier’s celebration of “consumer choice” is very different from the capitalist model experienced by us today. See, for example, Simone Debout Oleszkiewicz’s introduction to NMI&S 14 and, again, Vaneigem’s excellent introduction to HPA.

52. The Harmonians are “constantly on the move” (TQM 288; TFM 178). The stress placed by Fourier on the dynamic lifestyles of his phalansterians is important as it goes to illustrate how his community is neither static, sedentary, nor indeed isolated (closed). For a compelling article on nomadism and Fourier (as well as Kant), see Schérer, “Le Séjour de l’errance.” For more on these subjects in relation to universal hospitality, see Schérer, Zeus hospitalier (Paris: La table ronde, 2005), esp. 118–29.

53. Much more would need to be said about how the societary order furthers the material passions: for example, the pleasures of sight are fostered by the care paid to visuism; the emphasis placed on flowers (TUU II, 563) is an acknowledgement of the sensual (but also educative) importance not only of the delights of the eye, but also of the strength and insinuating subtlety of
Far from fetishizing the consumer as “individual,” Fourier in effect dismisses what he would consider to be a merely “simple mode” of egotistical indulgence (TUU I, 506). The individual is an illusory extrapolation from the social, an effect produced by a materialistic industry financially interested in speculating on one’s insecurities. In an at once conventionalizing, but also socially atomizing way, “commodity culture” aggravates a reactive need to feel special or better than others. Fourier therefore recalibrates our social relations, with ourselves and with others, in his analysis of groupism, defined as our naturally expansive propensity to form groups. The supposedly “integral” individual is “essentially false” – as indeed is a couple – as only in a group (which is composed of at least three people) can the twelve passions be fully developed (OC XI, 320–21). Groupism unites the four affective passions of ambition and friendship, love, and family. In civilization, it is the latter passion that is over-emphasized. In Fourier’s Harmony, family is the passion emphasized least insofar as the family is a group of “forced or material bonds, not a free, passionate gathering, dissoluble at will” (TQM 193–4; TFM 80). Indeed, in the family, the child is “constantly harried by the admonishments of their parents,” if not downright maltreated (TQM 194; TFM 76). This constitutive coercion bodes badly for future “filial love,” and the categorically imperative appeal to Duty (a man-made fiction, according to Fourier) generates just as little a response in the child. Friendly sympathy and kindness would be a more fertile and effective way of nurturing positive bonds between adults and children. Hence, in the societary order, children are far less determined by family ties and, as a consequence, far less badly behaved.

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54. Fourier’s term for the divisive and dividing society we live in is l’industrie morcellée. It is fuelled by speculation (agiotage).
55. The twelve passions have 810 keys. For a detailed analysis of the mathematical-musical complexities of Fourier’s passionate attraction, see Patrick Taculsel, Charles Fourier, le jeu des passions (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000).
56. Most unlike Fourier, Proudhon was a staunch supporter of the patriarchal family (indeed, his views on women are objectionable). Nevertheless, this definition by Fourier of what constitutes a productive and happy group bears similarity with his conception of cooperative mutualism. For the (debatably overstated) differences between Proudhon’s ideas and Fourier’s notion of association, see, for example, CAP I, 162–3, and SW-P 61–3.
57. For Fourier “Duty” is merely man-made, whereas attraction comes from God (TQM 189; TFM 75).
children spend all their time at home crying, breaking things, quarrelling and refusing to work. However, as soon as they join the progressive Series or Series of groups they will work all the time, compete spontaneously among themselves, and eagerly find out as much as they can about agriculture, manufacture, science, and the arts. They will be productive and profitable whilst thinking that they are just enjoying themselves. Once fathers experience the effect the new order has on their children, they will find them adorable when they are in Series and detestable when they are in [the] incoherent households [of “civilization”].

(TQM 127; TFM 14)\(^{58}\)

This apparently magical transformation of the brattish child is achieved not by changing its passions, but by precisely working with them instead of against them. The potential of passions for social engagement is promoted and their invigorating energy is positively encouraged.

Just as the fate of the child and the parent is bleak in the traditional family structure, so too are the prospects for future happiness of the married couple itself: indeed “discord and tedium” generally results from isolated households locked into traditional modes of (re)production (TQM 230; TFM 116).\(^{59}\) The female particularly suffers from the patriarchally biased family structure, a dismal fate that greatly preoccupied Fourier.\(^{60}\) Indeed, he is remarkable for his emancipated stand on the question of women’s rights, an issue that he considers is woefully neglected by those supposed “enlightened philosophers with their

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58. Fourier is a major theorist of education, whose ideas in this field and indeed in many others, deserve to be better known in the Anglo-American world. For two good attempts to introduce them into circulation, see David Zeldin, The Educational Ideas of Charles Fourier (London: Frank Cass, 1969), and Réné Schérer, Vers une enfance majeure (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2006). Schérer is not only one of the best commentators of Fourier (along with Debout) but a major thinker in his own right (lamentably untranslated in English).

59. Proudhon claims that Fourier’s critical negation of the traditional (patriarchal) household is totally unacceptable on two accounts: first, because he unleashes “tendencies which are disorganizing and antisocial,” and second as, despite defending private property, in dismantling the family he gets rid of the “organic element,” the “soul,” of property itself (CONTRA II, 352). Proudhon’s ideas on sexual difference are lamentably out of tune with his challenging and topical ideas on property, which remains, of course, a key issue for women’s rights. By contrast, Fourier’s ideas on love chime as contemporaneous with, for instance, Hardt and Negri’s view that: “The modern concept of love is almost exclusively limited to the bourgeois couple and the claustrophobic confines of the nuclear family. Love has become a strictly private affair. We need a more generous and more unrestrained conception of love … [to] conceive [of] love as a political act that constructs the multitude” (Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire [New York: Penguin, 2004], 351ff.).

60. Fourier has been credited by modern scholars with having originated the word “feminist”; see Leslie F. Goldstein, “Early Feminist Themes in French Utopian Socialism: The St.-Simonians and Fourier,” Journal of the History of Ideas 43(1) (January–March 1982), 92.
“rights of men.”61 He inveighs against those “modern philosophers … [who] are concerned with *ethics* yet who neglect to acknowledge and demand the *rights of the weaker sex*, the oppression of whom destroys the very foundation of justice” (TQM 303; TFM 192) (as does slavery62). Just as the child reveals itself to be a different creature outside civilization’s incarcerating structures, so too does the female:

> To attempt to judge women by the defective character that they display in Civilization is like trying to judge the nature of man by the character of the Russian peasant who has no conception whatsoever of honor or liberty. It is like judging beavers by the sluggishness that they show in captivity, whereas in a state of liberty and coordinated labor they become the most intelligent of all quadrupeds. The same contrast prevails between the enslaved women of Civilization and the free women of the Combined Order. (UV 174)

However, in addition to these important gender issues, his radical ideas on sexuality in all its polymorphous perversity are also pertinent and challenging. Acutely sensitive to, and vocal about, human issues relating to gender, sexuality, class (poverty gives the lie to enlightened ideas about rational and cultural “progress”63), Fourier is additionally one of the rare thinkers who discusses the scandalous exclusion of the aged from socially productive life:

> There is nothing more distressing than the lot of children and old people in the civilized order: there are no suitable jobs for the very

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61. Writing in 1808, after the revolutionary Terror and with the Napoleonic wars still raging, such bloodshed was for Fourier consequential proof of what happens when the “visions of philosophers are put into practice.” His alternative view of a possible future should be understood as a *pacifist* reaction against the deadly destruction caused by historical conflict. The differences, tensions and rivalries encouraged by Fourier are not deemed to be incompatible with the peaceful coexistence that ultimately underlies the *raison d’être* of his social program of rights for all. See, for instance, “The task [facing the initial six progressive households] would be a very peaceable one, and instead of laying waste to the earth in the name of the rights of man, it would involve the peaceful establishment of the rights of women” (TQM 233; TFM 119).

62. According to Fourier, God wants associates not slaves (TUU I, 26). The liberation, not only of women, but of slaves, is therefore perceived by Fourier as essential if the “progressive series” is to be formed (TQM 134; TFM 21).

63. Poverty should be history for Fourier. He declares that poverty is the “most scandalous social disorder”; its praises might well be sung by ascetic moral philosophers but this eulogy amounts either to sheer hypocrisy, or to intellectual and sensual mediocrity (TQM 292–5; TFM 181–5). Fourier shares this refusal to accept poverty as a social inevitability with Saint-Simon and Proudhon.
old and the very young, with the result that childhood and old age become a burden on the social body. Children are nevertheless cherished for the services they will render in the future, whereas old people, from whom nothing is expected except a legacy, are unwelcome, despised, ridiculed behind their backs, and hounded into the grave. There is still some respect for them in rich families, but among the peasantry and the mass of the people there is nothing sadder than the fate of the old. They are degraded, openly rebuffed, scorned, and everywhere made to feel that their lives are useless.

(TQM 235–6; TFM 122)

Work is useful, for the young and old alike. As with Saint-Simon, Fourier makes a strong case for the social function of work, which has the capacity to bind us in valorizing and pleasurable ways into collegial teams and collaborative associations. The “right to work” for all should have been considered by “modern philosophers” to be a basic human right, as “without [it] all the other rights are useless” (TQM 302; TFM 192). Everyone should have the right to present themselves to society and to say:

“I was born on this earth. I ask to be admitted to all the sorts of works that are carried out here and for the guarantee to enjoy the fruits of my labor. I ask for the instruments necessary to carry out this work to be advanced to me, as well as some subsistence by means of compensation for the right to steal that simple nature gave me”; Every Harmonian, however ruined he might be, will have the right to make this speech in his native country and his request will always be received. (TUU I, 467)

Accordingly, in hospitable Harmony, people of all ages, as well as of all fortunes and misfortunes, find their place as it is the passionate proclivities (which embrace work) that are the generators of like-minded and like-bodied groupisms, not the arbitrary distinctions between the young, adult, and aged, (or even that between “men” and “women”). The new pleasures of Harmony will thus “be for people of all ages,” all sexes, and all classes (TQM 264; TFM 152).

When unbridled and expressed collectively, the passions can transcend the conventionally encoded relations of “civilization,” which lock us as individuals

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64. With the proviso that the work is useful work and not useless toil, to employ Morris’s crucial distinction (Morris, News from Nowhere, 285–306).

65. See also TUU I, 427: Fourier says that, despite talk about human rights, the fact that the “right to work” has been neither recognized nor granted should have been sufficient to prove to us that something serious is amiss with so-called “civilization.”
into the fictitiously impermeable categories of age, sex, and class.66 When thus in full flight, the passions heighten the pleasures of the five senses; they create the elective affinities of shared goals (ambition) and of friendship, and they also necessarily radically reconfigure the affects arising from love affairs and family relations. Additionally, the passions produce three distributive mechanisms for the four affective groups. The Cabalistic is the penchant for intrigue within the group and emulative rivalry with other groups. The Cabalistic passion thereby motivates the various intimately associated groups to excel in their particular production or activity. The exclusive character of the Cabalistic passion is countered by the alternating Butterfly passion that introduces another form of, and rhythm to, social distribution and interaction. The Harmonian flutters from activity to activity, joining different groups, creating amicable ties with a variety of different people according to a diversity of interests. Thereby this “dissemination of workers of one specialized group into a hundred other groups” also sows the seeds for an elaborate “intermeshing” whereby richly differentiated social ties can spring up and grow (UV 50–51; OC VI, 85; NMI&S 111; TUU I, 195).67

Once again (as was the case with Saint-Simon) a radically different understanding of what work is and can do is required: “attractive work,” comprising short (two hours maximum) working sessions on any one particular task, stimulates the body and the mind and fosters social interaction and productivity. By contrast, the long stretches of time favored by the “mercantile spirit” exploit workers’ energies to their depletion. According to Fourier, locking workers into the same repetitive, monotonous tasks does not ultimately even make economic sense (TUU I, 107; UV 231–2). Indeed, he is convinced that the societary order, which works with the natural resources of the passions, will increase productivity fourfold by soliciting willing diligence as well as “establish[ing] a system of distribution which will assure the lower classes of a proportional share in the increased wealth and a minimum sufficient for a decent life” (UV 127).68

66. Malécot, “Charles Fourier et l’utopie,” 115–16. For an instance of unconventional amorous proclivity and how it can breach the divides of age, see the anecdote about Valère and Urgère (TUU I, 199–201).

67. By specializing in just one activity, the worker develops a protectionist, reactionary, sedentary frame of mind (TUU II, 808). In Harmony the Butterfly passion, which keeps people constantly on the move, is the mechanism that prevents such a corporatist mindset from taking root.

68. Like Saint-Simon, Fourier has his eye on those who are parasitically unproductive in “civilized” society. These fall essentially into three groups: first, there are, of course, those who are idle owing to wealth or to unemployment; second, there are those who waste their energies owing to atomized industry, which needlessly duplicates the individual carrying out of tasks that could easily be performed more efficiently for the group as a whole; third, there are those who do socially useless work. The latter category consists of occupations such as working for
interest in the generalized wealth and well-being of others, in work as socially productive, is aided by the exalted Composite passion, which “electrifies” groups with its waves of contagious enthusiasm (NMI&S 109).

The thirteenth passion, which is the passionate stem for the other twelve, is *Unityism*. This passion is defined by Fourier as:

> the inclination of the individual to harmonize his own happiness with that of everything around him and of the whole human race, which today is so hateful. It is a boundless philanthropy, a universal well-being, which will not be able to develop until the whole human race is rich, free and just … (TQM 195; TFM 81)

Unityism, which shifts the social emphasis away from the egotistical individualism of incoherent “mercantile” spirit toward that which is collective, is in accordance with the forces of attraction that are at play and at work in the world as a whole. Fourier cites Laplace, who stated: “If there exists truths which appear to us to be detached from each other, it is because we are ignorant of the link [lien] which unites them as a whole” (TUU I, 438). 69 Newton’s demonstration of gravity shows this persisting “ignorance” to be unjustified for Fourier (and Laplace) insofar as this demonstration revealed one of the dynamic “links” that transverses universal matter. This Newtonian discovery needs to be extended to embrace the animal, the social, and the organic (defined as “the laws by which God distributes properties such as form, color, smell, etc., to all created or future substances in the various globes” (TQM 149; TFM 36). This working-through of the laws of material attraction to embrace all aspects of life on this planet (and others) necessitates a radical redefinition of what is meant by the social: “By analogically observing nature we see that all social harmony, from that of the planets and fixed stars to that of bees and beavers, is revealed and directed by attraction” (TUU I, 436).

Up to now we have tended to regard nature as something “in itself,” separated from us by a mysterious “veil of brass,” and divided against itself in the forms of the army (an organization that just bleeds the social body), or manufacturing shoddy goods, or working as a mercantile intermediary who dishonestly profits from commercial exchange. When work is not only a right for all but also an attractive pursuit that has evident social benefits for all, there will be no unproductive parasites (UV 130–33). For Fourier as the first socialist thinker of the “right to work,” see UV 137–8.

69. Fourier insists that *everything is harmoniously related* in the universe (TUU I, 226).

70. Fourier surmised “that the attractions and properties of animals, vegetables and minerals might be co-ordinated on the same level as those of man and the stars” (TQM 129; TFM 16).
of isolated species. We are now told to understand ourselves in terms of and through nature’s vast range of “hieroglyphs.” Accordingly, he quite exquisitely analyses, for example, “the bright yellow tuft on the head of a cockatoo” as an “emblem of an unhappy marriage,” or the cauliflower as “an ocean of flowers” symbolizing “the young lover” (UV 407, 411). This conceptualization of nature might strike us as simply anthropomorphic, especially given his statement that “without analogy nature is no more than a vast patch of brambles” (UV 410). However, the meanings that nature is seen to have for us are not simply a reflection of human concerns; they engender in turn a complex transformation of the human. We begin to understand the interrelatedness of the universe as a mutating whole pulsating with passionate attractions. Fourier writes: “Every created product, cedar or oak, cat or dog, as hieroglyphic, emblematic, can present either internally or externally, fifty or hundred tableaux of the effects of our passions and our social relations” (OC VIII, 253). We are induced to redefine ourselves as essentially nonessential, primarily “passionate,” rather than rational, creatures.

In addition, we are coaxed into associating ourselves in a “new alliance” with other living and nonliving forms (animals, vegetables, and minerals as well as the planet itself) as equally desiring, responsive, and dynamic becomings. This “new alliance” breaks with the approach of human instrumental reason with its

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71. Abbé Barthélemy’s claim that “Nature is concealed under a brazen veil, that the united efforts of men and ages can never lift up the extremity of this covering” is often repeated by Fourier, to be every time categorically rejected by him. See, for example, TQM 216, 395; TFM 103, 288.

72. For Fourier the “passionate attraction is the impulsion given by nature anterior to reflection which persists in spite of the opposition to reason, duty and prejudice” (NMI&S 85).

73. As Schérer, in his introduction to L’Écosophie de Charles Fourier, writes: “the earth is not only the milieu for the living but is itself living” (ibid., 6). Drawing on the work of Félix Guattari (Les Trois écologies [Paris: Éditions Galliée, 1989]), Schérer continues: “it appears that only an ecosophy is capable of maintaining a desiring and productive tension between the human and nature” (L’Écosophie de Charles Fourier, 22). See also Vaneigem (in DLA 11) on how the advent of a “new alliance with nature” – evidently with these words he is evoking Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (La Nouvelle alliance [Paris: Gallimard, 1986]) – would “announce the end of a system founded on the frenzied exploitation and pillage of natural resources.” As Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, Harry Zohn (trans.) (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 261, pointed out when discussing the merits of Fourier’s ideas about our place in and relation to the universe, the exclusion of a new dialogue with nature by an instrumental reasoning is not just the preserve of capitalism but was also one of the faults of state communism. My use of the Deleuzian term becomings is justified as for Fourier, and apparently God, the universe has to be seen in movement: “God is the enemy of uniformity, he intends movement to be in perpetual change (TQM 305; TFM 194). [*] Deleuze is discussed in detail in an essay by Daniel W. Smith in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6, while Guattari’s work on ecology is treated in the essay by Jonathan Maskit in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
“divided-up industry” (industrie morcellée) that fails to think coherently, that is, to think the whole, and that therefore has a detrimental impact on the environment. Indeed, Fourier is remarkably prescient about, for example, the negative effects of deforestation, the erosion of mountains and slopes, and, as we have already seen, the gustatory and social effects of neglecting agriculture: all results of the lack of “joined-up thinking” (TUU I, 64, 361, 407, 413; TUU II, 352). However, perhaps rather more challenging for those already ecologically minded are his ideas, for example, about heating up the poles to make them habitable (for humans), his plan to “perfect a regime of artificial feeding” for babies, and increasing by tenfold the quantity of fish available for consumption by conserving them in “reservoirs with fertilizers,” that is, intensive fish farming (!) (TUU I, 401, 401; NMI&S 207). Despite these somewhat problematic ideas about environmental changes, he makes an equally strong case for the catastrophic decline of the planet due to our being sluggishly out of sync with the combined movements of the universe. Our “social tardiness” sickens the planet, he tells us (TUU I, 568).

In Le Nouveau monde industriel et sociétaire (The industrial and societary new world), Fourier describes the way the peasant dairy farmers of the Franche-Comté, his native region, organize themselves:

The peasants of the Jura, seeing that, with the milk of one single household, one couldn’t make a cheese called gruyère, banded together, taking their milk each day to a common workshop [atelier] where the contribution of each one was noted down on a wooden stick. From the collection of all these little quantities of milk an abundant cheese is produced at little cost in a vast vat. (NMI&S 43)

Given our “pompous” pretensions in the field of “economism,” Fourier asks the rhetorical question: how come the nineteenth century has been unable to nurture these preexisting “little seeds [germes] of association” so that they grow into a “full-fledged system [un système plein]”? (OC XI, 356; NMI&S 43). If there is no systematic cultivation of these alternative ways of social and economic interaction, Fourier tells us, any project for societal improvement will remain a utopia, a mere “dream of The Good without the means of execution, without an efficient method” (OC XI, 356). If society does not undergo a radical transformation, if it does not reassess what is valuable and what is not, then no substantial progress will be made. Fourier paints a bleak picture of the present and what will be the future if theory does not become practice:

All over the place people desert the countryside to go to the cities, to invest in public funds, to speculate at the Stock Exchange, whilst the
ant-hills of the merchants, of whom there are twenty times too many, absorb all the capital. Deceitful competition further stimulates the corruption to the point that bread itself is poisoned by sulphates. In the meantime utopian philosophers sing the praises of enlightened progress. (OC IX, 356)\(^74\)

III. PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON

Like Fourier, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon\(^75\) was a native of the “relatively recently annexed and still independent spirited” Franche-Comté, a region of cheese- (and clock-) making.\(^76\) Both like and unlike Fourier, he also appeals to the model of the small-scale workshop run according to what he called “mutualist” principles as a conducive basis for a radical reorientation of society and its values along decentralized and, by extension, federalized lines.\(^77\) Proudhon’s first biographer,

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74. As we have already pointed out, Fourier clearly highlights the topical issues of the abandonment of manufacturing industries of which the most important is agriculture and the rupture of direct contact with nature and the concomitant degradation of quality foodstuffs. In this succinct passage, he is also emphasizing the live subject of the preponderant importance accorded to, and the dangerously inflated influence of, banks and bankers.

75. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65; born in Besançon, France; died in Paris) was of working-class, even peasant origins despite being labeled “petit-bourgeois” by Marx. His father worked in a brewery, his mother was a waitress and as a small boy he himself worked in the fields tending crops and livestock in the Jura. He was later by trade a typographer, printer, and journalist. While an apprentice (compagnon) traveling around France (1830–32), he presented himself to the mayor of Toulon and unsuccessfully claimed his right to work as a citizen of the world. His declaration in 1840 that “property is theft” made him notorious. In 1848 his experiences as parliamentarian reinforced his growing aversion to party politics. He was imprisoned in Saint-Pélagie and then at the Conciergerie from 1849 to 1852 for his opposition to Louis Napoléon Bonaparte. Proudhon is the father of libertarian socialism or societary anarchism (as opposed to state socialism), the founder of the People’s Bank, a promulgator of mutualist systems and self-government and a far-sighted thinker of federalism. His ideas were particularly influential during the 1871 Paris Commune and the radical French trade union, the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail), directly recognized his influence by naming their daily newsletter La voix du peuple and monthly newspaper L’atelier.


77. When reflecting on why it might be that Fourier, Proudhon (and Considérant), all originating from the Franche-Comté, became “social inventors,” Christian Guinchard also evokes their most probable awareness of “the collective rural experience of cheese-making” which necessitated the association of several producers in a system of “reciprocal loans of milk” (Christian Guinard, “Besançon et Mulhouse – I: Deux mémoires sociales déterminantes,” La Grande Relève [May 2005], http://economiedistributive.free.fr/spip.php?article769 [accessed June 2010]). See also the website http://artic.ac-besancon.fr/histoire_geographie/new_look/Ress_thematiq/thematiq/utopies.htm (accessed July 2010). Michel Anthony’s introduction to
Charles-August Sainte-Beuve proclaimed that his ideas would perhaps triumph one century after his death. Michel Ragon, writing after the fall of the Berlin Wall and reflecting on the dismal failure of monolithic state communism it represented, considered that the late twentieth century was even more propitious than the 1960s for the ideas of a Proudhon and for libertarian socialism generally to take seed. Following on from our analyses of Saint-Simon and Fourier, it remains for us to look at Proudhon’s ideas and their currency for us now.

We have seen how Fourier lamented the lack of systematic initiative needed in society at large to disseminate the “seeds of association” that were capable of fermenting social change. While in effect sharing many of Fourier’s basic convictions, Proudhon would no doubt balk at the idea of a “fully fledged system” being at all desirable. In an 1841 letter to his friend Antoine Gauthier he wrote:

You ask me to give you an explanation about how society is to be reconstituted. … [But] it is not a question of imagining in our heads this valuable site of utopian resources opens with the words: “the Franche-Comté is the land of utopians and of utopias ....”

78. Proudhon died in 1864. A few years later, during the 1871 Paris Commune, workers were seen clutching copies of Proudhon’s De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières, and his friend, Gustave Courbet, whose radical realism he championed in Du principe de l’art was attempting to put Proudhon’s ideas about mutualism to work in his capacity as President of the Federation of Artists (see Bertrand Tillier, in Gustave Courbet [Paris: ADAGP, 2007], 19–28). One century later (1968), nine to ten million French workers were on strike. One of the symbols of this generalized contestation was the occupied “workers’ fortress” on the Île Seguin, the Billancourt Renault factory. A few years later (1972–73), the watch-making LIP factory in Besançon (Proudhon’s birthplace and home for many years) was taken over and self-managed by the workers themselves until the forces of official “order” moved in to reclaim it and thereby save the authority of the state (and status quo). During this period Proudhonian ideas about workers’ mutualist associations, about work itself as a “collective force,” about what property is and could become, about the problems engendered by centralized statism (whether capitalist or communist) are definitely at play. For the inspiring story of LIP, see Maurice Joyeux, “Chez LIP: On fabrique; on vend; on se paie” (At LIP: We make; we pay ourselves; we sell) available at http://incревablesanarchistes.org/articles/1968_81/lip_1973.htm (accessed July 2010) and the important documentary film by Christian Rouard, Les LIP, l’imagination au pouvoir (Les Films d’Ici, 2007). For how the anarcho-mutualist working practices of the Franche-Comtois cheese-makers was exported in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries to the Besançon clock-making workshops and thereby to LIP, see Guinchard, “Besançon et Mulhouse.”

80. Proudhon’s relation to Fourier was perhaps overdetermined: having supervised the printing of Le Nouveau monde industriel et sociétai re and thereby become well acquainted with his writings, he admitted that “for six weeks [he] was captive of this bizarre genius” (see George Woodcock, Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements [Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1962], 102–3). He subsequently seemed to take almost every opportunity to criticize him, notably with regard to his radical ideas about amorous relations.
a system that can then be presented. … This is not the way to reform the world. Society can only be corrected by itself … social science is infinite, no-one possesses it entirely … no-one on earth is capable of giving a complete system from start to finish that only has to be implemented. This would be a most damnable lie.81

For Proudhon the most a “social scientist” can do is to present “examples, a method,” not a blueprint for a better world or a doctrine to be inculcated. Hence, in his notorious 1846 letter to Marx,82 while confirming his commitment collaboratively to “discover the laws of society,” he wrote:

simply because we are leaders of a movement, let us not instigate a new intolerance. Let us not set ourselves up as the apostles of a new religion, even if it be the religion of logic or of reason. … Let us never consider any question exhausted, and when we have used our very last argument, let us begin again if necessary, with eloquence and irony. On this condition I will join your association with pleasure, otherwise I will not. (SW-P 150–51)

Proudhon was indefatigably committed to the idea and practice of independent living, working, and thinking, hence his deep suspicion of any systematized, institutionalized, and hierarchized party politics.83 However, this advocacy of individual liberty is far from being asocial or antisocial; for Proudhon it offers precisely a means by which a new form of sociability can be produced.84

As we have already seen, Fourier’s vision of what societary “association” could become was radical and challenging. However, Proudhon is keen to differentiate most categorically between what he perceives as a Fourierist-style “association”


*82. For a discussion of Marx and Marxism, see the essay by Terrell Carver in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.

83. Proudhon gives a bleak picture of his parliamentary experience as “people’s representative.” He depicts his time in office as a period during which, far from directly communicating with and acting for his voters, he was isolated from them, locked into committee meetings that propagated agendas that were out of sync with the faster moving events in the outside world (CONF 124). This experience explains his conclusion that “all parties without exception, in so far as they seek power, are varieties of absolutism” (quoted in Woodcock, Anarchism, 15).

84. Woodcock, Anarchism, 99, describes Proudhon’s form of anarchism as that of a “social individualist” whereas, by contrast, Max Stirner’s is that of “an egoistic individualist.” See also Woodcock’s subsequent analysis of La Création dans l’ordre de l’humanité for how the social is the matrix or “serial order” within which “each man’s personality must find its function and fulfillment.”
and his model of “mutualism.” The crucial differences can be understood as being both temporal and psychological. Proudhon writes: “Whilst we are considering association, let us note that mutualism intends men to associate only insofar as this is required by the demands of production, the cheapness of goods, the needs of consumption, and the security of the producers themselves” (SW-P 62; CAP I, 163, emphasis added). This “only insofar” introduces restrictions to the mode of participation in the social contract that is mutualism, which are absent in Fourier’s model. First, Fourier’s association presupposes (without necessitating or coercing in any way) a participation that – albeit most varied, dynamic, libertarian, and transformative – nevertheless presumably endures in a temporal continuity. By contrast, Proudhon’s mutualism has temporal flexibility and episodicity structurally built into its definition. Mutualism is therefore defined as “an act by which two or more individuals agree to organize among themselves, within certain limits and for a given time [dans une mesure et pour un temps déterminé], the industrial force we call exchange.” This temporal restriction and variability accompanies, second, a psychological distinction. Proudhon continues:

Consequently [the individuals] undertake mutual obligations and reciprocal guarantees for a certain number of services, products, benefits, duties, and so on which they are in a position to obtain and render, knowing themselves to be in all other respects totally independent [se reconnaissant du reste parfaitement indépendants], both in what they consume and what they produce.

(SW-P 97; IDEE 132, emphasis added)

This distinction between the individual and the greater social body (which might in the case of a particular transaction involve just one other person) is for Proudhon a crucial safeguard against the individual being “gobbled up” (englouti) by the “communitarian ocean” (CAP I, 87; SW-P 60, translation modified).85

Evidently, given his commitment to the “passionate series” that entails an ever finer detailing of subgroups engaged in exquisitely subtle rivalry, Fourier wishes his community to be everything but an undifferentiated and homogeneous totality. His projected world would certainly not appear to bear any relation to the interpellated and policed populations of governmental states, whether overtly totalitarian or supposedly “democratic.” Nevertheless, Proudhon detects within all associations, rightly or wrongly, a “systematized outlook [une pensée

85. As discussed above, Fourier envisaged a much greater scale of social interaction, of at least 800 people.
Social communion and human solidarity is not a case of that passionate attraction which, according to Fourier, ought to flare up like fireworks in the setting of the series of contrasting groups from the intrigues of the cabalist tendency in man and the changes of his butterfly tendency. It is an inward pleasure, to be found as much in solitary meditative reflection as in the bustle of the workshop. It results from the worker’s sense that he is making full use of his faculties – the strength of his body, the skill of his hands, and the agility of his mind; it comes from his sense of pride at overcoming difficulties, at taming nature, at acquiring knowledge, and at guaranteeing his independence. It is a sense of communion with the rest of the human race through the memory of past struggles, through identity of purpose and the equal sharing of well-being.

(SW-P 81–2)

Here Fourier’s envisaged associative participation is presented as a constant solicitation to an ever enthusiastic and active involvement in a continuous present. His ideal community is characterized as producing pleasures that are capable of responding in an immediate and direct fashion, and that are communicable to those who surround the individual person.86 Proudhon’s notion of social communion is not lacking in sensuality, but, compared with Fourier’s, the discrete space accorded to the pleasures of the body (and the mind) allows them to communicate less with their immediate surroundings, to be less present, more taciturn and reserved. They can engage with a different temporality, maybe reaching out into the past to those who are no longer immediately there. History, memory, and human relations to time generally play a much greater role in Proudhon’s thinking than in Fourier’s.

When facing the present and looking forward to the future, the modus operandi of the mutualism provides a temporary and temporalizing structure or framework within which individual liberty is produced, sustained, and even increased (IDEE 150). Preconditions for this renewal of commercial transactions, which is concomitantly a radical overhauling of society’s conventional practices and values, are: first, that commutative justice replaces distributive justice and, second, the contract must be synallagmatic, or reciprocally binding. “Commutative justice” or “the rule by contract or in other words, rule

86. Guérin, Ni Dieu, ni maître, 87.
by economics and industry” must replace the “rule by laws” (SW-P 96; IDEE 132). This replacement marks the passage from a hierarchizing system of governance wherein the infantilized governed await their respective and proportionate deserts to be dispensed to them, to an egalitarian framework where each “undertake mutual obligations and make reciprocal guarantees.” As Proudhon so passionately and convincingly tells us:

To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated for, regimented, penned in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commanded by those who have neither the title, science, nor virtue. … To be governed, is to be, at each step, by every transaction, with every movement, noted, registered, recorded, priced, stamped, eyed up and down, classified, patented, licensed, authorized, annotated, reprimanded, hindered, reformed, put straight, corrected. (IDEE 309)

Governance perpetuates a patriarchal hierarchy and the family should precisely not therefore be taken as the model for society as a whole (IDEE 127). In the family, the child eventually revolts against this parental authority as she or he begins to reason for herself or himself. Acts of disobedience mark his or her growing maturity. Proudhon explains how this refusal just to accept rules and regulation without first independently evaluating them, has the potential to transform the wider power structure. “If [one] obeys no longer because the king commands but because the king proves [his right to command], it may be said that henceforth [one] will recognize no authority and that [one] has become [one’s] own king” (Qu’est? 425; WisP? 207). Henceforth one is not accepting the governance of one’s will by some external sovereign authority. Instead, one is recognizing the immanent legitimacy of the law in that particular instance and according to the consideration needed, if it indeed is, to those who administer that particular affair so that they can carry it out (Qu’est? 433; WisP? 212). The term consideration is Saint-Simon’s, which he defines as “the voluntary permission given to those who do some things that you judge to be useful to partially

87. Hence Proudhon’s well-grounded reservations about the cultic worship of The Father, Enfantin. He states that those “fraternal socialists who take the family as the element of society all end up with a dictatorship” (IDEE 127). For his opinion that Saint-Simon’s ideas have been “strangely distorted by his disciples,” see SW-P 90–91. Proudhon elsewhere staunchly defends the family as if it is a bastion of value. He is challengingly contradictory on this issue, but for Proudhon contradiction is not a weakness or failing, but an irreducible and progressive force.

88. Given Proudhon’s reactionary views on women (for one example, see SW-P 254–6), I insist on maturing minds being within both male and female bodies!
dominate you” (with regard to that particular issue) (I LHG 42). In a scientific age capable of proving truths deduced from observation, it may now be thought that the loci of traditional authority “are worthy of no consideration” (Qu’est? 426; WisP? 208). Proudhon hammers home the conclusions we should be drawing for ourselves:

The law was made without my participation, in spite of my absolute disagreement, in spite of the harm that it makes me suffer. The State does not deal with me; it does not exchange anything with me; it holds me to ransom. Where then is the bond of conscience, reason, passion or interest which obliges me in any way? (IDEE 152)

Such free thinking spells the end to government.

This idea of governmentality as an institution to be dismantled has been perennial or, more precisely, is immortal: Proudhon suggests that “an idea cannot perish, it is always reborn from its contradictory [sic]” (IDEE 142). Hence, in reaction to the events of the French Revolution, which ended up consolidating a centralizing state, it was inevitable that someone like Saint-Simon would reignite the “incorruptible seed” that is the idea (IDEE 142, 145). He clearly saw that the system of government belonged to a past feudal age and that it should be replaced by talented administrators who facilitate the flow of industrious activity and exchange. As discussed above, he felt that this view was in tune with the forces actively at work within society as a whole. In 1823–24, he wrote:

Those who are administered, governed, in this population have adopted industrial principles which serve as a guide to their actions. They only obey those combinations which reconcile the interests of the contractual parties. They think that the public fortune must be administered in the interests of the majority. They have a horror of privileges and rights of birth. (IV CATE 34–5)

89. See also Musso, Le Vocabulaire de Saint-Simon, 17–19, who formulates the idea of consideration as “the voluntary gift of a ‘position of domination’ granted by the governed to ‘those who do things that they judge to be useful.’”

90. See the analysis above of Saint-Simon’s investment in the vivacious “force of [scientifically-based] demonstration” as a means of social liberation. For the extent of the liberation that is anticipated, see Proudhon: “The Gods have departed, the kings are withdrawing, privilege is disappearing, everyone counts himself one of the workers” (SW-P 170).

91. See also CAP I, 80, on the power of ideas.

92. For further analysis of how administration replaces governance, see III SI 151; II ORG 187; IV CATE 7, 43ff.). Given how in current society administration often takes the form of deadening bureaucracy antithetical to lively intellectual activity, Saint-Simon’s writings open the prospect of it being conceived more creatively.
Proudhon depicts how the idea of the “negation of government” has traveled through time, periodically illuminating a particular period, such as Saint-Simon’s, until it is finally – in this case some thirty years later – fully adopted by someone who carefully nurtures it and then, when it is ripened, flings it “like a meteor into the electrified masses” (IDEE 145). Proudhon’s theory of mutualist exchange, already nominally present in Saint-Simon’s writings, is seen as charging the idea of nongovernance with the extra galvanizing energy it needs to make a real impact on the already changing world.

However, being sensitive to questions of time, Proudhon also makes it clear that the most topical idea of mutualism (which, as he well knew, was already working in Lyon, notably among the radicalized silk-workers [les canuts] of the Croix-Rousse) is also a return to a venerable “primitive practice.” He explains that:

The theory of mutuality or of mutum, i.e., of exchange in kind, whose simplest form is the loan for consumption, is, from the point of view of the collective being, the synthesis of the two ideas of property and community, a synthesis as ancient as the elements that constitute it.

(CONTRA II, 411)

The practice of mutualism is the result of a “six thousand year long meditation on this fundamental proposition: A = A” (ibid.). The directness of the exchange promotes “sincerity,” in contrast to the deceitful speculation and commodified mystification propagated by parasitic intermediaries such as merchants with their money interests. Requisite credit should be obtained, not by borrowing at interest, but by workers organizing themselves to create their own networks of mutual guarantees as an act of solidarity. As Proudhon recognizes, credit does not have to take the form of money: “anything that has an exchange value can be an object of exchange.” Alternative economies to capitalism are possible.

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93. Proudhon convincingly suggests that one reason why the force of Saint-Simon’s ideas was lost was because his own “disciples” misunderstood them. They failed (or refused) to see that “the producer [the active agent within society] is the negation of government, that organization is incompatible with authority.” In effect the Saint-Simonians reintroduced distributive, thereby abandoning Saint-Simon’s commutative, justice.


95. For mutualism as the law of talion no longer associated with vengeance and criminality but now serving “the tasks of labor and the good office of free fraternité,” see SW-P 60 and CAP I, 87. For it as the putting into practice of “do as you would be done by,” see IDEE 153.

96. Guérin, Ni Dieu, ni maître, 82.
One such scheme was his very own “People’s Bank,” which proposed a reformed banking system that exactly did not operate with capital but with vouchers. Its declaration read that it had “as its base the essential gratuity of credit and exchange, [and] as its aim the circulation of values not the production of them, and as its means the mutual consent of producers and consumers” (SW-P 76).

The society envisaged by Proudhon positively encourages the proliferation of economic exchanges while actively working against the monopolistic accumulation of capital. Proudhon clairvoyantly sees the dangers of global monopolies but he remains confident that, because of its constituent variabilities – temporal, extent, purpose … – and because of the liberty of each involved that is preserved, even boosted by it, mutualism, by its very nature, breaks down those monolithic and all-encompassing bodies over which individuals have no control.97 He reiterates that:

Mutuality presupposes the division of land, the division of properties, the independence of work, the separation of industries, the speciality of functions, individual and collective responsibility according to whether the work is individualized or grouped, the reduction to a minimum of general costs, suppression of parasitism and misery. (CAP I, 88)

A “moral person,” with needs, rights and duties intact (although not necessarily constantly the same), remains at the end of every exchange that is simultaneously the beginning of another (IDEE 223).98 This nonalienation of the person in every transaction amounts to a society wherein it is “as if my will repeated itself to infinity” (ibid.). This serial repetition of the individual will in the social serves not only to reinforce it, but also to reveal the illusory nature of an individuality outside the social that would have its very own “continuity of conscience, permanence of intimate sense, and indefatigably wakeful ego” (CREA 141).

As we have already seen, with mutuality the will is not “held to ransom” by external sources of sovereign authority as it is in a governmental system (IDEE 152, quoted above). However, it does possess a keen awareness that everything it produces is “already struck [frappé] by a mortgage to society” (Qu’est? 283; WisP? 115). This primordial indebtedness occurs because we consume well before we begin to produce. When we finally begin producing we are therefore already in debt to the work produced by the collective force that has preceded us, and that continues laterally to support our industrious endeavors.

97. For how global monopolies must surely eventually burst to form smaller “republicanized” entities, see CONTRA II, 411.
98. For the series needs leading to rights leading to duties, see Qu’est? 434; WisP? 213.
Proudhon succinctly states that “in relation to society the laborer is a debtor who of necessity dies insolvent” (Qu’ est? 283; WisP? 116). Even the actualization of an individual’s potential derives the nourishment it requires to flourish from the “universal intelligence and general knowledge slowly accumulated” through time: “Whatever may be then the capacity of a man, once this capacity is created it does not belong to him. Like the material fashioned by an industrious hand, it had the power of becoming and society has given it being” (ibid.). The conclusion to be drawn is therefore that the facts underpinning labor as a social activity fundamentally destroy the right to property (whether material or intellectual) as something we integrally own.

This reasoning led Proudhon in 1840 to his notorious statement: “Property is theft!” (Qu’ est? 129; WisP? 13).99 In place of property, he reinstates the primordial right of possession. This right recognizes from a moral perspective the physico-geographical facts that science demonstrates. One such fact is the spheric shape of the planet, which means that land is limited and must therefore be shared (Qu’ est? 72–3; WisP? 18–19). It also recognizes how indispensable and therefore precious natural resources are and how, in times of increased population levels, redistribution must occur.100 Possession is a right that is temporary, not fixed (Qu’ est? 210; WisP? 66). It readjusts its claim to the things on this planet, not according to the claims of distributive justice whose dictum runs “to each according to his capacity; to each capacity according to its results,” but according to the contractual obligations of commutative justice that recognizes that “there is a place for everyone under the sun” (Qu’ est? 215; WisP? 69).

Proudhon subsequently revisited the question of property in Theory of Property (1863–64). Having previously claimed that “property-owners, robbers, heroes, and sovereigns” were all synonymous terms, he now imagined a transfigured form of property, purified of the “right of increase” (droit d’aubaine), that could provide a counterweight to the centralizing and interfering tendencies of the state (Qu’ est? 428; WisP? 209; TdeP 189).101 Even if its motivations are still essentially egotistical and reactionary, once seen in the context of an ongoing

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99. Proudhon’s ideas on property are so richly explorative and topical that they deserve tomes of commentary; for example, for pertinent ecological concerns about the appropriation of the earth, water, air, and light, see Qu’ est? 216–22; WisP? 70–74. For an evocative account of the aura of property worthy of Walter Benjamin, see Qu’ est? 289–90; WisP? 119–20.

100. This argument echoes Kant’s in the essay “Concerning Perpetual Peace,” but there is no evidence that Proudhon had actually read it.

101. Proudhon defines “right of increase” in the following way: “Increase receives different names according to the things which produce it: farm-rent [fermage] for lands, house-rent [loyer] for houses and furniture, rent for life-investments, interest for money, benefice, gain, profit (three things which must not be confused with wages or the legitimate price of labor)” (Qu’ est? 289; WisP? 119). Fraser translated le droit d’aubaine as the “right to escheat,” which is not accurate.
combat against an all-invasive state, property emerges as an anarchistic force, even in spite of itself. By stubborn principle it is irreverent, anti-unitary, and rebellious to external authority (TdeP 144).102

This revision of his position can be seen as evolving out of his better understanding of the processes of life itself. In his 1853 Philosophy of Progress he wrote:

Progress … is an affirmation of universal movement, and thus it is the negation of immutable forms and formulae, of all doctrines of eternity, permanence and impeccability, etc., applied to any being whatsoever. It denies the permanence of any order, including that of the universe itself, and the changelessness of any subject or object, be it spiritual and transcendental.

(SW-P 247, translation modified)103

The problem with his adoption of possession in the 1840 What is Property? as the solution to property’s abuses is that it functioned as a synthetic, “superior term” that purported to resolve the conflicts engendered by proprietorial inequity, and to silence the contradictory claims made to justify ownership (TdeP 52). The abolition of property is not the definitive answer to society’s problems as its eradication would remove a crucial source of “dynamic tension” and thus have an immobilizing effect on society as a whole.104 While still militating for radical social reform, Proudhon, as we saw earlier in his letters to Gauthier and Marx, is deeply suspicious of any supposedly definitive solutions and systems. He accordingly returns to the subject of property and tackles it again this time in all its paradoxical complexity: “property is theft … and liberty.”105 By so doing, he recognizes that the egotistical retrenchment that often besets property-owners and the bureaucratic inertia that often overcomes the machinery of state are

102. Having consistently condemned absentee-landlordism, he also recognizes that property-owners have to maintain their assets, especially if they are in the form of land, and that this maintenance is a repeated, even daily, act of creative “re-making” (IDEE 219). Thought of in this light property enters into a dialogue with nature and thereby stands as a powerful counterforce to industrialization. However, given his commitment to contradiction as a life-force and his refusal of simplistic “answers” to complex – because changing – situations and problems, Proudhon then concludes Theory of Property with the following words: “When I see all those gates and walls outside of Paris which prevent the poor pedestrian from enjoying the view of the countryside and the feel of the land, I get violently irritated … I admit that my dignity as man bristles with disgust … If ever I find myself to be a property-owner, I’ll make sure that God and men, notably the poor, pardon me!” (TdeP 245–6).

103. See also Woodcock, Anarchism, 26–7, for Proudhon’s understanding of the processes of life and history as almost Heraclitean (and as non-Hegelian/ Marxist). See also CONTRA II, 413, for Proudhon’s nonlinear account of time and history.

104. Hervé Trinquier in CREA I, 14.

105. For Woodcock (Anarchism, 98–133), Proudhon is the “man of paradox”; see ibid., ch. 5.
two opposing absolutes from which can “spring up political movement, social life itself, just as a driving, luminous, vivifying spark, lightning, is released from two contrary sources of electricity” (TdeP 193). Out of these antinomies, their conflicts and precarious equilibrium, comes growth and development; any fusional resolution or the elimination of one of the terms would be the equivalent of death (TdeP 52). 106

“Society seeks order in anarchy,” suggests Proudhon, just as the various processes of life do (Qu’est? 428; WisP? 209). Order does not result from “a hierarchy of functions and faculties” but instead it is constantly recreated out of the reiterated balancing and complex organization of “free forces” (CAP I, 86). Whereas the traditional discourses of religion, morality, science, and law seek to impose a masterly language that purportedly unites, englobes, and sums up their subjects, the task of politics, as Proudhon sees it, is to “separate from the point of view of interests and material inevitabilities, everything that can be separated as does nature” (FEDITAL 218–19). Nothing should be left undivided (FED 122). These societal processes of separation, such as increasing federalization that Proudhon sees as the future of politics, are serial and pluralistic devolutions that accompany the various forces of life itself. 107 In the state, massive units are difficult to mobilize and therefore prone to inertia. They benefit from being broken down into smaller, nimbler entities that are able to respond to, and engage with, external bodies in a quicker and more fluid way. Just as the organs of animals derive their “strength [puissance] and harmony” from an organized “separation” of their constituent parts and materials (FED 162), 108 so too would societal structures benefit from being broken down into smaller, nimbler entities that are able to respond to, and engage with, external bodies in a quicker and

106. The abolition of private property can lead straight to the brutality of collectivization as evidenced in the Soviet Kolkhoz. For Proudhon’s analysis of peasants’ gut rejection of the “societary,” see IDEE 232. The abolition of the state is also not necessarily Proudhon’s desired aim: in FED, 108–9, he envisages more a transfigured state whose “authoritative attributes” are finely specialized, restricted, and minimized, and that is less directly involved in societal affairs, rather than no state at all. As Trinquier says, Proudhon’s “utopia” is not a world without conflict but a “world wherein the liveliest of oppositions can develop and organize themselves freely” (Trinquier in CREA I, 19).

107. Federalism is perceived by Proudhon as being the logical outcome of mutualism: “When it is translated into the realm of politics, what we have hitherto termed mutualism or guaranteeism is called federalism. The entire political and economic revolution is summed up in this simple synonym” (SW-P 111).

108. This parallel between society and organisms is, however, an analogy. I would not go so far as Grange (Saint-Simon, 41) in suggesting that Proudhon had “a conception of natural social spontaneity” for the reason that the serial interrelations he envisages are deliberately negotiated through contracts, a fact that is crucial for creating and maintaining individual liberty.
more fluid way. The science of physiology again provides key insight into how political and social systems could be improved for the future advantage of all.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

When Proudhon advocates the replacement of “constituted political powers [pouvoirs]” by “organized economical forces,” he joins Saint-Simon and Fourier in their passionate commitment to social change (IDEE 193). Like them he revolts against ideologues who, seeking to implement their “uniform social plans … where everything is simplified and resolved,” attempt to homogenize our political, social, and cultural lives by imposing formatted practices and ideas (TdeP 228–9). This authoritarian drive to sameness is for all three the equivalent of reducing the body, with all its variety of arterial and venal tubes, tendons, nerves, gazes, and so on, to “one unique, solid, resistant matter” such as bones. Societal ossification is the inevitable outcome. For all three, future happiness and well-being depend on the creation of a social order that positively encourages the “plurality of elements, the struggle of elements, the opposition of contraries” and whose only synthesis is that of “undefinables and absolutes” (TdeP 229). All three give us a challenging reinterpretation of work as a positive social activity to which everyone should have the right.

MAJOR WORKS

Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon


Abbreviations

CATE “Catéchisme des industriels” (1823–24), in Œuvres.
COR “Correspondance avec M. de Redern” (1811), in Œuvres.
IND “L’industrie” (1816–17), in Œuvres.
LHG “Lettre d’un habitant de Genève à ses contemporains” (1803), in Œuvres.
MSH “Mémoire sur la science de l’homme” (1813), in Œuvres.
NC “Nouveau Christianisme” (1825), in Œuvres.
ORG “L’organisateur” (1819–20), in Œuvres.

109. For instance, see above for Saint-Simon’s criticism of the solid thought of the “brutiers” and his references to the complex and varied organization of animals such as beavers; and Fourier’s fostering of diversity in humans and in nature generally against the homogenizing tendencies of monoculture.
OS “De l’organisation sociale” (1825), in Œuvres.
PHY “De la physiologie appliquée à l’amélioration des institutions sociales” (1825), in Œuvres.
QOP “Quelques opinions philosophiques à l’usage du XIX siècle” (1825), in Œuvres.
QUE “Sur la querelle des abeilles et des frelons” (1819), in Œuvres.
REORG “De la réorganisation de la société européenne” (1814), in Œuvres.
SI “Du système industriel” (1822), in Œuvres.
TGU “Travail sur la gravitation universelle” (1813), in Œuvres.
VIE “Vie de Saint-Simon par lui-même” (1808), in Œuvres.

Charles Fourier

The standard edition of Fourier’s works is Œuvres complètes. Introduction by Simone Debout Oleszkiewicz. 12 volumes. Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1966–68. Les presses du réel is currently reediting his works and these and other more recent editions have been used where available.

Abbreviations

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon


Abbreviations
CONF “Les confessions d’un révolutionnaire” (1849).


Qu’est?  *Qu’est ce que la propriété?* Malesherbes: Le livre de poche, [1840] 2009.


## CHRONOLOGY

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<td>Watt invents the steam engine, opening the way for the “industrial revolution”</td>
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<td>Reinstatement of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university</td>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>Birth of Charles Bernard Renouvier</td>
<td>Jane Austen, Emma</td>
<td>Battle of Waterloo; final defeat of Napoleon; Congress of Vienna; establishment of the German Confederation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>Bolzano, Rein analytischer Beweis Hegel, Encyclopedia</td>
<td>Ricardo, Principles of Political Economy</td>
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<td>1818</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Marx</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Death of Jacobi Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</td>
<td>Byron, Don Juan Grimm, German Grammar</td>
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<td>1820</td>
<td>Birth of Friedrich Engels and Herbert Spencer</td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith</td>
<td>Death of Napoleon Peru and Mexico declare independence from Spain Greece declares independence from Turkey</td>
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<td>1824</td>
<td>Death of Maine de Biran</td>
<td>Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony</td>
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<td>1825</td>
<td>Death of Saint-Simon Saint-Simon, The New Christianity</td>
<td>Ludwig I becomes king of Bavaria, more liberal reign and support for the arts</td>
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<td>1826</td>
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<td>Ludwig-Maximilians-University moved from Landau to Munich</td>
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<td>1827</td>
<td>Death of Pierre-Simon Laplace</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>(–1842) Auguste Comte, Cours de philosophie positive in six volumes</td>
<td>Stendhal, The Red and the Black</td>
<td>July revolution in France, setting off revolts in other parts of Europe</td>
</tr>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, The Hunchback of Notre Dame</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Birth of Jules Lachelier Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Death of Goethe Clausewitz, Vom Kriege Goethe, Poetry and Truth</td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey</td>
<td>Pushkin, Eugene Onegin</td>
<td>Abolition of slavery in the British Empire</td>
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<tr>
<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
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<th>POLITICAL EVENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1834 Death of Schleiermacher</td>
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<td>1835 Strauss, <em>The Life of Jesus Critically Examined</em></td>
<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville's <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<tr>
<td>1837 Death of Fourier Bolzano, <em>Wissenschaftslehre, Versuch einer ausführlichen und grösstheils neuen Darstellung der Logik, mit steter Rücksicht auf deren bisherige Bearbeiter</em></td>
<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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<td>1838 Feuerbach, <em>Pierre Bayle nach seinen für die Geschichte der Philosophie und der Menschheit interessantesten Momenten</em></td>
<td>Charles Dickens, <em>Oliver Twist</em></td>
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<td>1839 Birth of Charles Sanders Peirce Feuerbach, <em>Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie</em></td>
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<td>1840 Proudhon, <em>Qu'est ce que la propriété?</em> Schopenhauer, “Über die Grundlage der Moral”</td>
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<td>King Frederick William IV takes the throne in Prussia</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)</td>
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<td>1844 Birth of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche Marx writes <em>Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts</em></td>
<td>Alexandre Dumas, <em>The Count of Monte Cristo</em></td>
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<td>1845 Death of A.W. Schlegel</td>
<td>Alexander von Humboldt, <em>Kosmos</em>, Volume One</td>
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<td>1847 Boole, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>On the Conservation of Force</em></td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Birth of Gottlob Frege</td>
<td>Publication of the Communist Manifesto</td>
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<td>1849</td>
<td>Death of Bolzano</td>
<td>Death of Frédéric Chopin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Robert Schumann completes the music for Byron's Manfred</td>
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<td>1851</td>
<td>Bolzano, Paradoxien des Unendlichen</td>
<td>Herman Melville, Moby Dick</td>
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<td>Herbert Spencer, Social Statics</td>
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<td>Great Exhibition staged in the Crystal Palace, London</td>
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<td>1852</td>
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<td>1854</td>
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<td>H. D. Thoreau, Walden</td>
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<td>1855</td>
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<td>Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass</td>
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<td>1856</td>
<td>Birth of Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>1857</td>
<td>Birth of Ferdinand de Saussure</td>
<td>Charles Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil</td>
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<td>Death of Comte</td>
<td>Gustav Flaubert, Madame Bovary</td>
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<td>1858</td>
<td>Birth of Georg Simmel</td>
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<td>Saint-Simon, Mémoire sur la science de l’homme</td>
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<td>1860</td>
<td>Death of Schopenhauer</td>
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<td>1861</td>
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<td>Johann Jakob Bachofen, Das Mutterrecht</td>
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<td>1862</td>
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<td>Victor Hugo, Les Misérables</td>
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<td>1863</td>
<td>Mill, Utilitarianism</td>
<td>Édouard Manet, Olympia</td>
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<td>1864</td>
<td>Birth of Max Weber</td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>Death of Proudhon</td>
<td>(–1869) Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace</td>
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<td>Premiere of Richard Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde</td>
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<td>1866</td>
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<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment</td>
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<td>1867</td>
<td>Marx, Das Kapital, Vol. I</td>
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<td>1868</td>
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<td>Birth of W. E. B. Du Bois</td>
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<td>Birth of Émile Chartier (“Alain”)</td>
<td>Creation of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)</td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>Peirce, “On a New List of Categories”</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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<td>1869</td>
<td>Mill, <em>The Subjection of Women</em>&lt;sup&gt;(–1870)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Jules Verne, <em>Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</em>&lt;sup&gt;(–1870)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>(–1876) Wagner, <em>Der Ring des Nibelungen</em></td>
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<td>1870</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>Nietzsche, <em>Die Geburt der Tragödie</em></td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>Death of Mill</td>
<td>(–1877) Tolstoy, <em>Anna Karenina</em></td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>Birth of Max Scheler</td>
<td>First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Berthe Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, and Sisley)</td>
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<td>Émile Boutroux, <em>La Contingence des lois de la nature</em></td>
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<td>Brentano, <em>Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt</em></td>
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<td>Mill, <em>Nature, the Utility of Religion and Theism</em></td>
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<td>1875</td>
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<td>Premiere of Georges Bizet's <em>Carmen</em></td>
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<td>1876</td>
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<td>Death of George Sand (Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin)</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Death of Antoine Augustin Cournot</td>
<td>Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<td>1878</td>
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<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Death of Rosenkranz Frege, <em>Begriffsschrift</em></td>
<td>Henrik Ibsen, <em>A Doll’s House</em></td>
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<td>Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle</td>
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<td>Thomas Edison exhibits his incandescent light bulb</td>
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<td>1882</td>
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<td>Premiere of Wagner's <em>Parsifal</em> in Bayreuth</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Jaspers and José Ortega y Gasset</td>
<td>Death of Wagner</td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of Marx</td>
<td>Cantor, “Foundations of a General Theory of Aggregates”</td>
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<td>Dilthey, <em>Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften</em> (–1885)</td>
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<td>Nietzsche, <em>Also Sprach Zarathustra</em></td>
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<td>1884 Birth of Gaston Bachelard</td>
<td>Mark Twain, <em>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</em></td>
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<td>Frege, <em>Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik</em></td>
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<td>1886 Nietzsche, <em>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</em></td>
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<td>1887 Death of Vischer</td>
<td>Nietzsche, <em>Zur Genealogie der Moral</em></td>
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<td>1888 Birth of Jean Wahl</td>
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<td>1889 Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein</td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
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<td>1890 William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
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<td>1892 Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung”</td>
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<td>1893 Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1894 Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
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<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of projected motion pictures</td>
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<td>Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1896 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
<td>Athens hosts the first Olympic Games of the modern era</td>
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<td>1897 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1898 Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
<td>Zola, article “J’accuse” in defense of Dreyfus</td>
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<td>1899</td>
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<td>Start of the Second Boer War</td>
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<td>1900 Birth of Hans-Georg Gadamer</td>
<td>Freud, <em>Interpretation of Dreams</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of Nietzsche and Félix Ravaissan</td>
<td>Planck formulates quantum theory</td>
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<td>(–1901) Husserl, <em>Logische Untersuchungen</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1901 Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
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<td>1903 Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavailles</td>
<td>Du Bois, <em>The Souls of Black Folk</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Death of Charles Bernard Renouvier and Herbert Spencer</td>
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<td>1904 Spencer, <em>Autobiography, or The Life and Letters</em></td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
<td>Law of separation of church and state in France</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(–1905) Weber, <em>Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus</em></td>
<td>The Dreyfus Affair ends when the French Court of Appeals exonerates Dreyfus of all charges</td>
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<tr>
<td>1905 Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
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<td>1906 Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Séder Senghor</td>
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<td>1907 Birth of Jean Hyppolite Bergson, <em>L’Evolution créatrice</em></td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d’Avignon</em></td>
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<td>1908 Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. O. Quine</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911 Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article on Husserl: “Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d’une Logique pure” in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914 Death of Peirce</td>
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<td>Germany invades France</td>
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<td>1915 Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<td>1916 Publication of Saussure’s <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
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<td>1917 Death of Durkheim</td>
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<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1918 Birth of Louis Althusser</td>
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<td>Proclamation of the Weimar Republic</td>
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<td>Death of Cantor, Lachelier, Renouvier, and Simmel</td>
<td>First World War ends</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) founds the Bauhaus School</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Death of Weber</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded</td>
<td>Kahil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>Birth of Jean-François Lyotard Sartre, Raymond Aron, Paul Nizan, Georges Canguilhem, and Daniel Lagache enter the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>André Breton, <em>Le Manifeste du surréalisme</em> Thomas Mann, <em>The Magic Mountain</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze, and Frantz Fanon</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>The Trial</em> First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Birth of Michel Foucault Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl’s phenomenology: <em>Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</em></td>
<td>The film <em>Metropolis</em> by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin The Bauhaus School building, designed by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Sein und Zeit</em> Marcel, <em>Journal métaphysique</em></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, <em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Birth of Jürgen Habermas Heidegger, <em>Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik</em> and <em>Was ist Metaphysik?</em> Husserl, <em>Formale und transzendentale Logik</em> Husserl, “Phenomenology” in <em>Encyclopædia Britannica</em></td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway, <em>A Farewell to Arms</em> Erich Maria Remarque, <em>All Quiet on the Western Front</em></td>
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| 1929 | Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*  
Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne |  
| 1930 | Birth of Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Félix Guattari, Luce Irigaray, and Michel Serres  
Levinas, *La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* | (-1942) Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*  
Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*  
Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems |  
| 1931 | Heidegger’s first works appear in French translation: “Was ist Metaphysik?” in *Bifur*, and “Vom Wesen des Grundes” in *Recherches philosophiques*  
Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*  
Husserl’s *Ideas* is translated into English |  
| 1932 | Birth of Stuart Hall  
Bergson, *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion* | Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*  
BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK |  
| 1933 | University in Exile is founded as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research  
(–1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études |  
| 1935 |  
Husserl, *Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*  
Sartre, “La Transcendance de l’égo” in *Recherches philosophiques* | Penguin publishes its first paperback |  
| 1936 |  
Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”  
First issue of *Life Magazine* | (-1939) Spanish Civil War |  
<p>| 1937 | Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous | Picasso, <em>Guernica</em> |<br />
| 1938 | Death of Husserl | Sartre, <em>La Nausée</em> |</p>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>(–1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel's <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em>&lt;br&gt;Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium&lt;br&gt;Founding of <em>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</em></td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em>&lt;br&gt;John Steinbeck, <em>The Grapes of Wrath</em></td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3)</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Death of Benjamin</td>
<td>Richard Wright, <em>Native Son</em></td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>Death of Bergson&lt;br&gt;Marcuse, <em>Reason and Revolution</em></td>
<td>Arthur Koestler, <em>Darkness at Noon</em></td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and the US enters the Second World War&lt;br&gt;Germany invades the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>Phénoménologie de la perception</em></td>
<td>George Orwell, <em>Animal Farm</em>&lt;br&gt;Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of <em>Les Temps modernes</em></td>
<td>Establishment of the United Nations&lt;br&gt;End of the Second World War in Germany (May); atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of War in Japan (September)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Hyppolite, <em>Genèse et structure de la “Phénoménologie de l’esprit” de Hegel</em>&lt;br&gt;Sartre, <em>L’Existentialisme est un humanisme</em></td>
<td>Bataille founds the journal <em>Critique</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the French Indochina War&lt;br&gt;Establishment of the Fourth Republic</td>
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<td>1947</td>
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<td>Beauvoir, <em>Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté</em></td>
<td>Anne Frank, <em>The Diary of Anne Frank</em></td>
<td>Creation of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)</td>
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<td>Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus”</td>
<td>Thomas Mann, <em>Doctor Faustus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Althusser appointed agrégé-répétiteur (&quot;caïman&quot;) at the École Normale Supérieure, a position he holds until 1980</td>
<td>George Orwell, <em>1984</em></td>
<td>Foundation of NATO</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidegger’s <em>Existence and Being</em> is translated</td>
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<td>1950</td>
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<td>Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl’s <em>Ideas I</em></td>
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<td>1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of Alain and Wittgenstein</td>
<td>Marguerite Yourcenar, <em>Memoirs of Hadrian</em></td>
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<td>Arendt, <em>The Origins of Totalitarianism</em></td>
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<td>Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”</td>
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<td>1952</td>
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<td>Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Ralph Ellison, <em>Invisible Man</em></td>
<td>Ceasefire agreement (July 27) ends the Korean War</td>
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<td>1953</td>
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<td>Wittgenstein, <em>Philosophical Investigations</em> (posthumous)</td>
<td>Lacan, together with Daniel Lagache and Françoise Dolto, founds the Société française de psychanalyse</td>
<td>Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20)</td>
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<td>Lacan begins his public seminars</td>
<td>Crick and Watson construct the first model of DNA</td>
<td>Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule</td>
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<td>1954</td>
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<td>Scheler, <em>The Nature of Sympathy</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1955</td>
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<td>Marcuse, <em>Eros and Civilization</em></td>
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<td>Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
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<td>1956</td>
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<td>Sartre’s <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1956</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em>&lt;br&gt;Founding of <em>Philosophy Today</em></td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em>&lt;br&gt;Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community&lt;br&gt;The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Günter Grass, <em>The Tin Drum</em>&lt;br&gt;Gillo Pentecorvo, <em>The Battle of Algiers</em></td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Death of Camus&lt;br&gt;Gadamer, <em>Wahrheit und Methode</em>&lt;br&gt;Sartre, <em>Critique de la raison dialectique</em>&lt;br&gt;Spiegelberg, <em>The Phenomenological Movement</em></td>
<td>First issue of the journal <em>Tel Quel</em> is published&lt;br&gt;The birth control pill is made available to married women</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Death of Bachelard</td>
<td>Rachel Carson, <em>Silent Spring</em></td>
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| **1962** Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*  
Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*  
Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage*  
Heidegger, *Being and Time* appears in English translation  
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* appears in English translation  
First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois | Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*  
France grants independence to Algeria |  |
| **1963** Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* | Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*  
The first artificial heart is implanted | Assassination of John F. Kennedy  
Imprisonment of Nelson Mandela |  |
| **1964** Barthes, *Eléments de sémiologie*  
Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*  
The Beatles appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show* | Gulf of Tonkin Incident  
US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin |  |
| **1965** Death of Buber  
Althusser, *Pour Marx and, with Balibar, Lire “Le Capital”* | Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*  
Assassination of Malcolm X |  |
| **1966** Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*  
Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme*  
Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*  
Lacan, *Écrits* | Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*  
Jacques-Alain Miller founds *Les Cahiers pour l’Analyse*  
*Star Trek* premieres on US television  
Johns Hopkins Symposium “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” introduces French theory to the American academic community | (–1976) Chinese Cultural Revolution  
Foundation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale |  |
| **1967** Derrida, *De la grammaatologie, La Voix et le phénomène, and L’Écriture et la différence* | Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*  
Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall, first African-American Justice, to the US Supreme Court |  |
| **1968** Deleuze, *Différence et répétition and Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*  
Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* | Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* | Assassination of Martin Luther King  
Prague Spring  
Tet Offensive |  |
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<td>1968</td>
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<td>Beatles release the White Album</td>
<td>Events of May ’68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Death of Jaspers and Adorno Deleuze, Logique du sens Foucault, L’Archéologie du savoir Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed</td>
<td>Woodstock Music and Art Fair Neil Armstrong is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
<td>Stonewall riots launch the Gay Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Death of Carnap Adorno, Ästhetische Théorie Foucault, The Order of Things appears in English translation Husserl, The Crisis of European Philosophy appears in English translation Founding of the Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology Foucault elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France Ricoeur begins teaching at the University of Chicago</td>
<td>Millet, Sexual Politics Founding of Diacritics First Earth Day</td>
<td>Shootings at Kent State University Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Lyotard, Discours, figure Founding of Research in Phenomenology</td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>End of the gold standard for US dollar</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Death of John Wild Bourdieu, Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique Deleuze and Guattari, Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 1. L’Anti-Oedipe Derrida, La Dissémination, Marges de la philosophie, and Positions Radical Philosophy begins publication Colloquium on Nietzsche at Cerisy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Watergate break-in President Richard Nixon visits China, beginning the normalization of relations between the US and PRC</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Death of Horkheimer</td>
<td>Thomas Pynchon, Gravity’s Rainbow</td>
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<td>YEAR</td>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
<td>CULTURAL EVENTS</td>
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| 1973 | Lacan publishes the first volume of his *Séminaire*  
Roe v. Wade legalizes abortion | Chilean military coup ousts and kills President Salvador Allende |
| 1974 | Irigaray, *Speculum: De l’autre femme*  
Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* | Founding of *Critical Inquiry*  
Creation of the first doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous | Resignation of Nixon |
| 1975 | Death of Arendt  
Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*  
Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un*  
Derrida begins teaching in the English Department at Yale  
Foucault begins teaching at UC-Berkeley  
Foundation of GREPH, the Groupe de Recherches sur l’Enseignement Philosophique | Cixous and Clément, *La Jeune née*  
*Signs* begins publication  
The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales | Death of Francisco Franco  
Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize  
Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War  
First US–USSR joint space mission |
| 1976 | Death of Bultmann and Heidegger  
Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. I. La Volonté de savoir*  
Derrida, *Of Grammatology* appears in English translation  
Barthes is elected to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France | Foundation of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature | Death of Mao Zedong  
Uprising in Soweto |
| 1977 | Death of Ernst Bloch  
Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* appears in English translation  
The Centre Georges Pompidou, designed by architects Renzo Piano (1937–) and Richard Rogers (1933–), opens in Paris | Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel |
| 1978 | Death of Kurt Gödel  
Arendt, *Life of the Mind*  
Edward Said, *Orientalism*  
Birmingham School: Centre for Contemporary Culture releases *Policing the Crisis* | Camp David Accords |
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<th>Year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Death of Lacan Habermas, <em>Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em> Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Debut of MTV First cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in US</td>
<td>Release of American hostages in Iran, François Mitterrand is elected as the first socialist president of France's Fifth Republic, Confirmation of Sandra Day O'Connor, first woman Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
<td>Debut of the Weather Channel</td>
<td>Falklands War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Habermas, <em>Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne</em> First complete translation into French of Heidegger's <em>Sein und Zeit</em></td>
<td>Don Delillo, <em>White Noise</em> Donna Haraway, <em>Cyborg Manifesto</em></td>
<td>Mikhail Gorbachev is named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Death of Beauvoir</td>
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<td>Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR</td>
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<td>PHILosophical Events</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1986</strong> Establishment of the Archives of Husserl de Paris at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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<td>Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines</td>
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</table>
| **1987** Derrida begins his appointment as Visiting Professor of French and Comparative Literature at UC-Irvine | Toni Morrison, *Beloved*  
Discovery of Paul de Man's wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America | In June Gorbachev inaugurates the perestroika (restructuring) that led to the end of the USSR  
The First Intifada begins in the Gaza Strip and West Bank |
Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland |
| **1989** Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*  
Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* | *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska  
Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web | Fall of the Berlin Wall  
Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing |
| **1990** Death of Althusser  
Butler, *Gender Trouble* | The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases  
Beginning of the Human Genome Project, headed by James D. Watson | Nelson Mandela is released from prison  
Reunification of Germany  
Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars  
Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland |
| **1991** Deleuze and Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* | Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*  
The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet | First Gulf War |
| **1992** Death of Guattari  
Guattari, *Chaosmose* | | Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union  
Dissolution of the Soviet Union |
<p>| <strong>1993</strong> Gilroy, <em>Black Atlantic</em> | | Dissolution of Czechoslovakia; Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic |
| <strong>1994</strong> Publication of Foucault’s <em>Dits et écrits</em> | The Channel Tunnel opens, connecting England and France | Genocide in Rwanda |</p>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Grosz, <em>Volatile Bodies</em></td>
<td>Cloning of Dolly the Sheep (died 2003)</td>
<td>End of apartheid in South Africa; Nelson Mandela is sworn in as president</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze and Levinas</td>
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<td>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1992, goes into effect</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze and Levinas</td>
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<td>End of Bosnian War</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>Death of Mitterrand</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>Completion of the Human Genome Project</td>
<td>Beginning of Second Gulf War</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>Beginning of conflict in Darfur</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Death of Derrida</td>
<td>Asian tsunami</td>
<td>Madrid train bombings</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Death of Ricoeur</td>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>Bombings of the London public transport system</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Death of Jean Baudrillard and Rorty</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>Death of Robbe-Grillet</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Death of Lévi-Strauss</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Major works of individual philosophers are collected at the end of the relevant essay in the text.


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The University of Chicago Press
Chicago
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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition’s complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called...
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s *On Bentham and Coleridge* (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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INTRODUCTION

Daniel Conway

This volume charts the most influential trends and developments in European philosophy in the tumultuous period 1840–1900. Particular emphasis is placed on the theoretical responses to, and anticipations of, the revolutionary fervor of the period. The main figures of the period are situated with respect to the following indices: their relationships to the dominant paradigm of Hegelian philosophy; their debts and contributions to the theme of revolution; their participation in the dawning self-awareness of modernity as a unique historical epoch; their contributions to the emerging project of conducting a critique of modernity; and, finally, their contributions to the current elaboration of the dominant themes and discourses of continental philosophy.

This historical period is essential, we believe, to the development and articulation of those projects – including deconstruction, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, poststructuralism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, negative theology, postcolonial studies, postdemocratic political theory, and transhuman philosophy – that are now widely regarded as integral to the identity and self-understanding of continental philosophy. The period 1840–1900 merits careful study not only for the insights and innovations it birthed, but also for its incubation of so many of the ideas and questions that are central to the currently dominant expressions of continental philosophy.

It has become customary in recent years to frame the development of European philosophy in the nineteenth century as an extended, serial response to the magisterial achievements and expansive influence of Hegel. While this response admits of significant variation across a number of spheres of human endeavor – including religion, art, politics, law, and economics – a single theme tends to prevail: Hegel is understood to have articulated a definitive position or
stance that is believed to verge on, or aspire to, comprehensive totality. He is understood to have done so, moreover, on the strength of his dauntingly potent historical–phenomenological method – popularly, if inaccurately, known as the dialectic – which many critics regard with elevated suspicion. To capitulate to Hegel, his critics occasionally insist, is to surrender to the totalizing impulse his system supposedly manifests. The consequences of doing so, his critics further insist, include an increasingly normalized and homogeneous existence, which, some might claim, we have a moral duty to resist.

According to proponents of this general line of interpretation, Hegel’s philosophy is not simply the powerful expression of a creative intellect attuned to the dynamic rhythms of historical development. It also represents – and, more ominously, celebrates – the victory of those darker impulses to which the modern epoch was (and remains) uniquely vulnerable. These impulses travel and coalesce under a variety of names, but they are generally agreed to have funded the most disturbing political monstrosities of European modernity. That any such identification is patently unfair to Hegel is worth noting, but it is also beside the point of this introduction. For better or worse, Hegel’s philosophy has come to stand for an unacceptable degree of accommodation on the part of Europeans to form, structure, order, security, homogeneity, authority, or totality.

This general approach to the development of nineteenth-century European philosophy has proved to be both familiar and productive. Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of successful academic courses and seminars devoted to the theme of “Hegel and his critics,” and the nineteenth century is well known to scholars and students for its spirited debates, big ideas, and grand ambitions. The richness and diversity of these curricular innovations, and of the sweeping historical narratives they embroider, faithfully attest to the reach of Hegel’s influence, even if the drama they stage is occasionally contrived. This general approach is endorsed, moreover, by many of those thinkers who are integral to the development of philosophy in the nineteenth century. Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Peirce, to name just a few figures of significance, all understood themselves to be responding, either directly or indirectly, to Hegel. In all of these cases, moreover, Hegel’s standing as the philosopher of the modern period – and, so, as the perceived guardian of assorted orthodoxies – instilled in his critics an unusual level of energy, audacity, and combativeness. German philosophy in particular was dominated by Hegel, although his shadow extended well across the continent as a whole.

1. A representative statement of this concern is expressed by Isaiah Berlin, who includes Hegel among those “rationalist metaphysicians” whose anticipation of “a final harmony in which all riddles are solved, all contradictions reconciled” leads them to favor “monism” over the “pluralism” that Berlin advocates. Isaiah Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 168–72.
A further attraction of this approach is that it fits the stormy tenor of the times. As Hegel himself was fond of pointing out—most notably, perhaps, with respect to his brush with “world-spirit on horseback” (aka Napoleon)—the political and cultural developments of the century appeared to confirm the larger outlines of his philosophical system. Several of these developments bear noting here: the emergence of the modern nation-state; the acceleration of research in science and technology; the unprecedented mobility of Europeans and the subsequent mixing of social classes; the exportation of European culture (and aggression) via imperial expansion; and the flattering reflection of European culture to be glimpsed in the ongoing struggle to civilize the native peoples and landscapes of the Americas.

The career of philosophy in the nineteenth century reflects in many respects the excitement and turbulence of the times. Freed for the most part from the constraints of academic manners and political patronage, the major figures of the period forwarded daring, irreverent hypotheses, very much in the spirit of Hegel’s own philosophy. Grand, sweeping theories were in vogue, and philosophers endeavored to comment instructively on such general themes of vital interest as the nature of the human condition, the meaning of life (and death), the future of humankind, the limits of reason, the aims and bounds of science, and the proper scope of freedom. In many cases, as we will see, the leading philosophers of the period channeled and lent voice to the utopian muse that has inspired so much of Western philosophy. Indeed, despite the emergence in the nineteenth century of several enduring schools of suspicion, the leading figures of the period had not yet abandoned the perennial philosophical quest for the ideal society to which human beings might aspire. In short, that is, the dream of pan-European Enlightenment was not yet extinguished.

The leading philosophers of the period furthermore regarded themselves as both qualified and entitled to weigh in on the scientific debates of the day. Indeed, there was not yet a general sense among European philosophers that science was somehow beyond their ken. In some cases, in fact, the leading philosophers of the period considered themselves to be toiling at the very forefront of scientific research. This was especially true with respect to the nascent “human” sciences, including sociology, history, political economy, and psychology. Thinkers as diverse as Marx, Nietzsche, Comte, Dilthey, and Peirce understood themselves to be contributing productively (if diversely) to the determination of the method that would place the emerging “human” sciences on a firm foundation. Here it bears noting, in fact, that the very concept of science (Wissenschaft) was contested, and successively refined, throughout the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century, scholars were inclined to apply the term science quite generally, and to virtually any identifiable body of received knowledge. By the end of the century, however, the scope of science had
been narrowed considerably, and the distinction between the “natural” sciences and the “human” sciences had become widely accepted.

To be sure, this general approach to the development of nineteenth-century European philosophy also has its limitations. As we have seen, for example, this approach can have the effect of distorting Hegel’s philosophical aspirations and accomplishments. As these distortions verge on caricature, moreover, Hegel comes to represent a veritable army of straw men. This state of affairs admits of considerable irony. The name of the philosophical champion of spirit (Geist) has become a shorthand designation for any comprehensive interpretation, apparatus, or regime that either threatens or promises to crush the human spirit. Similarly, the philosopher who dared to track the maturation of human freedom, who located the demonstrable superiority of Western civilization in its elaboration of (and support for) political institutions that reflect the creativity and will of the citizens they serve, has become synonymous with any comprehensive campaign to circumscribe individual expressions of freedom. Accordingly, the political philosopher who sought to defend the ethical relevance of the family and the indispensable contributions of the “corporations” is now seen as the apologist par excellence for the hyper-organized, ultra-efficient, pan-surveillant, über-policing modern nation-state. Finally, the former Tübingen seminarian who demonstrated how and why God might have entered time is now regarded as the arch-nemesis of appeals to faith, miracles, petitionary prayer, divine intervention, and all other irrational elements of religious practice and experience.

Another limitation of this approach is that it can tend toward unhelpfully reductive strategies of interpretation. A sprawling philosophical enterprise is all too easily compressed into a single big idea, and a voluminous corpus of writings is all too easily condensed into a few pithy slogans. In some cases, this reductive approach is applied to the century as a whole, especially if Hegel is taken to represent the prevailing (Apollonian) impulse toward integration and systematization while his critics are variously taken to represent the (Dionysian) impulse toward disintegration and dissolution. In fact, as we will see, this impossibly neat depiction of nineteenth-century European philosophy fails to capture the divided allegiances, shifting boundaries, complex genealogies, and cross-currents of influence that produced the rich, unruly diversity of thought that characterizes the period 1840–1900.

For all the clarity afforded us by its most enduring caricatures, the career of nineteenth-century philosophy was marked by ambiguity, uncertainty, and, occasionally, outright confusion. With respect to so many important points of

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2. Several of these straw men are exposed by Jon Stewart in Idealism and Existentialism: Hegel and Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century European Philosophy (London: Continuum, 2010).
contention, the leading philosophers of the period simply did not know what to think. Part of the problem was that they struggled to digest an overwhelming influx of knowledge about their world. The period was rife with scientific advances, anthropological and ethnological discoveries, empire-driven contact with alien peoples and civilizations, and technological innovations – all of which influenced the development of European philosophy. Even the “big ideas” that are so often attributed to the central figures of the period remained a source of significant mystery to their authors. Feuerbach and Marx, so clear in their opposition to Hegel, are anything but clear about the sensuous character of existence to which philosophers, ideally, should attend. Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard, so perspicacious in reckoning the failings of contemporary Christendom, were notoriously elusive on the question of how to constitute – much less to sustain – a life of genuinely Christian faith and practice. Nietzsche, so insightful in his spot-on critique of the bloated idols of late modernity, is uncharacteristically inelquent with respect to the nebulous “future” of philosophy. In this light, perhaps, the true, collective genius of nineteenth-century European philosophy may be seen to be largely diagnostic – as opposed to prognostic or prescriptive – in nature.

In recognition of these limitations, we have employed a modified, hybrid approach to the development of European philosophy in the period 1840–1900. Following the familiar strategy outlined above, we have tracked the lively commerce in big ideas for which the nineteenth century is well known. At the same time, however, we have attempted to detail the complex background against which this commerce transpired. Toward this end, we have devoted entire chapters to the major figures of the period, including Feuerbach, Marx, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Peirce, while also placing these figures in the broader context of the philosophical movements branded in their names. In addition, we have devoted entire chapters to several thematic developments of central importance – for example, in hermeneutics, spiritualism, sociology, science, mathematics, and art. In all of these chapters, finally, we have taken care to situate the highlighted theories, insights, innovations, and debates in their historical, social, political, and cultural contexts.

As our unifying theme, we have focused on the revolutionary fervor that alternately informed, structured, interrupted, fragmented, and guided the development of European philosophy in the period 1840–1900. This theme is apposite, we believe, for a number of reasons. First of all, the period under consideration was shaped by revolutions of various kinds, from the political struggles of 1848, through the intensifications of the industrial and scientific revolutions, to the geopolitical revolution that was marked by the rise of a unified Germany at the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War. This theme thus accommodates the general sense of urgency that infused the philosophical debates of the period.
Rightly or wrongly, the philosophers working in this period believed that something important and worthwhile was at stake in their deliberations. This belief was revolutionary, moreover, inasmuch as they deemed something essential to European modernity to be either missing, dormant, damaged, or awry. The apparent victory of the Hegelian system signaled the need for philosophy to acquire a new focus and direction, lest the great promise of European modernity come to naught. Indeed, several of the thinkers surveyed in this volume understood themselves to be issuing devastating, if not fatal, challenges to the status quo in politics, religion, science, art, and virtually every other sphere of human endeavor.

Second, the theme of revolution captures the contrarian spirit of the period. Many of the philosophers examined in this volume are joined by a common commitment to the suspension of traditional pieties and to the interrogation of received orthodoxies. For these thinkers, nothing was so hoary or venerable as to escape scrutiny and criticism. The penetrating power of reason, channeled by the emerging scientific method, was employed to unmask all manner of sham and humbug. In fact, many of the philosophers treated in this volume shared the conviction that European modernity was other than it appeared. It was up to them, they further believed, to acquaint their fellow Europeans with the reality that lay hidden beneath the beguiling appearances. In short, it is no accident that this period nurtured the overlapping careers of the three great masters of suspicion – Marx, Nietzsche, Freud – and of several others who merit a similar designation.

Finally, the theme of revolution is recommended by the contributions of the philosophers surveyed in this volume, many of whom were actively engaged in what they or others described as revolutionary innovations, movements, or causes. In some cases, of course, the call to revolutionary activity was explicit, literal, and unmistakable. In other cases, the revolutionary response in question was either nascent or imperceptibly under way. In still other cases, a revolution in thinking and practice had already taken hold, obliging the philosopher(s) involved to interpret this revolution on the fly. As we shall see, the revolution in question was presented by some as real, practical, and of determinate consequence, while from others the revolutionary impulse received a more figurative or allusive formulation.

In general, however, the philosophers treated in this volume presented themselves as responding to the exigencies of a perceived condition of crisis. In some cases, the crisis was perceived as current, while in other cases it was understood

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3. This common orientation to a crisis is helpfully elucidated by Richard Kearney in his “Introduction,” in Modern Movements in European Philosophy, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
to be gathering or imminent. Although the nature of the crisis was diversely characterized – for example, as either material or spiritual, secular or religious, practical or theoretical, quotidian or eschatological – in most cases philosophy was expected to play a unique, leading role in addressing the crisis in question. (In some cases, to be sure, philosophy was chastised, called to order, and/or challenged to evolve in response to the perceived crisis.) For the most part, in fact, the task of philosophy was seen to lie in providing an interpretation of the crisis in question and, subsequently, in preparing European modernity to address this crisis, whether by adapting to it, deflecting its advance, avoiding it altogether, or accelerating its constituent contradictions.4

Chapter 1 charts the development and divergence of “Right” and “Left” articulations of Hegelianism, with a particular emphasis on the contributions of Ludwig Feuerbach.5 In this chapter, William Clare Roberts explains how Feuerbach attempted to situate himself within the roiling debates of his day, focusing in the process on Feuerbach’s elaboration of a nuanced interpretation-cum-reception of Hegel’s account of the maturation of Geist in world history. Known primarily for his influence on the young Marx, Feuerbach played a major role in the elaboration and defense of humanism as the hidden truth of Christianity (and, so, of Hegel’s account of the movement of history). Rather than treat individual human beings as finite shapes of divine Spirit, Feuerbach identified the God of Christianity as an externalized objectification (or psychological projection) of as-yet-unclaimed perfections of distinctly human provenance. As Roberts ably demonstrates, the interpretation of Christianity for which Feuerbach himself is best known to twenty-first-century audiences was made possible by what Feuerbach regarded as his more important contribution: a new approach to, and direction for, philosophy itself. As envisioned by Feuerbach, the task of philosophy is to lead human beings – potentially for the first time – to engage the world in the sensuous totality of its existence. In doing so, human beings stand to glimpse – albeit ever so obliquely – the concrete truth of their communal existence (i.e. their species-being).

Chapter 2 continues this developmental narrative, documenting the contributions of Karl Marx and the subsequent rise of Marxism. Focusing on Marx’s aversion to the antipolitical, ideological abstractions of philosophy, Terrell Carver portrays Marx as a social critic and political activist – more closely allied with journalism than German philosophy – determined to publicize and promote class-based antagonisms throughout Europe. Carver traces the birth of

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4. As can be seen in many of the essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3, this theme of crisis continues in the work of many of the important philosophers in the early decades of the twentieth century.

5. These developments are treated in a different context in the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
philosophical Marxism to the founding efforts of Friedrich Engels, Marx’s friend and collaborator, noting that the subsequent development and exportation of Marxism was contrary to Marx’s own antiphilosophical wishes. The inequities of capitalism were best addressed, Marx believed, not through the elaboration of philosophical theories (e.g. of alienation), but through the effective organization of disaffected workers. As presented by Carver, Marx appears not only as the great critic of speculative, ideological philosophy, but also as the (reluctant) inspiration for a new, eminently practical articulation of philosophy in Europe and beyond.

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to another outspoken critic of European modernity, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Expertly guided by Alastair Hannay, the reader is introduced in this chapter to a thinker bent on fomenting what might be called a revolution of the spirit. Convinced that contemporary Christendom had strayed dangerously far from the founding insights of Christianity, Kierkegaard embarked on an ambitious campaign to persuade his fellow Danes – via direct and indirect forms of discourse – to aspire for the first time to a life of genuinely Christian faith and practice. In order to do so, he realized, he would need not only to encourage his readers to cultivate habits of introspection and inwardness, but also to loosen the grip on them of the social and cultural institutions that were emblematic of European civilization in the modern epoch. Toward this latter end, Kierkegaard launched a blistering, unrelenting attack on the Danish state church, which, he alleged, had become a pawn of larger forces responsible for the growing secularization of northern Europe in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard is perhaps most famous for a series of pseudonymous writings in which he brought the full complement of his literary, philosophical, and psychological gifts to bear on a cluster of problems centered on the difficulties involved in leading a life of Christian devotion in late modern Europe.

Chapter 4 documents the contributions of another influential critic of the established practice of Christianity in the modern epoch. The great Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky – who is not typically included in surveys of nineteenth-century European philosophy – was motivated by a set of concerns not unlike those that prompted Kierkegaard to take up his own pioneering investigations into psychology, religion, and politics. Indeed, Dostoevsky’s contributions to the development of European philosophy were significant, if largely indirect. As presented in this chapter by Evgenia Cherkasova, Dostoevsky appears as a gifted novelist, to be sure, but also as a keen observer of the social conventions and cultural mores that uniquely characterize the modern epoch. He proved to be an astute critic of modern political movements and institutions, a fearless explorer of the unconscious springs and irrational currents of “civilized” human behavior, a sympathetic expert on the psychology of religion, and
a dedicated chronicler of the paradoxes engendered by the desire for freedom. As Cherkasova persuasively maintains, Dostoevsky deserves to be considered, alongside Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, as one of the “masters of suspicion” who taught scholars and intellectuals of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to detect the hidden motives, libidinal investments, unacknowledged expectations, and unconscious conflicts that inform and enliven all spheres of human endeavor.

Chapter 5 is devoted to a philosopher who was deeply (and gratefully) influenced by Dostoevsky: Friedrich Nietzsche. At one time a professor of classical philology (at Basel), Nietzsche resigned his university appointment and fled the stifling confines of European academe. Adjusting to the itinerant life of the independent scholar, Nietzsche went on to write a number of important books that eventually became influential for the development of philosophy on the European continent and beyond. Nietzsche is presented here as a persistent critic of the supposed triumphs and accomplishments of European modernity. Where other observers of the European scene claimed to discern evidence of progress, development, maturation, and growth, Nietzsche claimed to detect symptoms of regress, decay, dissolution, and disintegration. Late modernity, he insisted, was a fundamentally decadent epoch, incapable of projecting its highest values and ideals into a meaningful and sustainable future.

The focus of this chapter falls on Nietzsche’s famous teaching of the death of God, by means of which he endeavored to report a crisis of confidence in the basic system of beliefs that supported Christian morality. Owing to the death of God, he maintained, European culture would soon find itself slipping into chaos and confusion, as its highest values – for example, God, Truth, Beauty, and so on – continued to suffer a precipitous devaluation. The goal he identified for philosophy in the twilight of the idols was to determine, soberly and scientifically, what the death of God was likely to mean for the future of humankind. Indeed, although he understood the death of God to augur a protracted period of disruption, uncertainty, dislocation, and calamity, Nietzsche cautioned against the presumptive conclusion that humankind simply cannot negotiate the vagaries of a godless cosmos. Those human beings who survive the death of God, he believed, will be advantageously positioned to renew the promise of European civilization.

Chapter 6 charts the development of hermeneutics, which comprises the science or method or art of interpretation. The author of this chapter, Eric Sean Nelson, places particular emphasis on the signal contributions to the development of nineteenth-century hermeneutics by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey. Already well known to scholars of biblical and classical texts, hermeneutics became influential in this period for its actual and proposed applications to research in philosophy, theology, and the emerging “human” (or
social) sciences. As philosophers and social scientists grappled with the problem of how to ground or orient their incipient programs of empirical research, they increasingly turned their attention to the method and practice of hermeneutics. In this respect, a perceived strength of the hermeneutic method lay in its attunement to those subjective, affective inflections of human language and behavior – as well as their historical and cultural contexts – that distinguish human beings from the nonhuman objects studied by natural scientists.

Deeply indebted to the culture and literary tradition of German Romanticism, Schleiermacher sought to develop an “art” of understanding that would prevail in the face of chronic, inertial misunderstanding. For him, the promise of hermeneutics lay in its capacity to accommodate one’s prereflective intuition of the “singular” and the “infinite,” which he later came to associate with the subjective recognition of one’s utter dependence on God. It was imperative to express and communicate these affective and intuitive dimensions, Schleiermacher believed, for these alone could provide human beings with the orientation they would need to deflect an otherwise corrosive rationalism and skepticism. Although similarly concerned to elucidate the process or method through which interpretation leads to understanding, Dilthey endeavored to employ hermeneutics to shore up and expand the as-yet-shaky foundations of the nascent “human” sciences. For him, the value of hermeneutics lay in its capacity for further understanding through a careful interpretation of human experience and behavior in relation to their contexts and structures. Notwithstanding their differences in temperament and approach, both thinkers articulated the famous “hermeneutic circle,” which describes the movement of understanding, from general to particular and back again, as it approaches and approximates the truth of the text or lived-experience under consideration. As Nelson instructively observes, the development and influence of hermeneutics continue to inform debates central to the articulation of European philosophy.

Chapter 7 documents the contributions of the “French spiritualists,” a group of philosophers who shared a common suspicion of materialism and a common inclination toward idealism, especially with respect to the emerging “human” sciences. The author of this chapter, F. C. T. Moore, helpfully situates the school of French spiritualism against the backdrop of nineteenth-century science. Reacting to what they regarded as misplaced enthusiasm for a mechanistic paradigm in the emerging “human” sciences, the French spiritualists resisted the impulse to establish the science of psychology, for example, on the basis of either materialism or determinism. An important influence on the development of French spiritualism was Marie François Pierre Gonthier de Biran (Maine de Biran), who, in stark contrast to the Cartesian valorization of reason, emphasized the role of the will in the conscious activity of human agents. Bucking the increasingly influential trend toward reductive theories and
explanations of human behavior, Maine de Biran insisted on the scientific relevance of the “life of the spirit.”

Of the French spiritualists themselves, Félix Ravaisson and Jules Lachelier deserve mention for their criticisms of materialism and their insistence that the “human” sciences must account for feeling, will, enthusiasm, freedom, and other subjective indices of human behavior. Charles Renouvier, who is occasionally associated with the school of French spiritualism, in fact represents a return to a Kantian framework for understanding the relationship between philosophy and science.

Moore closes this chapter by documenting the contributions of the eminent philosopher Henri Bergson, who not only served as a bridge figure to twentieth-century philosophy, but also famously developed what might be called a “spiritualist” response to the increasingly influential theory of evolution. Despite being far more favorably disposed toward science than his brethren among the French spiritualists, Bergson nevertheless shared their suspicions of simplistic and reductive appeals to material principles of explanation. Rejecting both materialism and vitalism in its crudest forms, Bergson aspired to design and conduct biological and psychological investigations that would accommodate both spirit and matter. As Moore suggests, we may thus conclude that Bergson's proposal of “creative” evolution expresses something of the spirit of French spiritualism.

Chapter 8 documents the birth and development of sociology in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The author of this chapter, Alan Sica, explains that sociology emerged in this period as a response to the pressing need to develop a scientific method that would allow scholars to collect and interpret the unruly data of the so-called “human” sciences. Sica deftly charts the genealogy of sociological research, from its origins in the investigations of Herbert Spencer and Henri de Saint-Simon, through the innovations of Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber, to its consolidation in the early twentieth century as a scientific (and academic) discipline in its own right. Whereas Spencer is perhaps best known for the teleological inflections of his contributions to “social Darwinism,” and Saint-Simon for his utopian faith in the progress and prosperity to be enjoyed by a society guided by science, it was Comte who recoiled most decisively from the crypto-theological failings of speculative philosophy. His influential “Law of the Three Phases” was designed to show, pace Hegel (and others), that the full maturity of humankind lay in its graduation from a reliance on metaphysics to an appeal to positive facts and empirically confirmed data. Comte's famous positivism was meant not only to place the nascent “human” sciences on a firm empirical foundation, but also to elevate the sociologists themselves to positions of quasi-religious leadership within society.

Durkheim in turn aimed to identify, and build on, those basic insights of Saint-Simon that he (and others) felt Comte had not properly acknowledged. In
doing so, Durkheim hoped to recover for the “human” sciences some measure of the philosophical sophistication that, according to him, Comte had sacrificed. This trend was continued by Weber, who reserved for philosophy an indispensable role in determining the criteria for evidence and truth in the “human” sciences. As Sica demonstrates throughout this chapter, the leading social theorists of the period borrowed liberally from their philosophical brethren. Thus it should come as no surprise that the development of sociology in this period so closely parallels related developments in the history of European philosophy.

The theme of Chapter 9 is the development of science and mathematics in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In this chapter, Dale Jacquette tracks several of the most important innovations in scientific method and its mathematical foundations. Central to this account are his treatments of the proliferation of scientific research projects and of the dramatic—and occasionally contentious—expansion of the domain perceived as appropriate to, and ripe for, scientific investigation. In addition to providing a broad overview of the period, Jacquette helpfully draws our attention to several significant developments in scientific method and practice, including John Stuart Mill’s contributions to the empiricist method of inductive reasoning, Bernard Bolzano’s contributions to a neorationalist philosophy of science and mathematics, Comte’s development of his positivism, and Gottlob Frege’s contributions to scientific semantics and philosophy of mathematics.

As previously noted in Chapters 6 and 8, this period also witnessed the emergence of the distinctly “human” (or social) sciences, wherein scientific methods were applied, with varying results, to the data encoded in human behavior. As Jacquette demonstrates, the consolidation of research methods and protocols was accompanied by a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the established “laws” of nature. From this contentious, tumultuous situation would arise the influential twentieth-century challenges to classical Newtonian science.

Chapter 10 is devoted to the emergence and development of pragmatism in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with special emphasis on the seminal contributions of Charles Sanders Peirce. As presented here by Douglas R. Anderson, Peirce is best understood as both an appreciative reader and a respectful opponent of Hegel. While indebted to Hegel’s focus on dynamic processes of historical development, Peirce resisted Hegel’s decision to discount the enduring significance of the universal categories of “Firstness” (or qualitative immediacy) and “Secondness” (or otherness). According to Peirce, that is, Hegel’s preoccupation with the logical sublation of opposing theses, which Peirce understood in terms of his own category of “Thirdness” (or mediation), prompted him to ignore, or deny, the perdurance of the categories of Firstness and Secondness.

Pragmatism thus emerged, and subsequently developed, not as a rejection of Hegel’s method, but as a unique reception of this method. It was left to the
pragmatists, Peirce believed, to fulfill the promise of German idealism and to steer Hegel's method into closer conformity to the emerging paradigm of evolutionary science. As subsequently modified by William James and John Dewey, pragmatism began to take on the form in which it is still familiar today. Indeed, the contemporary influence of pragmatism on the development of European philosophy thus completes the feedback loop that began with Peirce's engagement with Hegel.

In Chapter 11, Gary Shapiro closes our volume with a detailed survey of aesthetics and art history in the period 1840–1900. Reflecting the revolutionary fervor of the period, practitioners (e.g. Richard Wagner) and theorists (e.g. Karl Marx) of art proposed revolutionary advances of their own, with respect both to the goals and methods of artistic production and to the proper cultural role of aesthetic theory. As in previous chapters, the focus is placed here on the rejection of established norms and conventions and the subsequent introduction of innovative practices and approaches. Establishing the uniquely modern provenance of the study of aesthetics, Shapiro documents the contributions and concerns of the post-Hegelian generation of European philosophers, including Karl Rosenkranz, F. T. Vischer, Søren Kierkegaard, Robert Zimmermann, and others. Deftly guided by Shapiro, the reader is introduced to the rapidly shifting scene wherein European artists perfected their craft while theorists and critics replaced shopworn pieties with bold, new, experimental measures of evaluation. From Nietzsche's investigation of the “physiology of aesthetics” to the management of nature by landscape gardeners, the latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed a veritable proliferation of new artistic forms and genres.

As these chapters and their authors variously confirm, the period 1840–1900 saw the fruition of those insights, questions, and challenges that are now deemed central to the core ventures of contemporary continental philosophy. By way of conclusion, it may be worthwhile to review several general lines of influence and inheritance from the nineteenth century. First, we may trace the broadly interrogative approach and generally critical stance of continental philosophy to the unmasking and debunking projects that were launched in the nineteenth century. The groundbreaking criticisms developed by Feuerbach and Marx, for example, were instrumental to the articulation of a critique of modernity and of the seemingly “natural” institutions that sustain its supposed “progress.” From the pioneering investigations conducted by Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche emerged the fully developed schools of psychoanalysis that we now associate with Freud, Jung, Reich, and Lacan. From the seminal contributions of Schleiermacher and Dilthey grew the philosophical hermeneutics practiced by Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, and their contemporary followers. The current surge of interest in negative theology, the death of God, post-Holocaust ethics, and the new atheism would be unthinkable apart from the contributions
of the great nineteenth-century critics of institutionalized religion, including Feuerbach, Marx, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Comte.

Second, continental philosophy owes its abiding attunement to alterity, in all of its innumerable and incommensurate incarnations, to the expansive investigations conducted by the leading thinkers of the nineteenth century. The period 1840–1900 was marked by an explosion of contact with, and interest in, the various others of European modernity. As scientists gathered new data, explorers encountered new cultures, and previously segregated nations, peoples, and classes began to intermingle, European philosophers were generally keen to acknowledge – although not always to include – the others to whom they were introduced. The ongoing debates about what would and would not “count” as true science, or real philosophy, we might speculate, accustomed philosophers on the continent to contested disciplinary borders and permeable (if not porous) disciplinary boundaries. European philosophers, we might further speculate, grew to expect their efforts at categorization and classification to require regular updates and revisions, especially when presented with those others whose unique existence defied the standard systems of classification.6

Third, continental philosophy owes its generally inclusive orientation – which we may characterize as multidisciplinary, historically contextualized, politically engaged, scientifically informed, and hermeneutically sophisticated – to the leading thinkers and trends of the nineteenth century. As we have seen, the major figures of the period were not reluctant to enter scientific debates and controversies, and they contributed throughout the century to the continued refinement of scientific methods and practices. In this respect, contemporary continental philosophy may trace its lineage to the efforts of Marx, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Comte, Weber, and Peirce, to name just a few. To be sure, this orientation is also indebted to the resistance mounted by nineteenth-century philosophers to prematurely reductive applications of scientific principles of explanation. The debates surrounding the founding of the “human” sciences were very much concerned to preserve something that is irreducibly human – whether it be freedom, will, or spirit – in the face of increasingly popular mechanistic and deterministic worldviews. In this respect, contemporary continental philosophy is deeply indebted to the labors of the “Left” Hegelians, the French spiritualists, the early sociologists, and the early pragmatists.

Finally, we might conclude, continental philosophy owes its relentlessly inquisitive and self-reflective temperament to the pioneering thought experiments conducted by the leading philosophers of the nineteenth century. In general, the lines of questioning initiated by the nineteenth-century “masters of

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*6. The crossing of disciplinary borders is a guiding theme of the essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
suspicion” – Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, although other figures (e.g. Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky) are equally worthy of this designation – were instrumental to the development of the critical strategies and techniques that are associated with the most visible and influential contemporary expressions of continental philosophy, including deconstruction, postmodernism, and poststructuralism.  

7. I wish to thank Alan Schrift for his general guidance of the History of Continental Philosophy series and also for his efforts in support of this particular volume. Without his patience, good will, and editorial acumen, this volume would not have been completed. I also would like to thank Dana Lawrence for her editorial assistance in the final stages of the project. Finally, I would like to dedicate this volume to the memory of my mother, Mary Joan Kavanagh Conway, who died as this project was nearing its completion.
To those left cold by the bombast, internecine polemics, and melodrama of post-Hegelian German philosophy, it might seem either that Hegel’s students failed to attain the height of their master, and so fell into obscure partisan squabbles, or else that the entire project of German idealism contained the germs of this debacle from the beginning, and that it serves as a reductio ad absurdum of the whole tradition. Both of these views were common among the post–Hegelians themselves. The first reaction is characteristic of those who came to be known as Right Hegelians. These set themselves the task of conserving the truth of Hegel’s philosophy, and defending it against misapplications, misappropriations, and misinterpretations. The second reaction is the developed response of the more radical among the Left Hegelians, Feuerbach and Marx especially. Thus an air of dissatisfaction and restlessness permeates the entire post–Hegelian scene. To the extent that this dissatisfaction continues to characterize philosophical and political discourses, we remain within that scene.

This essay will investigate this scene of restlessness with special attention on the role of Ludwig Feuerbach. Feuerbach is generally treated as the joint between Hegel and Marx, and this essay will to some extent reinforce that tendency by beginning with Hegel and ending with Marx. Nonetheless, Feuerbach is certainly much more than a mere transitional figure, in that he articulates a response to

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1. Ludwig Feuerbach (July 28, 1804–September 13, 1872; born in Landshut, Bavaria; died in Nuremberg, Germany) was educated at the University of Heidelberg (1823–24), University of Berlin (1824–26), and University of Erlangen (1826–28). His influences included Bacon, Hegel, Kant, Leibniz, and Spinoza, and he held no university appointments.

the post-Hegelian ferment that endures as a recurrent, live option. Marx is certainly not the necessary consequence of Feuerbach’s premises; one can start down the path with Feuerbach and travel as far as one wishes without arriving at Marxism. One of the objects of this essay is to identify the point of rupture that separates Feuerbach’s position from that of Marx. Whether Feuerbach’s position is satisfactory, as opposed to unique and viable, is a separate question, and one that this essay will not seek to answer. Instead, it will identify the problem to which Feuerbach responds, trace in some detail the critique of theology and philosophy by which he responds to that problem, and highlight the distinctive features of his response, by which Feuerbach can be differentiated from Right Hegelians, other Left Hegelians, and Marx.

I. PERSONALITY, SPIRIT, AND THE PROBLEM OF INCARNATION

In order to appreciate Feuerbach’s problem, it is helpful to be cognizant of certain aspects of the historical and cultural context of his writings, aspects that are not explicitly acknowledged within those writings, but that function nonetheless as the backdrop against which Feuerbach wrote. Feuerbach was seduced into philosophy by Hegel himself, and left behind his studies in theology to devote himself to Wissenschaft (philosophical science). He was never to secure the academic post he desired, however, for he was blacklisted after failing sufficiently to guard his authorship of the anonymous Thoughts on Death and Immortality, which argued against the immortality of the personal soul. The ensuing death of his academic career was not due merely to his book’s offensiveness to religious orthodoxy. The personality of the soul – its individual and irreducible selfhood – was one leg of the three-legged stool of German order, together with the personality of God and the personality of the king. Warren Breckman has demonstrated that this discourse of personality colored all of the controversy surrounding Hegel and the Young Hegelians. This is because German personalism sustained an elaborate homology between the uniqueness of a personal God, the indivisible and quasifamilial sovereignty of the king, and the singularity of each subject. As Breckman reminds us, “the works of the Young Hegelians unified theological, political, and social themes in large measure because they were written within a context in which this unity was


*4. This philosophical context is the subject of many essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1; see, in particular, the essays by Terry Pinkard and Lawrence S. Stepelevich.
taken for granted.” 5 Therefore it is necessary to examine in more detail both the personalism of German politics and theology and the aspects of Hegelian and post-Hegelian thought that elicited such a powerful defensive reaction. It is crucial to understand, in other words, how German idealism came to be seen as a threat to the German order. 6

During and after the Pantheismusstreit (pantheism controversy) – the debate between F. H. Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn about whether Enlightenment rationalism necessarily entails pantheism and fatalism – the line of demarcation between enlightenment and reaction was Spinoza’s definition of God as substance, or the totality of nature. It was Jacobi’s exchange with Mendelssohn that cemented the identification of Spinozism with what Jacobi called “nihilism,” and counterpoised to it the intuitive and emotional certainty in “a transcendent personal intelligence” (MYH 26). 7 Already in Jacobi, the transcendent personality of God is also keyed to the transcendent personality of the human individual. After Napoleon’s defeat, Restoration political thinkers such as Carl Ludwig von Haller decisively asserted the personality of the sovereign to be the third leg of the stool, and Pietist reactionaries and the later Schelling unified all three into the Christian personalism that functioned as the de facto state ideology of Prussia right up to 1848. 8

Without delving too deeply into Hegel, it is a fairly straightforward matter to show that his philosophy of spirit is deeply – although not simply – opposed to each branch of orthodox personalism. In his early essay “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate,” he had argued for the incompatibility of Christianity and personalism. According to Hegel, Christ himself was explicitly “against personality, against the view that his essence possessed an individuality opposed to those who had attained the culmination of friendship with him.” 9 This view did not change, and is reiterated in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Although his endorsement of monarchy in The Philosophy of Right dramatically separates him from the Left Hegelians, Hegel’s monarch was not the personal monarch the conservatives wanted, but a mere functionary of the state, a “decider” whose decisions carried not personal authority but only the impersonal authority of

5. Warren Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15. Hereafter cited as MYH followed by the page number.
6. Throughout this section I rely heavily on Breckman’s scholarship.
7. For a discussion of Jacobi in relation to his criticism of Kant, see the essay by Richard Fincham in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
8. See the useful account in MYH 63–89.
the constitution and its laws. On theological and political grounds, then, the conservatives had good reason to count Hegel as an opponent.

It is in relation to the third aspect of personalism, however – the transcendent personality of the individual – that the complexity and depth of Hegel’s opposition to personalism comes to the fore. The personality defended by the conservatives was a willful personality, self-contained and sovereign within its own domain. This personality has a place in Hegel’s thought, to be sure. Yet it is not the truth of personality, but only an abstract, legalistic moment to be overcome. Just as God the Father is not the truth of God, so, too, the self-contained, sovereign person is not the true person; only Geist (spirit) is fully and actually a self-conscious subject. When Hegel introduces spirit in the *Phenomenology*, he writes:

> A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much “I” as “object.” With this we already have before us the Notion of Spirit. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is – this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: “I” that is “We” and “We” that is “I.”

As opposed to the abstract, legal person, spirit is the concrete person, the person constituted as a subject by a consciousness of its intersubjective reality. This person is not sovereign or willful, for it comes to know itself only through the ethical and rational life it shares with others. Spirit does not transcend and rule over its own private domain, but is always outside itself. In Jean-Luc Nancy’s apt phrase, spirit “trembles in desire.” Or, as Judith Butler puts it, “if we are to follow *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, I am invariably transformed by the encounters I undergo; recognition becomes the process by which I become other than what I was and so cease to be able to return to what I was.”

Hegel’s identification of spirit as the truth of personality could not have pleased any of the parties in the theological–political disputes roiling Germany,

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10. As Breckman puts it, “At the core of both the theological and political discourses of personality was an intense concern with the nature and conditions of indivisible unitary will – in short, with the nature of sovereignty” (MYH 63).


for all camps relied, at one point or another, on abstract personality. The political reactionaries stressed the sovereign personality of the king, and the religious reactionaries stressed the same in God. But political liberals were equally invested in the personality of the individual political subject. Attachment to and rejection of the spiritualization of God, of the state, and of the subject, therefore, became the shibboleths of Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism, respectively. Left and Right Hegelians were as one in their adherence to spirit. What divided them was the question of how to interpret spirit, a question that came unmistakably on the scene with the 1835 publication of David Friedrich Strauss’s *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined.*

In the denouement of his argument, Strauss presents the standard Hegelian Christology – every element of the “evangelical history” is “deduced” dialectically from “the concept of God and man in their reciprocal relation” only to diagnose it with a fatal contradiction:

If reality is ascribed to the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures, is this equivalent to the admission that this unity must actually have been once manifested, as it never has been, and never more will be, in one individual? This is indeed not the mode in which Idea realizes itself; it is not wont to lavish all its fullness on one exemplar, and be niggardly towards all others: it rather loves to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other – in the alternate positing and sublating of individuals.

(LJ 48)

With this text, the division between Left and Right Hegelians sprang into existence fully formed, like Athena from the head of Zeus. Whereas Right Hegelians (such as Philip Conrad Marheineke and Karl Rosenkranz) emphasized the differentiation within spirit, and valorized certain historical instantiations of spirit as the actual manifestations of the idea, Left Hegelians followed Strauss in denying equally to all particular historical shapes of spirit the privilege of

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14. David Friedrich Strauss (January 27, 1808–February 8, 1874; born and died in Ludwigsburg, Württemberg [Germany]) was educated at the University of Tübingen (1825–30) and University of Berlin (1831–32). His influences included Hegel, Kant, Schleiermacher, and Spinoza, and he held appointments at the University of Tübingen (1832–33) and University of Zurich (1839). His major works included *Das Leben Jesu, Kritisch bearbeitet* (*The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*; 1835).

15. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, in *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, Lawrence S. Steplevich (ed.) (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 46. I have silently expurgated Massey’s editorial insertions, such as brackets and interpolated German words. Hereafter cited as LJ followed by the page number.
actualizing the idea. It is the play of history as an infinite totality that alone incarnates the “infinite spirit” of God, and no incident or moment of that play can, to the exclusion of other moments, condense and hold the infinite within itself.

That this Left Hegelian interpretation amounts to an absolute humanism was made obvious by Strauss from the beginning:

Humanity is the union of the two natures – the incarnate God, the infinite Spirit alienated in the finite and the finite Spirit recollecting its infinitude; … it is the worker of miracles, insofar as in the course of human history the spirit more and more completely subjugates nature, both within and around man, until it lies before him as the inert matter on which he exercises his active power. Humanity is the sinless one because the course of its development is blameless. … It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven, for from the negation of its natural state there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life; from the sublation of its finitude as a personal, national, and terrestrial spirit, arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens.

(LJ 48–9)

There are two dilemmas constitutive of Strauss’s spiritual humanism, dilemmas that will in turn frame Feuerbach’s own construction and development of a spiritual or transcendental anthropology. The first is the dilemma between Strauss’s dispersal of spirit into the infinite play of the species and his obvious commitment to a progressive historical development. If no “particular point in time” can incarnate infinite spirit, how can human history tell the tale of a “more and more” complete spiritualization? It would be easy enough to resolve this first dilemma were it not for a second; on the one hand, Strauss wants to deny any particular incarnation of the infinite within history, but, on the other, he does not want to relapse into a Kantianism that would posit the idea as merely ideal, as approximated but never realized. Infinite spirit cannot be contained within history as a local phenomenon, but nor can it stand outside history as an eternal ought.

In his works on teleological judgment and history, Kant had formulated a concept of the species that clearly foreshadowed the post-Hegelian scene.16 He had claimed that the “natural capacities” of humanity, insofar as they are destined for rational employment, “are to be completely developed only in the species, not in the individual,” and that:

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*16. Kant’s philosophy is discussed in detail in the essay by Thomas Nenon, as well as several of the other essays on reactions to Kant’s philosophy in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
[Nature] requires a perhaps incalculable sequence of generations, each passing its enlightenment on to the next, to bring its seeds in our species to the stage of development that completely fulfills nature’s objective. And the goal of [man’s] efforts must be that point in time, at least among the ideas of men, since the natural capacities must otherwise be regarded as in large part purposeless and vain.17

For all Hegelians, this fails to satisfy, as Hegel’s Preface to The Philosophy of Right attests. The promise and satisfaction of Hegelian philosophy was the “warmer peace” with historical actuality that it brought.18 For Strauss, that peace took the form of history conceived as a progressive totality that, its progress notwithstanding, had always already constituted the identity of God and the human species. God is not incarnated within that history because it is only the totality in its play that makes the divine materially present. The progressive spiritualization of nature is not progress toward an eschatological completion, either within or outside history, but the ever-triumphant expansion of the totality itself.

Strauss’s formulation of spirit was the final nail in the coffin of Hegelianism so far as its conservative critics were concerned, and it made the position of the Right Hegelians a very difficult one, for they had to defend their more conservative Hegel against both the conservative anti-Hegelians and the Hegelian Left. It seemed as if they had no ground on which to stand, their adversaries having already divided the whole terrain – Christianity to the right, Hegelianism to the left – between themselves. There will later be a resurgence of a quasi-conservative position from within the ranks of the Left Hegelians themselves – that of Bruno Bauer19 – but Bauer’s conservatism was a secular, elitist neo-

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19. Bruno Bauer (September 6, 1809–April 13, 1882; born in Eisenberg, Saxe-Altenberg; died in Rixdorf, Germany) was educated at the University of Berlin (1828–34). His influences included Hegel, and he held appointments at the University of Berlin (1834–39) and University of Bonn (1839–42). His major works include: Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker und des Johannes, Dritter und letzter Band (1840–42); (anonymously) Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel, den Atheisten und Antichristen (The Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum; 1841); Das Entdeckte Christentum: Eine Erinnerung an das 18. Jahrhundert und ein Beitrag zur Krisis des 19 (Christianity Exposed: A Recollection of the 18th Century and a Contribution to the Crisis of the 19th; 1843); Die Judenfrage (The Jewish Problem; 1843); Christus und die Cäsaren: Der Ursprung des Christentums aus dem römischen Griechenthum (Christ and the Caesars: The Origin of Christianity from Romanized Greek Culture; 1879).
conservatism. Christian Hegelianism was, after Strauss, treated generally as an oxymoron. Therefore we can turn to Feuerbach, who turned Strauss’s argument into a critical technique by which he sought to revolutionize humanity’s self-conception.

II. FEUERBACH’S ANTHROPOLOGY OF SPIRIT

If Feuerbach is known for one thing, it is for coining “species-being” (Gattungswesen), the term so important for the young Marx. Species-being is the sort of being, human being, that is – and is conscious of what it is – only in and through its relations with the other beings of the same species. Hence it would not be an exaggeration to say that Feuerbach’s concept of the species-being is nothing more than Hegel’s spirit – “I” that is “We” and “We” that is “I” – under a different name. That Feuerbach’s central philosophical concept differs from Hegel’s only verbally is not nothing, however. Indeed, Feuerbach would say this verbal difference amounts to an essential difference, for it brings out the relation between thought and language, a relation over which Feuerbach seeks to break absolutely with Hegel. Feuerbach takes Hegel to identify thought and language, reason and demonstration, and his first open criticism of Hegel attacks precisely this purported identity.

Feuerbach’s essay Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie, appearing in 1839, articulates two basic criticisms of Hegel. First, Feuerbach argues that Hegelian philosophy “is defined and proclaimed as absolute philosophy; i.e., as nothing less than philosophy itself, if not by the master himself, then certainly by his disciples – at least by his orthodox disciples – and certainly quite consistently and in keeping with the teaching of the master” (TCH 97). This claim, Feuerbach replies, is refuted by the same reasoning Strauss used to refute the claim that God was incarnated in Christ. No infinite species realizes itself in a single individual. Such an incarnation would, indeed, amount to “the end of the world,” emptying all future time of any meaning or history (TCH 98). Second, Feuerbach argues that all modern philosophies, including Hegel’s, “presuppose philosophy; that is, what they understand by philosophy to be the immediate truth”

20. Ironically, Bauer had, at twenty-six, been chosen by Marheineke to deliver the Right Hegelian critique of Strauss’s Life of Jesus. The ink was barely dry when Bauer went over to the Left. In a further irony, Strauss very quickly abandoned much of his Hegelianism. The fourth edition of his book – the 1842 edition translated into English by George Eliot – contains very little Hegelian terminology.


22. I will return to the relation between incarnation and history in Feuerbach’s writings below.
The Logic and Phenomenology of Spirit do not begin, according to Feuerbach, by addressing “sensuous consciousness” – the other of philosophy – but by addressing philosophy itself (TCH 114). In other words, Hegel offers no inducement to sensuous consciousness to get on board with his philosophical project in the first place. His philosophy remains solipsistic.

Both of these criticisms depend on Feuerbach’s denial that thought and language are identical. Feuerbach’s argument for this denial takes the form of three appeals to experience. His first appeal is to the communication between teacher and student. A “quick-witted person,” he reminds us, “can be ahead of his demonstrating teacher” (TCH 105). This shows us that “forms of communication, modes of expression, representations, conceptions” are only “forms in which thought manifests itself,” not “active forms of thought, not causal relations of reason” (TCH 104 n.1). The teacher does not “instill his thoughts in me like drops of medicine,” and the philosopher cannot “really produce philosophers” (TCH 105). Rather, the teacher presupposes the self-activity of the pupil’s understanding: “he only embodies and represents what I should reproduce in myself in imitation of him” (TCH 105–6). Thus linguistic, demonstrative thought, including the dialectical presentation of Hegel, “is only the translation into an idiom comprehensible to us of a highly gifted but more or less unknown author who is difficult to understand,” the “genius for thinking” in all of us (TCH 105 n.1).

Second, Feuerbach appeals to the process of writing. To write is to present thought, but “[t]hought is prior to the presentation of thought” (TCH 107). Hegel knew before beginning the Logic, for example, that it would culminate in the absolute idea, and yet the Logic in its presentation does not begin with this knowledge. Feuerbach concludes:

This contradiction between the thinker who is without needs, who can anticipate that which is yet to be presented because everything is already settled for him, and the needy writer who has to go through a chain of succession and who posits and objectifies as formally uncertain what is certain to the thinker – this contradiction is the process of the Absolute Idea which presupposes being and essence, but in such a way that these on their part already presuppose the Idea. … That is why the Idea’s lack of self-knowledge at the beginning is, in the sense of the Idea, only an ironical lack of knowledge.

(TCH 112)

In other words, Hegel is an unwitting ironist, an ironist who cannot admit his own irony in the face of his self-seriousness. He is a self-denying “actor” and “artist” (TCH 105–6). Such is the case with all philosophers who communicate their
thought. Every linguistic presentation, including Hegel’s dialectic, is communication; hence language – and not merely the propositional language of the understanding – is distinct from thought.

Finally, Feuerbach appeals directly to sensuous consciousness, which, he claims, treats language as a mere means, a tool that sensuous consciousness picks up and discards as it is a help or a hindrance. This is why the opening of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* – which claims to begin with sensuous certainty of the “this” and the “now”23 – fails to address sensuous consciousness at all. Feuerbach has sensuous consciousness respond to Hegel:

> Enough of words, come down to real things! Show me what you are talking about! To sensuous consciousness it is precisely language that is unreal, nothing. How can it regard itself, therefore, as refuted if it is pointed out that a particular entity [the presence of consciousness] cannot be expressed in language? (TCH 114)

Whether these criticisms have any real impact on Hegel is unimportant for present purposes. What they reveal about Feuerbach, on the other hand, is critical. Feuerbach’s skepticism about systematic presentation and his conviction that language stands outside thought as a mere instrument ought to prepare one to read *The Essence of Christianity* with an eye to what it does not say. If Hegel is unwitting in his irony and unable to acknowledge it, Feuerbach is well aware that he cannot help but be ironic himself. The silent currents of thought that circulate behind his presentation, even as they are communicated by his presentation, are what must concern the reader. As Feuerbach himself wrote to his friend Christian Kapp in November 1840, just as he was finishing *The Essence of Christianity*, he is a “cryptophilosopher.”24

Thus, when Feuerbach writes, in the preface to the second edition, that *The Essence of Christianity* “contains a faithful, correct translation of the Christian religion out of the Oriental language of imagery into plain speech,”25 the reader must remember that this is a translation from one set of representations into another set of representations, from concrete, sensuous images into “abstract images” (EC 77). That this translation is possible, and that Feuerbach has set it forth, is itself supposed by him to provide a demonstration in deed of “the real, complete nature of man” (EC xiv–xv). The act of translation indicates without elucidating the reality of the spirit – the species – behind the letter. The “principle”

of Feuerbach’s “new philosophy” is “verified practically, i.e., in concreto” by the translation of religion into speech (EC xiv). The essence of Christianity speaks in Feuerbach’s book, and confesses by this spoken self-representation that its imagistic representation in the hearts and minds of its adherents is no more its essence than is its new, verbal representation. The essence is what speaks, not what is spoken, and what speaks is “Man” (EC xv–xvi).

Since the essence of Christianity is the essence of all religion, and also the essence or principle of Feuerbach’s new philosophy, it follows that Feuerbach is not the enemy of religion. Feuerbach’s philosophy agrees completely with religion: “it has in itself the true essence of religion – is, in its very quality as a philosophy, a religion also” (EC xxiv).26 Rather, the enemy of religion is theology, or – what amounts to the same thing – the old, pre-Feuerbachian philosophy, especially Hegel’s. By a profound reversal, Feuerbach agrees with the orthodox Right that Hegelianism is the mortal enemy of religion, of spirit, and of “man.” What Hegel’s orthodox critics did not notice, however, is that they, too, are arrayed against religion and on the side of Hegel. The opposition of the theologians to Hegel is the opposition of one sort of anti-religion to another sort of anti-religion.

Theology and philosophy are anti-religious and anti-human because, whereas religion “is the immediate object, the immediate nature of man” (EC xxii), theology and philosophy are “the reflection of religion upon itself” (EC xviii), a reflection that makes “real beings and things into arbitrary signs, vehicles, symbols, or predicates of a distinct, transcendent, absolute, i.e., abstract being” (EC xx). Theology and philosophy take the representation of religion to be the essence of religion, and thereby make out the real essence to be a mere representation of the representation. If religion is “the dream of the human spirit” (EC xix, translation modified), it is a spontaneous dream, and so is innocent.27 Theology, however, takes the dream to be the reality, and tries to derive the dreaming spirit from its dream. Philosophy compounds the sin by translating the sensuous dream-images into the abstract word-images of metaphysics, while continuing theology’s attempt to derive the dreamer from the (now abstract) dream. Against this image fetishism of theology and philosophy, Feuerbach proposes to defend religion in its complex reality. Against his age, “which prefers

26. See also Ludwig Feuerbach, Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, Manfred H. Vogel (trans.) (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1986), §64. Hereafter cited as PPF followed by the section number.
27. Wartofsky is excellent on this point: “Feuerbach is neither a positivist nor an atheist, in the ordinary (and narrower) senses, but rather an emergentist, for whom religion is a serious (and dialectically necessary) expression of a certain stage of human self-understanding” (Feuerbach, 6).
the sign to the thing signified,” he wants to reduce “the appearance of religion” to its essence, and to explain the dream from out of the dreamer (ibid.).

The dreamer is human spirit, the human individual in its constitution by and consciousness of its species-being. In religion, this spirit dreams only of itself. Thus Feuerbach defines religion itself as “identical with self-consciousness – with the consciousness which man has of his nature” (EC 2). But if religion is self-conscious spirit, what need is there for Feuerbach’s new antiphilosophy? If religion already confesses all of its secrets without thereby ceasing to be religion (EC 57–8), what does Feuerbach’s translation of that confession into speech accomplish? It is easier to say what it does not accomplish. It certainly does not do away with religion. For this reason, the standard account, according to which Feuerbach is a critic of religion, is simply wrong if critique is taken to be an external, negating stance. Feuerbach affirms religion, defends it against theology and philosophy, and asks of it only that it openly avow what it already is: absolute humanism. Feuerbach has long been taken to be an empirically minded materialist, as well as a critic of religion. The Vienna Circle positivists lumped him in with Hume, Bentham, and Comte as a predecessor of their own “hedonism and positivist sociology.” Even those who stress his Hegelian heritage tend to portray him as moving toward sensationalism, nominalism, and positivism as he matured. While it should be clear from the above that he is far from being a textbook secularist, the question of how to understand Feuerbach’s epistemological statements – his insistence on the priority of sensation, for example – remains unanswered. I think it is better to see Feuerbach as a proto-phenomenologist than as a proto-positivist, anticipating the thought of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty rather than Mach and Ayer. His phenomenological humanism distinguishes him from his Left Hegelian peers, and outlining its distinctive positive features will be the focus of the final section.

28. Compare Louis Althusser, “On Feuerbach,” in The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings (1966–67), François Matheron (ed.), G. M. Goshgarian (trans.) (London: Verso, 2003). Althusser argues that Feuerbach differs from all “enlightenment” critics of religion (beginning with Epicurus) in that these all attribute religion to “partial and, usually, aberrant effects of human nature,” while, for Feuerbach, “religion is not only an index of the distinction between man and the animals, but that which constitutes man’s humanity, the human essence in its adequation” (ibid., 91–2).

The central tenet of *The Essence of Christianity* is Feuerbach’s formula, “God is the mirror of man” (EC 63). In this, Feuerbach seeks to encompass two realizations. First, God is the peculiar object of the human being, the inescapable object of human apprehension. Second, this object is nothing other than human being objectified; everything that is in God is in human species-being, if not in each and every particular human being. According to Althusser, “the term ‘object’ … sustains the entire edifice of Feuerbach’s theory,” and it is the objective character of human being that opens it to the sort of anthropological study Feuerbach undertakes, perhaps the first philosophical anthropology in the modern sense. Therefore, in order to understand the import of Feuerbach’s central tenet, it seems necessary to analyze his notion of the object.

Working backwards, Feuerbach denies the possibility of a Cartesian or Fichtean ego, an immediately self-relating subject, explicable via introspection. Consciousness has access to itself – is self-consciousness – only by way of its consciousness of objects. This is the origin of his claim that “for my thought, I require the senses, especially sight” (EC xiv). The true nature of a human being is not inside, but outside. Not only the truth of statements about nature in general, but the truth of statements about human nature, is in objects, not in the subject. The subject has an inside only because it has an outside that it has introjected. Feuerbach is most explicit about this in his *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, where he writes, for example, that “a real object is given to me only where a being that affects me is given to me and where my self-activity … finds its boundary or resistance in the activity of another being” (PPF §32). This discovery of the boundary of one’s own subjectivity is precisely the experience of being passive. Thus, Feuerbach continues, “only where I am transformed from an ‘I’ into a ‘thou,’ where I am passive, does the conception of an activity existing apart from me, that is objectivity, arise” (ibid.). In other words, only by being an object can I experience objects, only by being an object can I be a subject. Being active – and here Feuerbach means thinking – implies being passive, that is, sensitive, and being sensitive further implies being sensible. This is the anchor of Feuerbach’s philosophical anthropology, since anything and everything objective and sensible about human life can serve as a way into the active subjectivity of human species-being.

But there is yet this further wrinkle to Feuerbach’s rather elliptical argument. Being an object is not co-extensive with sensation or passivity in the everyday

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31. See Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 206–10, for a good discussion.
32. See also PPF §32.
senses of those terms, at least not in the original significance of being an object. I am truly or originally an object only when I am the object of another subject, when I am a “thou” to another “I.” Intersubjectivity is, in other words, a condition for the possibility of subjectivity. Thus he claims that the object is “originally” only another “I” (PPF §32). This excavation of the conditions for the possibility of the thinking subject Feuerbach takes to mark the fundamental divide between his new philosophy and all other philosophies of the modern age. The “I” is constituted only as a “thou,” the subject only as an object, thinking activity only as sensuous passivity.

As a consequence, Feuerbach argues that thought, the activity of the subject as such, must take its place within these conditions of its possibility. In one sense, this “must” is simply descriptive. Human beings cannot but think in an intersubjective context, and in light of an experiential history; there is nothing we can do about it. But Feuerbach also formulates this “must” as a series of “categorical imperatives”:

Desire not to be a philosopher, as distinct from a man; be nothing else than a thinking man. Do not think as a thinker, that is, with a faculty torn from the totality of the real human being and isolated for itself; think as a living and real being, as one exposed to the vivifying and refreshing waves of the world’s oceans. Think in existence, in the world as a member of it, not in the vacuum of abstraction as a solitary monad, as an absolute monarch, as an indifferent, superworldly God; then you can be sure that your ideas are unities of being and thought. (PPF §51)

How might these imperatives be fulfilled? How does one think in the world as a member of it? The world is nothing other than the totality of possible objects, of which each human being is one. But the original object is itself a subject. Therefore the totality of possible objects is, in this original sense, the totality of subjects. In other words, the world is identical with the species. Realizing that I am, in Wartofsky’s phrase, “species-identical” with my object is the definition of thinking as a member of the world.33 Human beings look around the world and find nothing but their humanity looking back at them.

Feuerbach seems to mean this in several senses. In one sense, he writes, “The certainty of the existence of other things apart from me is mediated for me through the certainty of the existence of another human being apart from me” (PPF §41). In this sense, certainty is always an intersubjective phenomenon; what is real is what is socially vouched as real. In another way, every object, by

being an object for human consciousness, is a humanized object. Thus, “Even the moon, the sun, the stars, call to man gnôthi seauton [know thyself]. That he sees them, and so sees them, is evidence of his own nature” (EC 5). Finally, in a closely related manner, human senses are, according to Feuerbach, “elevated above the limits of particularity and its bondage to needs,” in that they know no limits. All human senses are, therefore, “intellectual and scientific acts” (PPF §53). Thus the nature that every possible object shows to us is an infinite nature, a nature that knows no bounds. Human being cannot escape itself into some other; wherever it goes, there it finds itself. Human being is its own “absolute horizon.”

But none of this reveals the process whereby human beings are to go from finding their species-being always already mirrored back to them from every object to realizing that is what they are finding, and thereby fulfilling Feuerbach’s imperatives. Feuerbach’s new philosophy is needed because we do not recognize ourselves in our original object. We look in the mirror and see God – the infinite spirit – but we fail to see that we are looking in a mirror. We do not recognize ourselves in God because we do not see the mirror as a mirror. The problem is that “[m]en first see objects only as they appear to them and not as they are; they do not see themselves in the objects, but only their imaginations of the objects” (PPF §43). Imagination and fantasy, like discursive thought, are abstract. Sensuous intuition and feeling are concrete. But we don’t find ourselves immediately at home in the concrete. Rather, we have to work to actually see what is in front of our faces. Feuerbach writes:

Immediate, sensuous perception comes much later than the imagination and the fantasy. … The task of philosophy and of science in general consists, therefore, not in leading away from sensuous, that is, real, objects, but rather in leading toward them, not in transforming objects into ideas and conceptions, but rather in making visible, that is in objectifying, objects that are invisible to ordinary eyes. (PPF §43)

Truly religious eyes are actually better at seeing than are “the eyes of the anatomists or the chemists,” and yet Feuerbach wants to replace even these with “the eyes of philosophers,” understood in his new sense, of course (PPF §41). “Historical epochs arise,” he writes, “where that which before was only ideated and mediated becomes an object of immediate and sensuous certainty” (PPF §38). The becoming visible of the mirror-function of the object would, it seems, mark the epoch to end all epochs, for in becoming visible as a mirror, the object

would show us to ourselves as we really are. Our objects, being so many mirrors, would reflect to us our essential nature.

No process has been outlined, however, whereby we could come to see the mirror as a mirror. Because the human subject is constituted only intersubjectively, we must expect that such consciousness can come only socially; the intersubjective context must matter. Feuerbach also tell us explicitly that “[o]nly in feeling and in love … is the infinite in the finite” (PPF §33). Thus we can expect further that the realization cannot be a merely rational one; it must be felt. Thus Feuerbach becomes himself a preacher and exhorts us:

The single man for himself possesses the essence of man neither in himself as a moral being nor in himself as a thinking being. The essence of man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man; it is a unity, however, which rests only on the reality of the distinction between I and thou. (PPF §59)

The conditions that authenticity must be communal and must be felt only reinforce what Feuerbach’s critique of Hegel already said: even new philosophers cannot really produce other philosophers. Feuerbach cannot simply tell the truth and expect that the telling will make the truth manifest to his readers. The telling is only an abstract image of the concrete fact. But the fact itself is attested only by the act of translating it into new images. This, finally, is what Feuerbach means by praxis: the act, renewed again and again, of taking the confession of the species, and then publishing the transcription of the confession. This transcription never incarnates the species, nor does it trap the species in amber. Rather, it only witnesses the excessiveness of the species vis-à-vis any of its manifestations. It thereby is meant to provoke our wonder at and love of our own species-being.

This confessional practice is Feuerbach’s distinctive contribution to post-Hegelian philosophy. The post-Hegelian scene is constituted by the various attempts to discover a happy relation of individual consciousness to the totality, conceived initially as infinite spirit, then as species. In the beginning, Strauss tried to dissolve the problem by denying the possibility of such a happy relation. No exemplar realizes the species; the individual consciousness is the unhappy consciousness. In the end, Max Stirner35 tries again to dissolve the problem, but in the opposite direction, by completely subjectivizing spirit. Stirner was a quiet figure on the margins of the Left Hegelians gathered around Bruno Bauer until

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35. Max Stirner (Johann Kaspar Schmidt) (October 25, 1806–June 26, 1856; born in Bayreuth, Bavaria; died in Berlin, Germany) was educated at the University of Berlin, University of Erlangen, and University of Königsberg. His influences included Hegel, and he held no academic appointments. His major works included *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (*The Ego and Its Own*; 1844).
he published his polemical and sensationalistic book *The Ego and Its Own* in 1844. Taking Feuerbach's opposition between word and thought to the extremes of nominalism, Stirner argued that Feuerbach's “man” is just as abstract and ideal as the Christian God, and hence just as opposed to the concrete existence of the unique individual, which alone is real. Because these abstract ideas—God, state, humanity, proletariat—are rooted in the artistic externalizations of unique individuals, they are, in fact, merely so many disguises under which individuals affirm themselves egoistically. Stirner therefore urges his readers to abandon their hypocrisy and self-denial, to recognize and embrace the egoism that really drives even their acts of self-abnegation, and to assert the identity of individual and species. The close of his book is Stirner’s apotheosis:

They say of God, “Names name me not.” That holds good of me: no *concept* expresses me, nothing that is designated as my essence exhausts me; they are only names. Likewise they say of God that he is perfect and has no calling to strive after perfection. That too holds good of me alone.36

Self-consciousness comes to equal the unique consciousness that can appear only in an infinitely self-satisfied individual.

Caught between these two extremes, both temporally and argumentatively, Feuerbach tries to hold them together. Like Strauss, he insists on the reality of the infinite, but, like Stirner, he insists on the possibility of satisfaction. In the experience of love evoked by the true religious–philosophical practice of confession, the veil between individual and species separates and a nonalienated expression of species-being shines through. The veil of history can always serve as a ground for these pinpricks of nonalienated love. The mirror can, at any moment, appear as mirror, thereby bringing us back to the ineluctable truth of our species life.

The post-Hegelian scene, then, is dominated by a problem Hegel thought he had overcome: the problem of how the universal and rational idea is or comes to be present in the particular and confused persons, events, and movements of sensuous experience. Marx breaks with this scene only when—or, more precisely, to the extent that—he abandons spirit, identifying it with an ideological reflection of capital, whose incarnation must be resisted through revolutionary action, not sought. This is the perhaps only half-conscious point of his scribbled promissory note in the margins of the notebooks posthumously published as *The German Ideology*, that “Communism is for us not a state of

affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.”37 The extent to which Marx actually succeeds in elaborating this denial in a coherent revolutionary practice is not for this essay to judge. What is clear is that such a coherent revolutionary practice could not be a continuation of Feuerbach’s confessional project by other means, a translation of one manifestation of the species into another, both of which manifestations equally fall short of the spiritual activity that effects the translation itself.

**MAJOR WORKS**


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I. MARX AND PHILOSOPHY

Karl Marx\(^1\) did not write philosophy as a philosopher, nor would he have been pleased to be read in this way. From his earliest published works, which were topical and provocative newspaper reports and opinion pieces, he dedicated himself to political activism, holding the view that academic philosophers were too little engaged with social questions, and that philosophy as a profession and a genre would never engage properly with the politics of thoroughgoing social change. The interpretation of some of his works as philosophical, or as stating philosophical doctrines or using concepts of philosophical interest, developed in his later lifetime, and was the work of others. In the first instance this was done by Friedrich Engels (1820–95), his lifelong friend and occasional collaborator, who provided a biographical and philosophical context for Marx, so that he could be read in this way. In works of his own, and republished texts by Marx, Engels summarized Marx’s life and thought for the reading public in this manner, while also maintaining that Marx was a political activist of worldwide and epoch-making significance.

After Engels’s death Marxism emerged as a comprehensive philosophy and political practice through which many of the twentieth century’s most important social and economic transformations were envisioned and pursued. By the 1930s, however, some of Marx’s works and ideas were taken up by professional

\(^1\) Karl Marx (May 5, 1818–March 14, 1883; born in Trier, Rhenish Prussia; died in London, UK) was educated at the University of Bonn (1835–36), University of Berlin (1836–41), and University of Jena (PhD, 1841). Hegel is the primary philosophical influence on his work.
phosphores, at times and to some degree independently of the Marxist philosophical tradition, and often with rather less political fanfare. It must thus be understood that reading Marx as a philosopher, and interpreting his works and ideas as philosophy, is an exercise at odds with their original context as interventions into the politics of the time, as he construed it. Nonetheless, Marx has become a familiar figure in various philosophical traditions, including continental philosophy, and it is the purpose of this essay to explain how and why this happened, and what substantive claims and doctrines have been constructed on this basis.

II. EARLY LIFE AND SUBSEQUENT CAREER

Marx was born into the professional classes of converted Jews who had been afforded civil rights under the Napoleonic occupation of the Rhineland during the French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802). These reforms survived to an extent during the era of restored monarchical and princely regimes that followed the Congress of Vienna (1814–15). During this period the impetus for anti-monarchical campaigns for representative and responsible government grew steadily, culminating in the European revolutions, albeit short-lived, of 1848.

Marx had a classical “gymnasium” education in the days when philosophy covered the known and important forms of knowledge. The principal controversies of the time did not presuppose an opposition between it and science; rather, science was comprehended within it as natural philosophy. The intellectual and political diremption running through contemporary works and debates in philosophy was between “free-thinking” philosophical inquiry and the orthodoxies of confessional Christianity. The latter were themselves the principal way through which authoritarian sovereignty and minimal public accountability were promoted by the mutually supportive political establishments of church and state. The struggles between faith and reason were both personal and political. Marx’s early life has almost always been read as more aligned with reason than with faith, although his parents were in no way radicals. Karl was encouraged by his father to study at university, first at Bonn, and then at Berlin, in order to become a lawyer.

Given the near absence of public political life in the patchwork of German kingdoms, principalities, and city-states, and the phobias concerning republican ideas and revolutionary violence promoted by the post-Napoleonic regimes, academic philosophy represented a somewhat insulated realm where free-thinking could take place. However, open confrontations with the truths that were the bedrock of Christian faith, and therefore of the moral and political order as such, had to be avoided. Atheism, or even the kind of skepticism that
would question the tenets and position of Christianity, was an obvious ground for exclusion and dismissal in the universities and the professions. As a Jew, Marx’s father had to become a confessing Lutheran in order to continue practicing law, and some of the “free-thinking” historians and philosophers of the time, including associates of Marx, never obtained the academic positions they sought, or in some cases were dismissed from positions they already held. While the procedures involved were not full-blown inquisition and persecution, the atmosphere and results were clearly restrictive and punitive, rooted in fundamentalism and bigotry. In his university days Marx became associated with free-thinkers in history and philosophy, in particular with appropriations of philosophy for radical political purposes.

The common methodological thread in “free-thinking” was historicization. This was derived from the late eighteenth century onward through the pioneering historical and archaeological researches of German scholars into ancient civilizations and languages. Its effects are profoundly political. One way of claiming and maintaining power is to declare some states of affairs to be natural or necessary, and thus protected by fact, logic, and morality from change. When a history is provided for these phenomena – typically in law, politics, or the economy, and particularly when this history provides comparisons across times and cultures – then the claims of logical or moral necessity and of conformity to an unchanging nature no longer seem credible. Historicization shows that in human institutions at different times there have been different legal, political, and economic systems, justified by different philosophies, religions, and “time-honored” traditions. By eschewing clear statements endorsing the political and economic arrangements of the present, and failing to re-affirm the revealed truths of Christian confession, new histories could promote destabilization in contemporary power structures and open up perspectives on social change. Perhaps current certainties would pass away, as previous ones had done. Perhaps the rejection of past certainties could not be explained away with smug assurances about the secure certainties of the present. Owing to the enforcement of political and religious orthodoxies at the time, there were few published works as bald as this. Instead, a considerable amount of careful ambiguity in language, content, and requisite assurances was the order of the day, since freedoms of expression were not protected. The whole idea of a right to such protection was itself subversive.

Given the appropriation of classical Roman and Greek philosophies into European culture and legal systems, begun in the early Middle Ages and thus the bedrock for the schools and universities that Marx attended, nonradical historicization was little questioned. This was because it was familiarly combined

with Christian principles and practice, and not seriously challenged by alternative orthodox histories and philosophies derived exclusively from the Bible and other fundamentalisms of the Christian churches. However, a landmark work during the time of Marx's intellectual development addressed itself directly to the historical basis of Christian faith, in particular the life and teachings of Jesus. Then, even more radically, another book propounded a theory of the anthropological processes through which religions of any kind had been produced within societies up to the present. These two books were David Friedrich Strauss’s *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835), and Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* (1841).³ These works went through an impressive number of controversy-provoking editions in Marx's youth, with a fourth edition of Strauss’s book published in 1840, and a second of Feuerbach’s in 1843.

Strauss’s work applied a rigorous historical method to the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s life. This was precisely the kind of skepticism that the defenders of orthodoxy were uncomfortable with, and the results were much as they had feared: there were no facts to be had from the Gospels themselves, or indeed from any other reliable sources. While sounding like history and eyewitness reports, much Gospel discourse was merely repetition of earlier texts of prophecy, claiming fulfillment. Feuerbach’s work was more radical and more philosophical, proposing a mechanism of projection throughout history (and indeed speculatively, in prehistory) through which humans assuaged their anxieties by constructing fictive supernatural beings. These beings were themselves only the repositories of projected human qualities and activities (courage, love, anger, war, etc.) around which religious practice and institutional power were produced. Humans were thus in thrall to an alien realm supposedly over and above their mundane existence.

Both Strauss and Feuerbach, however, proposed versions of philosophy that would effectively transcend confessional Christianity, at least for the educated classes where free-thinking had the wherewithal to flourish, and thus they would avoid an overt rejection of familiar moral values and the ultimate horror of valueless nihilism. Strauss’s solution was a kind of pantheism, where goodness pervades the universe, of which rationalized Christianity was an instance. Feuerbach’s was a religion of humanity, where human values were recognized and respected as exactly that. The Christian establishment regarded both new systems as many steps too far, and both philosophers entered a pariah realm where their readers were radicals, and the two were clearly on the wrong side of respectable philosophizing.

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³ Strauss’s and Feuerbach’s works are discussed in detail in the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*. 

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By historicizing philosophy itself, and expanding the content of philosophy to include history and culture in all aspects, G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) had set all these problems up.⁴ Writing in language of deliberate ambiguity, though, he was able to achieve the eventual production of his work as a system, comprising published volumes and other materials that were still in editorial production following his death. While his early works excited suspicion that the realization of the rational and the real, as he understood these developmental phenomena in the world, was driven forward by the French Revolution (1789–99), the mature works were generally read as much more sympathetic to the conservative ideals of the restored Prussian monarchy. In the later Hegelian and post-Hegelian world, it was clear, then, that politics and social questions generally were now central to the philosopher’s work and vision, rather than excluded or marginalized as ancillary. Hegel had equated knowledge with the philosophization of human historical experience in its entirety, rather than with philosophy as an abstract account of truth and judgment. From the Hegelian perspective, there was no reason to exempt confessional Christianity from occupying a position in the development of Geist or – in the usual clumsy English translation, “spirit” – which in Hegel’s discourse stood for the driving force within human development. Thus the protected zone for matters of faith was no longer obviously intact and so exempt from philosophical scrutiny.

Keeping the authoritarianism of both church and state in place was a major political project pursued by the rulers of the time, and evinced in numerous antiradical scares and exemplary punishments. It was evident in politicized academic appointments, notably that of the philosopher Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854) to the Berlin Academy in 1841.⁵ His mission was to deradicalize the Hegelian legacy and to discourage the radicalism brewing among “Young Hegelians”⁶ (an echo of “Young Germany,”⁷ a liberal literary nationalism flourishing a few years previously). Marx’s interest in Hegel was thus compulsory, in the sense that any student of the time would need to engage with the great German master. This engagement was necessarily political, because the content and current position of the landmark philosophical system was itself a political issue in almost the only public space – the universities – where debates about politics, however rarefied, could take place, albeit within the coded terms of philosophical engagement.

⁴ For a discussion of Hegel’s philosophy, see the essay by Terry Pinkard in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.

⁵ Schelling is discussed in an essay by Joseph P. Lawrence in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.

⁶ The Young Hegelians are discussed in this volume in the essay by William Clare Roberts, and in the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.

⁷ “Young Germany” is discussed in Alastair Hannay’s essay in this volume.
During his student days Marx undoubtedly contemplated an academic career on the model of some of his younger teachers and associates, such as Bruno Bauer (1809–82). However, by the time he submitted his doctoral dissertation “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature” by post to the University of Jena, he can have had few hopes of obtaining a university position at all. His topic was far from purely academic, however, since he argued against philosophical determinisms that excluded change, and for philosophies where indeterminacy made change possible, thus using philosophy as a convenient metaphor for politics. Moreover his political liberalism – which in context was a subversive radicalism – had pointed him in the direction of the “social” questions of reform and economic transformation. Transformation of the social and political order, as had occurred to an unprecedented degree under the French revolutionary regimes, was of course out of the question, and obviously punishable as sedition.

Unsurprisingly, Marx’s alternative career move was into liberal journalism in 1842–43, during a brief window of supervised toleration allowed by the Prussian monarchy. Following the politically motivated closure of his Rhineland newspaper, Marx moved rapidly into expatriate politics, starting in Paris in 1844 and transferring to Brussels the following year. The young radical was by then a self-declared socialist and communist, deriving his views primarily from French utopian works of the 1830s, updated in the early 1840s to include the hardships of the emerging class of industrial workers. He was also an activist for constitutions based on popular sovereignty, representative and responsible government, and elements of male suffrage within the political system. He thus worked in alliance with middle-class liberal groups, advocating representative and responsible government and socioeconomic policies to benefit poor workers. While his communism looked forward to a classless, cooperative society – ideas having their origins in Plato’s works and Thomas More’s Utopia (1516) – his political project was essentially one of pushing liberals leftward, toward a transformative engagement with the economic structures that produce modern class inequalities. He participated as a radical journalist in the vicissitudes of the ’48 revolutions in central Europe, and after the swift collapse of the liberal republican regimes, he emigrated to England in 1849, one of many central European ’48-ers in exile. He remained there as a German-speaking émigré for the rest of his life, making only brief trips to the continent, and working as a journalist and publicist for working-class political struggles worldwide. Only later on in the 1870s

9. For a detailed account of the political context of this period, and of Marx’s perspective within it, see David Leopold, The Young Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
did he acquire – from his writings alone – a public reputation as a revolutionary, although his activities as a journalist in 1848–49 had been a long way from even partisan activism, let alone violence and street-fighting.

III. AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Written in 1859 when he was nearly forty-one, Marx’s own account of his life and works up to that point is contained in the “Preface” to his preliminary study, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. These few paragraphs pick out a somewhat different selection of texts to explain his career trajectory than are found in, say, the narrative accounts constructed by Engels in Marx’s later lifetime, and then again by many others after his death. The list also differs from any standard or specifically philosophical account constructed today. This is precisely because so much more material has become available and current over the years, as opposed to the very limited number of published and accessible works to which Marx could refer his readers at the time, hardly any of whom would have heard of him. Most importantly, in this account Marx clearly presents himself as a social critic and political activist, rather than a philosopher in any sense. He puts little emphasis on the works through which he has been posthumously understood as a philosopher, making no mention of certain now-famous ones at all.

Marx begins, not with his academic dissertation in philosophy, but with an allusion to some of the very few articles\textsuperscript{10} that he wrote and published in his time as a liberal journalist on, and then editor of, the Rheinische Zeitung (Rhenish Gazette), a legal and therefore moderate paper in Cologne. These were campaigning accounts informing readers about the hardships of workers in the peasant and wine-growing communities of the area, and also opinion pieces on free trade and protective tariffs, which were being discussed in the Rhine Province Assembly, a purely advisory and nonelected body. Alluding to his published criticism of other writers, who were guilty of “an echo of French socialism and communism, slightly tinged with philosophy” (CW 29: 262), Marx then recounts how he had to withdraw into his study following forcible closure of the paper. He then embarked on “a critical re-examination of the Hegelian philosophy of law,” self-publishing an introduction in 1844: “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law:\textsuperscript{11} Introduction” (\textit{ibid.}). His lengthy \textit{Contribution to the

\textsuperscript{10} For a detailed discussion of Marx’s early journalism, see Heinz Lubasz, “Marx’s Initial Problematic: The Problem of Poverty,” \textit{Political Studies} 24(1) (1976).

\textsuperscript{11} Hegel’s \textit{Philosophie des Rechts} (1821) has an alternative and more familiar English translation as \textit{Philosophy of Right}. 
Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law itself survived only in manuscript form and was left wholly unremarked and unpublished until the twentieth century.

This is the point in oft-repeated biographical narratives at which posthumous accounts that frame and justify Marx as in some sense a philosopher, or at least a major contributor to philosophy, generally take hold. It is also the point at which his engagement with Hegel is framed as a detailed critique of the latter’s political philosophy as such, allied to a critique of his overall dialectic as a general method. Marx’s method of critique is thus generally counterposed to Hegel’s as a landmark in post-Hegelian continental thought.12 And – given Hegel’s overt idealism – some kind of Marxian materialism is consequently initiated as a necessary philosophical contrast. However, Marx’s critical use of Hegel was no simple reversal or inversion, and certainly never a reversion to the ontological materialisms and epistemological empiricisms that Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) had so notably critiqued a generation or so earlier.

Marx’s own view of this conjuncture in 1859 was rather different from the posthumous accounts that paint him as a philosopher engaged in revising Hegel’s ideas at length. Marx himself tells his readers that his focus in 1843–46 was on “legal relations” and “political forms” (CW 29: 262), and that these – which were evidently the important political problems for him – could not be effectively comprehended as Hegel had attempted, that is, “on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind” (ibid.). Rather, Marx explained that from Hegel he had appropriated the concept of “civil society” (bürgerliche Gesellschaft), itself taken from “English and French thinkers of the eighteenth century,” and he had concluded that the “anatomy” of this “has to be sought in political economy” (ibid.). This was a science, or in Marx’s terms Wissenschaft or rigorous study, of the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of the goods and services of ordinary life on an individual, national, and international basis. It notably divided “civilized” society into classes by wealth and income, rather than by hierarchies based on rank or status.13

In his “Preface,” Marx then historicizes these processes in a way that was more or less common both to some notable political economists, such as Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), and to Hegel himself. However, in opposition to conventional thinking, Marx emphasized that distributive differences in terms of wealth and income were derived from the sphere of production – its technological forces and property relations – and so were not simply reflections of different abilities

12. For an alternative framing that emphasizes Marx’s intellectual debts to Aristotle, see Scott Meikle, Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx (London: Duckworth, 1983).
13. Political economy was the precursor to the economics of today, which is generally regarded as having its origin in the “marginalist” revolution in the 1870s. Economics established a clear, mathematical focus on prices, whereas the earlier study had centered on philosophical investigations into the nature of value, money, and profit.
to consume goods and services on the market. Thus his political perspective on change and reform was more radical and thoroughgoing than any adopted by the political economists, precisely because for him mere redistribution of goods and services would never suffice to resolve the social question of inequality. Instead a thoroughgoing transformation of the social relations of production would be required in order to derive the greatest benefits for all from the extraordinary productivity of modern industry, which he could clearly see on the horizon.  

His perspective was decisively marked off from Hegel's by a practical concern with the nitty-gritty of “material interests” (CW 29: 262) as outlined in his journalism, rather than with any supposed philosophical reversion from idealism to an oppositional materialism. Indeed Marx's engagement with any philosophy as such was secondary to, or explicitly in aid of, his chosen political project, a politically motivated critique of political economy.

Amplifying this point, Marx goes on to mention published works that are specifically “material” in this way, and not generally rated by philosophers for philosophical content: a “brilliant essay on the critique of the economic categories”15 (CW 29: 264), and a book, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*16 (1845), both by his friend Friedrich Engels. He pointedly noted that Engels had come to the same conclusion as himself, but “by another road,” that is, *not* through any detailed engagement with Hegel's works on the “social” question, but rather through critical investigation and empirical research of his own (CW 29: 264). Marx next includes his polemical engagement with the then famous French socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65),17 *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847),18 published in French, and his own French-language “Speech on the Question of Free Trade” (1848).19 This latter work is now little read, marking the fact that philosophical interest in Marx has generally won out over interest in his “economic” writings.

In equally brief fashion Marx also mentions the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), jointly written by Engels and himself, but in 1859 quite unavailable to his readers. Significantly in the context, the *Manifesto* was a work whose
political message would attract difficulties with censors and readers alike. For this reason the politically substantial portions of the 1859 “Preface” are effectively an extremely boiled-down and considerably restrained version of the ideas and arguments put forth ten years earlier in the anonymous pamphlet. In 1848 Marx had made explicit his communist commitments, echoing his short published work of 1844 “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law: Introduction.” Nineteenth-century socialism and communism were not then consistently distinguished from each other, and in any case these diverse movements comprised a wide variety of views on human nature, ideal societies, and political tactics. Communists, such as Marx, were generally more radical in focusing on working-class politics and calling for large-scale, revolutionary change, using violence if need be.

Marx’s political program can be succinctly summarized as one based on the promotion of class struggle in modern industrial society, where bourgeoisie and proletariat represent opposing class structures at a particular moment in history. He contrasted this with a timeless opposition of wealth and poverty, or a supposedly justified inequality reflecting incentives and rewards, and sacrosanct rights to property. Influenced by Engels’s early critical work on political economy, Marx took the view that modern mechanized industry was so productive that very soon human needs could be satisfied with little labor input. However, the current ownership of these enterprises by “private” persons was in radical contradiction with their “public” origin and potential as industrial resources. This contradiction was not merely conceptual, but real in the sense that the knowledge and systems giving rise to this productivity were not the creation of particular individuals who could own them in some sense that others must necessarily respect. Rather, those individuals were all themselves products of society in various ways, and so the products collectively produced by knowledge and systems developed in society should rightly belong to all. Moreover Marx conceived this as a dynamic scheme in which rising productivity would be built on greater use of machines in producing goods and services, and there would therefore be less employment available in the economy as a whole as economic development proceeded. The class structure would assuredly become simpler, as intermediate classes below the bourgeoisie would fall into the proletariat, and actual numbers within the bourgeoisie itself would decline to a small fraction of society as a whole. Social revolution made by the vast majority would necessarily democratize not just governmental structures, but economic ones at the workplace and at points of distribution for goods and services.

Summarizing Marx’s own summary of the guiding principle for this analysis, as he put it in the 1859 “Preface,” is rather more difficult. On the one hand, he generalizes that humans in society enter into relationships – property and
work relations, for instance – that are independent of their individual wills, yet are human constructions, of course, subject to change in history, sometimes profoundly and dramatically so. On the other hand, he argues that in the modern world he can foresee that humans could take charge of these changes in a different and highly self-conscious way, managing a society where abundance can be produced and distributed to the benefit of producers, rather than for the benefit of leisured classes who own or otherwise control productive resources. Overall he links economic and political structures in varying modes to the kinds of technologies and practices through which production occurs in the first place, referring to this as a real foundation. From this real basis there arises a legal and political superstructure, to which there are in correspondence definite modes of social consciousness, that is, political views and commonplaces, broadly understood as ideological, in Marx’s sense of the term (CW 29: 262–3).

Ideology in Marx’s view referred to ideas and doctrines that in practice help one class to oppress and exploit another. They appear – often in the work of philosophers and other prominent writers and essayists – as generalizations supposedly applicable to all mankind, or at least to all individuals that make up a given society. These “truths” were typically specious claims that ruling or dominant classes were necessary for there to be society at all, or that some classes or ruling orders had necessarily to care for others and to make decisions on their behalf. Ideological generalizations of this kind are – from Marx’s perspective – misleading, rather than false, selectively tendentious rather than thoughtfully political, mystifying rather than enlightening. Marx thus did not have an ideology himself, but rather – in his own terms – an outlook or conception that made ideology visible. Perhaps the single phrase that best sums up Marx’s outlook on history, society, and politics is the one where he asserts that “the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life” (CW 29: 263).

This synchronic schema then gives way to a diachronic one, in which Marx suggests that there have been four epochs in history that exemplify this: ancient, Asiatic, feudal, and modern bourgeois society. Changes from one social formation to another (and not necessarily inevitably or in this particular order) have arisen from conflicts between productive forces and productive relations. This happens particularly when the property system restricts technological and other workplace developments that enhance productivity and innovation. This was already in evidence as patchwork and antimarket feudal property relations in Marx’s own time were already being abolished in favor of “private” ownership of productive resources, in particular land, water, and mineral rights of unrestricted use. Bourgeois society, Marx says, will be under pressure from similar contradictions as increasing productivity reduces employment and therefore consumption, and the dysfunctionality of a market system based on “private”
ownership will become evident. This will be the last form of society in which such class antagonism will be a necessary feature, and its successor social formation will provide for collective control of production and distribution for the benefit of all, rather than for the benefit of the propertied few. In this text, subject to censorship at the time, proletarian revolution could not be mentioned, but the implication is clear (ibid.).

The manuscript works of 1845–46 that Marx also mentions in his 1859 “Preface,” but skips over – tantalizingly – as “self-clarification” (CW 29: 264), are the ones that have excited the attentions of philosophers to an increasing and now dominant degree. These were first published in part in the 1920s and subsequently transmitted in variously edited book-length versions, beginning in a German-language edition of 1932. The materials were posthumously – and now controversially20 – entitled The German Ideology. Marx describes them as a “critique of post-Hegelian philosophy” (ibid.), but seems little engaged with either the details or with explaining exactly why and how he had engaged in such a critique. The 1859 “Preface” does not actually mention dialectic or even method at all, and indeed Marx’s other comments on these matters are very few and far between. When Engels was writing his own philosophical work on Feuerbach and latter-day Feuerbachians many years later in the 1880s, he dismissed the old manuscripts of 1845–46 as “useless,”21 save for a very short one, which he published, in edited form, as “Theses on Feuerbach” (1886).22 The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, standardly recommended since the 1960s in order to understand Marx as a philosopher, are not mentioned at all.


22. CW 5: 6–8; for Marx’s original version, see CW 5: 3–5.
Engels was Marx’s publicist, and he worked hard to make Marx visible. One way of doing this, and so it seems – gaining political capital of a certain kind, was to make Marx a philosopher. Marx was decisively linked with Hegel, and therefore in a positive sense with philosophy and with philosophers, when Engels wrote his own biographical notes on Marx’s career and ideas. This was also in 1859, as both were then engaged in introducing Marx’s first substantial published work in his projected multivolume critique of political economy, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. Engels’s project in his 1859 review of Marx’s slim volume was to publicize the expertise of the then unknown author, and to précis his ideas in order to excite a readership. Rather understandably, Engels very prominently attached Marx’s name to Hegel’s, since the latter was obviously the greatest philosopher – and German philosopher – of recent times.

Engels explained how Marx had rectified Hegel’s political shortcomings by radicalizing his thought, and how he had built on the notable achievements of his system. In Engels’s account, Marx was thus similar to Hegel as a systematizer of all knowledge by means of a universal method. However, Marx was said to have inverted the master’s distinctive and reputedly powerful dialectic. In particular, Marx could account for the historical development of human society through a linked scheme of economic and political stages, but root this argument in a material world of human productive activity – as opposed to a “spirit” world of mere philosophical speculation. For Marx, class politics thus replaces the apparently autonomous development of “spirit” (CW 16: 472–5).

Engels also distinguished a logical from a historical method in Marx, while declaring them ultimately compatible and of unquestionable validity (CW 16: 475–6). While Engels could précis Marx’s distinctive outlook on historical and political development, introducing the phrase “materialist conception of history” (CW 16: 469), his three-part review was never completed. The promised section on the critique of economic theory, commercial practice, and political support structure – which was the point of Marx’s new book – was never produced. Engels thus initiated a commonplace disjuncture between what is of philosophical interest, and what is rather separably “economic.” This review was the point from which Marxist philosophy was secured, with Marx in pride of place as Hegel’s successor intellect. The whole idea that Marx was a philosopher, and that his work makes sense when reconstructed as a philosophy, dates from this period, rather than from Marx’s driving political intentions and the politicized context of philosophy itself under the illiberal regimes of the 1830s and 1840s.

Engels was thus effectively the founder of Marxism as a comprehensive system derived from a universal method. He developed this outlook, particularly in influential works of the late 1870s and early 1880s, and then definitively during the twelve years in which he outlived Marx. The most important of these was *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (1878), and its reprise in the editorially constructed *Dialectics of Nature* (1925). This latter was derived from unpublished notebooks and manuscripts, and was produced with suitable flourishes by a Russo-German team of Marxist scholars anxious to link Marxism with scientific certainty. Engels was thus made central to Marxist philosophy – in his own lifetime and then posthumously – through his reading, presumed authoritative, of Marx as a matter-in-motion materialist from whom only a correspondence theory of truth could proceed. This philosophy was thus widely publicized as Marx’s materialist inversion of Hegel’s idealism, and the basis of the so-called materialist dialectic. This latter was resolved into three universal laws applicable to nature, history, and “thought” or logic. These three laws of “dialectics” were: law of unity and struggle of opposites – a foundational assumption that all entities and processes contain within themselves opposite properties or terms; law of transformation of quantity into quality – purportedly explaining how purely quantitative and continuous changes to an entity or process can cause discontinuous changes that we understand as qualitative transformations in substance; law of negation of the negation – purportedly explaining how change and development proceed by successive negations, each one taking the resulting positive to a higher level.

From the beginning, Marxist philosophy was marginalized by professional philosophers and regarded with suspicion. This was precisely because of the way it purported to embody and validate a political commitment to a revolutionary transformation of society. The extent to which class struggle and transformative politics required this particular philosophy, or indeed any philosophy at all, was rejected even as a question by academic philosophers. This was because they claimed objectivity and universality, rather than political partiality and practical action, which were suspect orientations on the face of it. In that way the philosophical classics of Marxism are not themselves usually seen as classics of philosophy in academic circles. These Marxist classics included G. V. Plekhanov’s (1856–1918) *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* (1908), V. I. Lenin’s (1870–1924) *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy* (1909), J. V. Stalin’s (1878–1953) *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (1938), and Mao Zedong’s (1893–1976) *On Contradiction*

The last was a major revision emphasizing the fluidity of contradictions over the other organizing concepts of what came to be known by the 1920s as “dialectical materialism,” or “diamat.” Those philosophers outside the schools of Marxism who did not immediately dismiss Marxist philosophy on grounds that it was political typically dismissed the systematizing generalities of dialectical materialism and its variants as vacuous redescriptions of any entity or process in crypto-Hegelian jargon.

V. CHALLENGES TO MARXIST ORTHODOXIES

It is also the case that, from the beginning, Engels’s dialectics was challenged from within the Marxist camp by revisionist writers such as Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) in his Evolutionary Socialism (1899), and Hegelianizers such as Antonio Labriola (1843–1904) in his Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History (1896) and Socialism and Philosophy (1897), Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) in his Principle of Hope (1918) and György Lukács (1885–1971) in his History and Class Consciousness (1923). These challenges were on grounds that the scientific determinism promoted by Engelsian orthodoxies was depoliticizing, and, moreover, either false to the fluidities and contingencies of reality, or at least to those of social – as opposed to material – phenomena.

The Institute for Social Research, known as the Frankfurt School, was a notable and systematic attempt to replace Engels’s outdated materialism with newer forms of science and philosophy, eclectically conceived. The school dates from the 1930s when its constituents made very early use of Marx’s newly published Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The German Ideology, neither of which had been incorporated by Engels into his Marxist dialectics and materialism, nor used by Hegelianizers of the previous generation. This is particularly reflected in Herbert Marcuse’s (1898–1979) Reason and Revolution (1941), which re-analyzes the relation of Marx to Hegel, and in other antifascist projects that were critical of capitalist society. Working in the post-Kantian tradition of aesthetic and cultural criticism, Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69) generalized from Marx’s critique of capitalist society to a critique of Western civilization and rationalism in their Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947), and again in Adorno’s Negative Dialectics (1966). Incorporating aspects of psychoanalysis into a Marxian perspective

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*27. For a discussion of Lukács, see the essay by Chris Thornhill in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.

*28. Essays on the Frankfurt School, with special attention to Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, can be found in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
on capitalist society, Marcuse produced the hugely influential works *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *One Dimensional Man* (1964).

Working in similar ways, and with numerous interconnections, Marxist philosophers writing in French appropriated Marx in a selective and critical fashion, very closely allied with their political adherence to the Communist Party in France and their suspicions of the Marxist orthodoxies propounded by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They followed the early Hegelianizers in reading Marx in ways that undermined the materialism and determinism fostered by the later Engels. The Russian Marxist philosopher Alexandre Kojève lectured in Paris on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) during the 1930s and conjoined his focus on the so-called “master–slave” dialectic with allusions to Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, only recently published. These lectures and the general outlook on Marxism were hugely influential in French philosophy, in particular with relation to a further critique, that of German phenomenology, where ideas from Marx – rather than from deterministic Marxism – were used to amend its “existential” focus on consciousness and individual experience. Interpretations of Marx’s views on laboring activities in social settings, and on the constraints imposed by class structures in capitalist societies, featured in philosophical works such as Jean-Paul Sartre’s (1905–80) *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), drawing on the earlier essay “Search for a Method” (1957), and in the writings of other philosophers, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61), and sociologists such as Henri Lefebvre (1901–91).

The common thread was the application of Marxian notions of social production, class structure, and ideological critique to cultural criticism, social science, and historical research. As a result these areas of intellectual endeavor were substantially revised and redefined.

However, the most important thinker and activist succeeding to these unorthodox efforts was Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), a Communist Party worker in Italy during his short lifetime. His lengthy *Prison Notebooks* were circulated in parts after the Second World War and published in a collected edition in 1975. Rejecting Hegelian teleologies, but retaining a historicization of knowledge,

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29. For a discussion of Kojève, see the essay by John Russon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.

30. Numerous attributions notwithstanding, Marx did not make use of these passages from Hegel at all.

31. For a discussion of Sartre’s Marxism, see the essay by William L. McBride in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.

32. Merleau-Ponty is discussed in the essay by Mauro Carbone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.

33. Gramsci is also discussed in Thornhill’s essay in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.
Gramsci argued against a materialism of matter-in-motion, or analogies thereto. Marxism should not claim access to an ideal realm reflected in philosophy as a matter of objective truth, but should opt instead for a “praxis” account, where the intersubjective categories of practical life and cultural understanding themselves constitute the human realm where political judgments must take place.

Gramsci’s critique was therefore essentially one of Engels’s reading of Marx both as a philosopher and as a materialist, but was necessarily and interestingly constructed from much the same textual materials as Engels had used, rather than from hitherto uncirculated manuscripts. Moreover, like Marx’s work, Gramsci’s was written to resolve the political issues of the time, specifically the difficulties of negotiating a communist consciousness within the worker and peasant classes in a newly industrializing country. This was of course the same problem that Marx had set for himself. As a philosophy, rather than as the meditations of a political activist, Gramsci’s thought is a postwar reconstruction. But it is one that set the terms, ironically, not so much for a reading of Marx’s well-known works largely independent of Engels, as Gramsci himself had done, but rather for a philosophical “new Marx,” who was derived from manuscript materials that were widely circulated in translation in the postwar period.

VI. THE “HUMANIST” MARX

The postwar international political and economic settlements set the stage for the practice and promotion of philosophy that was profoundly different from prewar circumstances. The intense politicization and polarization of class politics was subsiding, and the professional tendency to dismiss politicized philosophies out of hand, or to dismiss philosophies that concerned themselves with political, historical, and economic issues, gradually waned. The political commitment characteristic of Marxist philosophers, and their use of Marx’s texts and interest in what came to be known as his “theory of history,” became respectable, if not necessarily universally accepted. The Lysenko affair, wherein Stalinist dialectics came to direct science in the USSR with disastrous results, together with a declining faith in the Soviet system among “progressive” intellectuals, marked the end of even hostile concern in Western philosophical circles with “diamat.” The continental tradition in philosophy, itself largely a postwar construction, admitted Marx and his historicizing and Hegelianizing successors, but not the dialectics and materialism promoted by Engels in his most deterministic and positivistic writings and correspondence.

Isaiah Berlin’s prewar book Karl Marx: His Life and Environment (1939) prefigured these developments in a remarkable way. While acknowledging the “diamat” of the time, Berlin (1909–97) simply sidelined it and read the available
texts of Marx within the historical context of liberalizing revolutionary movements fighting for social and economic transformation in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. Eventually Berlin's work, and his contextualizing successors, made Marx, and a philosophical interest in Marx, increasingly visible in philosophical circles and, in principle, separable from Marxist doctrines derived from Engels. Given Berlin's own visibility in academic circles at the highest level (All Souls College, Oxford) and his gifts in writing and broadcasting for an educated and middle-class audience, it is unsurprising that the politics in portrayals of Marx in this tradition was safely in the past. It was also, with suitable caveats, well insulated from Cold War “red scares” and other contemporary issues.

In the postwar period, Marx was also re-read independently of Engels's systematizing materialism and determinism, but in a much more Hegelian manner than in Berlin's rendition of his thought. Bertell Ollman's (1936– ) and Norman Levine's (1931– ) studies elaborated the way that Marx, self-consciously or otherwise, drew on Hegel's understanding of language as composed of inter-relational rather than precisely demarcated terms. The philosophical point is both anti-empiricist and sociologically holistic, arguing that Marx's views on language and society match, because language and society match. The Hegelian heritage can thus be stripped of the very mystifications about which Marx had complained, namely the apparently suprahuman or quasireligious source of movement and change implied by Hegel's entity – or metaphor – of Geist.34

Concurrently with these developments in reading Marx came new texts to read, in particular the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and The German Ideology manuscripts of 1845–46. Both were suited to the construction of Marx's work as a philosophy. This was because the discourse of the manuscripts themselves appeared philosophical in comparison with the detailed historical works, polemics, and economic critiques that – according to standard typologies – had succeeded this “early” phase. Marxology then took up questions of continuity, development, and innovation within this burgeoning field that was preoccupied with making sense of Marx rather than Marxism.

Philosophers, whether identified with Marxism in any sense or not, were generally content to receive these works as of obvious philosophical interest, and to leave contextualizing questions to the side, including the ones surrounding the production of these rather disparate manuscripts themselves as edited and readable entities. However, it is also true that contextualizers produced accounts of these works as philosophy, but equally as a stage on a journey to more empirical concerns that left philosophy behind. Both ways of receiving these texts failed to

set out clearly the context of the 1840s in which philosophy itself was a contentious practice, and to grasp clearly Marx’s radical ambitions for transforming what would count in liberal and radical circles as practical and progressive views and tactics concerning the social question. The philosophical “new Marx” was thus somewhat depoliticized. Philosophers were excited in the postwar period by the young Marx’s terminology of alienation, estrangement, species-being, and other so-called humanist ways of setting out his concerns.

These elements of the “humanist” Marx were largely expounded, rather than rigorously debated, in works that constructed the “new Marx” philosophically. These included numerous studies of alienation as a critical category figuring importantly in the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. The common threads in the “theory of alienation” that was constructed for Marx from these early manuscript materials is that the modern industrial worker is alienated or separated from the product of labor, productive activity itself, fellow workers, and “species-being.” Alienation as a concept derives from an array of preexisting German philosophical terms describing an essential fissure with “oneness,” which is regrettable and requires resolution or transcendence through transformation. Marx’s apparent contrast is with craftwork, where a worker knows his work in the object, understands and controls the productive process, has cooperative relationships with fellow producers and known consumers, and is at one with the universal human experience of producing goods and services. This is not to say that Marx in any way endorsed craftwork as a solution to any social questions whatsoever in the world of modernizing industrial production and consumption, but rather that this kind of (largely unpublished) philosophical analysis could help him to understand the socialist and communist critique through which political issues of proletarian poverty were then being addressed.

However, there were dissenting voices. In Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend (1986), Norman Geras (1943– ) offered a more critical perspective on this way of philosophizing the “early Marx,” arguing that it was a mistake to attribute a philosophy of human nature to him at all. Leszek Kołakowski’s (1927–2009) three-volume study, Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution (1978), argued from a wholly contrary perspective that there was no “humanist” Marx. Kołakowski’s view was that Marx’s thought was in essence seamless not only with Engels’s and with Soviet “diamat” but also with

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the policies and practices of authoritarian and oppressive self-styled Marxist parties and regimes.

VII. “OTHER” MARXES

There are, of course, further ways of engaging philosophically with Marx, and therefore with Marx as a supposed philosopher. In *For Marx* (1965), Louis Althusser (1918–90) published a notable critique of both the orthodox Engelsian “diamat” reading of Marx, and the new “humanist” one. He sought instead to find the philosophical and chronological point at which Marx “broke” with a philosophy centered on the human subject and then launched into a science that could be specified in philosophical terms. In Althusser’s view this was a science of structures, explaining how human subjects are hailed or “interpellated” into existence, one way or another, and also an explanation of how such structures occur in historical succession. While ultimately unsuccessful in finding such a point where this self-styled anti-Hegelian science succeeded philosophy in Marx’s work, or specifying its existence philosophically in a way that was independent of Marx’s supposed attempts to realize this achievement, Althusser’s assimilation of Marx into the French structuralist tradition was formidably influential. Structures, of course, could be identified as continental in some sense derived from Kantian critiques of British empiricisms. These were rooted by contrast in accounts of perception taking individuals to have essential and defining presocial capacities in their essence or nature. For a time in the 1970s, Althusserianism was said by many radical philosophers to be a more productive way of examining social life than either liberal individualisms emphasizing choice, or Engelsian teleologies of historical and ontological certainty.

The analytical or rational-choice school of Marxist thought, inaugurated in the mid-1970s by G. A. Cohen (1941–2009), Jon Elster (1940– ), John Roemer (1945– ), Robert Brenner (1943– ), Erik Olin Wright (1947– ) and others, took a quite different approach. While internally various, the common thread was a rejection of what its adherents termed Hegelianism, and thus of the continental tradition as such, on grounds that it was methodologically unrigorous, as indeed was French structuralism, in their view. By contrast, rigor was identified with a variety of presuppositions and methodologies, among them an individualism of a rational and economic character (rather than any kind of humanism), a method of propositional hypothesis and evidential testing (derived from the logical positivism and philosophy of science of the Vienna Circle of the 1930s),

*36. For a detailed discussion of Althusser, see the essay by Warren Montag in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*
and a claim to clarity and precision in language (derived from the “linguistic
turn” in Oxford philosophy of the later 1950s). Marx’s role from this perspec-
tive was to have contributed two notable puzzles to be resolved in a decidedly
noncontinental way.

One puzzle was the validity (or not) of his “guiding principle” as articu-
lated in the 1859 “Preface” (CW 29: 262). These few paragraphs famously but
ambiguously derive epochal change in human society from linked transforma-
tions in the forces and relations of production, contradictions that are in turn
reflected in political struggles for class dominance. H. B. Acton (1908–74) had
produced an influential critique in The Illusion of the Epoch: Marxism-Leninism
as a Philosophical Creed (1955), arguing that Marx was logically muddled and
empirically incorrect. Analytical Marxists essentially elaborated and reworked
this. The other puzzle was the validity (or not) of Marx’s theory of exploitation,
rooted in the value-theory of commodity production and exchange as outlined
in the opening sections of his late work, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy,
Volume 1, Book 1: The Process of Production of Capital. Mainstream economics
had no truck with this, but then analytical Marxists wagered that perhaps Marx
could be shown to be right after all.

The first puzzle was addressed by Cohen in a major work where a “rigorous”
version of Marx’s prose was produced and defended. But Cohen’s later verdict
was that Marx’s theory, stated that way, was ultimately false.37 The second
puzzle was addressed in a “rigorous” way by Roemer and others, adopting strict
assumptions from economic modeling and game theory. This produced exploi-
tation as a logical result, but the initial assumptions were precisely the ones that
Marx himself had always argued were constitutive of capitalist exploitation in
the first place, so in the absence of alternative ones, there was thus no critical
purchase.38

One notable debate in which academic philosophers engaged with Marx’s
texts and with Marxist philosophers – albeit those imbued with the “new Marx”
of the postwar period – was the “Marx and justice” controversy of the later
1970s and early 1980s. This was the first time that Marx’s texts were selectively
deployed and then debated in a nonsectarian, although not completely depo-
liticized, way. Justice and morality are of course topics in philosophy with an
ancient tradition of debate, through which any number of ontological, episte-
mological, and ultimately political positions have been articulated. Marx’s texts,
selectively quoted, were said to pose a puzzle within this tradition in two ways.

37. G. A. Cohen, Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Self-
University Press, 1982).
One puzzle was the apparent contradiction in his views. On the one hand, he had apparently argued that morality was epiphenomenal to the material processes through which human society constructs itself, and he had certainly dismissed contemporary philosophizing about politics as mere moralizing that could never be effectual. This seemed to follow from the dismissive (unpublished) comments that Marx had made in *The German Ideology* that all morality was ideological, because it was mere moralizing that covertly served the interests of the possessing classes. But on the other hand, he clearly had a political project to assist with the destruction of capitalism, on grounds that the exploitation inherent in it was to be condemned, and a successor communistic system to be instituted – violently, if necessary – for the benefit of all. How could such a political, and indeed personal, program not be rooted in a theory of morality, and an ethical vision? This seemed to follow because of Marx’s overt espousal of the proletarian cause, precisely as an effect of class interest, albeit the one that he had announced to be a human universal, and indeed species-defining characteristic.

The other puzzle was that Marx had apparently dismissed justice as an effect of the capitalist system, precisely because its rules of equal treatment were applied through supposedly consensual contracts between laborers and capitalists, exchanging a day’s work for a day’s pay. But his commitment to communism evidently entailed a commitment to a distributive scheme. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* he had said, “we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (CW 6: 506), and in the “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” he offered a maxim: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!” (CW 24: 87). How could this not entail a theory of justice? Or was Marx merely inconsistent, by accident or design?

The debate drew on a wide variety of Marx’s texts, reflecting the increased availability and respectability of standard and collected texts of Marx and Engels, particularly in English translation, that occurred from the 1960s onwards. In general, contributors were aligned with Marx, not as Marxists or as anti-Marxists, but as scholars respecting his gestating status as a major philosopher who could be examined in a reasonably neutral way, unaccompanied by political dogmatizing. The resolution of the “Marx and justice” debate was not a clear or consensus position, but rather a typology of defensible answers linked to the different kinds of theories that would count, on the one hand, as morality or justice, and on the other hand, the different kinds of philosophical positions that could plausibly support them.39 Notably in the debate Marx had re-arrived on the philosophical scene in textual readings construed independently of previous

Marxisms. But it is also the case that this mainstream anglophone position was constructed in a way that did little to link him directly to any post-Kantian position in the continental tradition.

However, philosophers who took a broader view in contextualizing the “new” Marx as a philosopher drew on the full range of texts available from the 1960s. They produced a series of notable studies, all of which took the Hegel–Marx relationship as central, and therefore they necessarily engaged continental philosophy. Reading Marx as primarily interesting as a critic of Hegel, commentators have extracted a substantive account and critique along the following lines. On the plus side, in his works Marx praised Hegel for presenting basic human social institutions – ethical relationships, family structures, economic organizations, and governmental forms – as historically varied, malleable, and developmental. But on the minus side, Marx took Hegel to task for a teleology of progress that was merely asserted and couched in rather mystical terms, and for his evident view that human life and change was all ultimately a matter of ideas. These were presented as a movement of abstractions, rather than in an empirically plausible historical account of socioeconomic and political practices, particularly those through which most people have actually lived their lives. At the time, right-wing Hegelians asserted the truth of the master’s philosophical presumptions and conservative politics, whereas left-wing “Young Hegelians” adopted the vision of historical change and progressive development through conceptual negation. Unlike both, Marx’s new political philosophy historicizes human development in specifically economic and everyday practical terms rather than in merely ideational terms such as morality, ethics, religion, philosophies, and the like, and it puts itself into overt engagement with processes of social change through struggle, specifically class struggle. Class struggle takes place, overtly or covertly, between different classes within a structure, where class itself is rooted by definition in intergenerational patterns of wealth and poverty. These structures were often defended at the time as natural and necessary, or conversely as open enough for exceptional individuals to rise up from poor circumstances. Marx’s thinking was that both these claims are implausible. In line with socialist and communist social criticism of the time, Marx finds that Hegel’s work apologizes for middle-class wealth and power, and constructs a state that secures this

privilege over “the people” whom Marx construes as workers, not as the unruly rabble that Hegel obviously feared.

While Marx rejected right-wing Hegelian views as merely reactionary, he ruthlessly criticized left-wing Hegelians in print for failing to get beyond a movement of concepts to a history and politics of genuine revolutionary confrontation. Both Hegelian schools were dismissed by Marx as “German ideologists,” thinkers who unwittingly promoted a class perspective – that of the bourgeoisie or property-owning class – while apparently philosophizing in universal, abstract terms about humanity. The universal human subject, Marx countered, was the proletarian or homo faber, “man the worker.” The proletariat collectively would produce the most decisive change in human history, through which human productive instruments and processes would be put to the service of all on the basis of need, rather than serving the interests of property owners and their heirs alone.

For contextualizing commentators the methodological puzzle that arises, then, is how exactly Marx had appropriated Hegel’s dialectic, and, given his decisively different political and orientation, why exactly he wanted to. Hegel’s dialectic is difficult to summarize, and the commonplace triad thesis–antithesis–synthesis is a particularly bad attempt. Rather, dialectic for Hegel indicates that conceptual relations are fluid and – somehow – in motion, and the overall effect is to produce a philosophy that emphasizes change. Hegel’s philosophy addresses itself systematically to the constitutive ideas through which social life is lived in different ways at different times. Marx objected to what he termed a mystification in Hegel’s discourse, namely that ideas somehow “move” and that human lives are some kind of consequence or effect of this motion-through-contraries. Hegel’s reconciliation of all negation as ultimately progressive struck Marx as quasi-religious, and politically smug. Nonetheless as a mode of critical thinking founded on assumptions of change and development, rather than timeless truths or descriptive certainties, Marx found Hegel’s dialectic very stimulating and highly useful.

In this way, then, the twentieth-century reception of Marx as a philosopher follows the general outlines set by Engels in 1859: Marx is said to be a world-class philosopher, worthy critic of the great Hegel, and very much Feuerbach’s superior in that regard. The crucial terms for articulating this view set out by Engels in 1859 also remain much the same by name at least, if not necessarily by content: materialism, idealism, and dialectic. They go along with a supposedly helpful set of metaphors through which Marx is said to invert Hegel and in that way to have extracted a rational kernel from a mystical shell. However, the selection of texts, philosophical issues, and political projects are necessarily very different from Engels’s, and differ somewhat among the academic commentators themselves, as one would expect.
VIII. POSTMODERN “TURNS”

As a modernist thinker Marx has largely been rejected by self-styled postmodernists within the continental tradition of philosophizing. This philosophical “turn” is centered on historicizing the categories of consciousness through which the phenomena of human experience are intersubjectively constructed, and on producing language-centered accounts of meaning and communication. These emphasize the discourses through which certainties are claimed and enforced out of what is necessarily contingent and indeterminate. If taken in an Engelsian sense, Marx’s work is clearly a modernist discourse of power/knowledge through which an authoritarian politics has unsurprisingly been practiced, in fact promoting the interests of communist elites in Marxist countries rather than those of the supposedly favored working class. If taken in an alternative humanist sense, Marx’s work is clearly rooted in prelinguistic universalizing presumptions about human life and consciousness that reproduce Eurocentric modernist structures of capitalist dominance, political claims to liberation notwithstanding.

The classic critique of both positions is that of Ernesto Laclau (1935–) and Chantal Mouffe (1943–),41 which counterposes Gramsci’s flexible and contingent constructions of cultural power to alternative readings of Marx, including Gramsci’s own.42 What is new in their work is the assimilation of Gramsci’s view that political consciousness is a cultural project, not an inevitable economic result, to the view that the discourses through which consciousness is articulated and changed are themselves the media of persuasion and power, rather than propositions to be tested for truth and thus (supposedly) efficacy. This of course is an application of a wider redefinition within the continental tradition as to what philosophy is, what its proper concerns are, what is mainstream, and what is “dangerous,” an attribute generally attached to alleged relativisms that postmodernists incur yet celebrate.

If Marx were to be re-read as himself a postmodern thinker, however, this would itself be an exercise that many would dismiss out of hand as an anachronism or, if not, certainly at odds with the certainties that, so it is presumed, his texts expound, and through which his political project proceeded (even if he himself were never an authoritative political actor). Marx would have to be re-understood as a thinker allowing contingency and indeterminacy in human

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41. Laclau and Mouffe’s work is discussed in detail in the essay by Lasse Thomassen in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7, and in the essay by Emily Zakin in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.

historical development, admitting necessary and inevitable uncertainties in his own generalizing theories, and focusing peculiarly on language itself as the means through which social relations are constructed as power relations, not simply as the medium through which knowledge of the human social world appears if the correct methodology is employed.

Reading Marx against the grain of his previous reception as a modernist is not quite as difficult or improbable as it sounds. As presented above, his intellectual and political trajectory from as early as 1842 was toward the social question of class power and oppression rather than to philosophizing as an activity abstracted from such practical concerns. For him this was swiftly resolved into an investigation of the discourses through which contemporary knowledge of these matters was generated. Specifically this meant accounts in natural philosophy (both Hegelian philosophizing and contemporary political economy). His lifelong project from an early stage was thus a “critique of the economic categories,” in his own turn of phrase. Natural philosophy and political economy represented both specialist discourses (whether of Hegelian accounts of civil society or of economic accounts of production, consumption, and class division) and everyday discourses, through which newly emerging commercial and industrial societies articulated their legal systems, histories, and political systems – indeed the common currency of daily life. On this view, Marx’s economic work represents not an analytical discourse of certainty but a complex and parodic re-presentation of economic science as a discourse that constructs and sustains a class structure. On this postmodern reading, Marx’s historical works then appear as investigative and exploratory, drawing out contradictions between events as he understood them and his own generalizing theories, always aiming for progressive political effect. Understood in this way, his theories and predictions do not exclude negative, regressive, or catastrophic outcomes, which he sometimes mentions. Marx is thus grounded in a view not only of language as constructive but of human activities as performative: they name what they act out, and they act out what they name.

IX. NOTHING OUTSIDE THE TEXT

Reading Marx in this way, as indeed reading him in any way, involves a selection of texts that have themselves increased dramatically in number over time and have also been through diverse and controversial contextualizations and

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43. Marx to Lassalle, February 22, 1858, in CW 40: 270.
editorial treatments. Even the production of large-scale uniform editions of published and manuscript works, letters, and notebooks involves overt or covert categorizations and necessarily controversial introductions and disciplinary framings (e.g. those of Engels or succeeding editors). This has a distinct effect on the way that Marx can be constructed as a philosopher (or not), and in the continental tradition (or not), given that uniform texts are a medium that “evens out” texts, making everything look like grist to the mill. A facsimile edition, say of pamphlets or letters, would by contrast emphasize the quotidian and often ephemeral character of political interventions that were only later philosophized into doctrines, propositions, or other discourses that speak directly to overtly philosophical concerns. Philosophical treatments of Marx tend to emphasize the 1859 “Preface” as a supposed methodological work at the expense of Capital, Volume 1 as a so-called “economic” one; or the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 as a supposed “humanist” work as opposed to so-called political works, such as the Manifesto of the Communist Party; or The German Ideology as a supposed “philosophical” work, in preference to so-called historical works, such as The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852). Works that are newly published and circulated, as many of Marx’s were after the turn of the twentieth century, often excite interest and commentary, suggesting that what is to be found in these unfamiliar works cannot be located elsewhere. Given Marx’s capacity for developmental repetition, and the vast quantity of his output, this is really rather unlikely.

X. AN ANTIPHILOSOPHY

Overall, Marx’s relationship to philosophy, and thus to any continental tradition, is highly problematic at the outset, although there are affinities with other antiphilosophical philosophies, as it were. These can be found, for example, in certain parallels between the later Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), who made remarks that are critical of philosophical puzzle-setting as the kind of activity devoted (ineffectually) to resolving what need never have been doubted or made problematic in the first place. Marx, of course, was disinclined to find certainties in the commonplace antiskeptical small change of ordinary life, as Wittgenstein did; rather the reverse, as his project was to argue that these are areas of mystification where political power accumulates in the hands

45. CW 11: 99–197.

*46. For a detailed discussion of Wittgenstein, see the essay by John Fennell and Bob Plant in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.

of exploiting classes. However, in terms of scorn for philosophers who were addressing political issues abstractly and ahistorically yet claiming truth and certainty, there is a certain family resemblance.\(^{48}\)

Taken as a philosopher, at least in most of the ways described above, Marx falls within a continental tradition critical of empiricisms. Yet his thoroughgoing indictment of Hegelian (or indeed any) subjective idealism thus raises an issue for constructions of a continental tradition that require a central focus on mind, consciousness, and the self, as does phenomenology.\(^{49}\) His focus not just on society but on the specifically economic processes therein, sometimes identified – provocatively – as “material,” begins to raise questions about empirical aspects of social life and empirical knowledge thereof, such that a philosophy could possibly emerge. The issue here is that Marx’s writings that are taken to be of most philosophical interest were themselves produced as an antiphilosophy, yet were written in the terms through which certain philosophies were articulated at the time. Thus they may easily be read anachronistically today as speaking to us in locutions that we familiarly characterize as philosophical. Marx’s own political project, however, represents a challenge not just to philosophy itself but to our traditional conceptions of disciplinary boundaries, and indeed to what is or is not acceptably academic or political. This is because it is rooted in concerns that are central to some philosophies but not argued through by him as a philosophical project with an audience of philosophers or students of philosophy in mind. While Marx relied on philosophers and philosophical methods in interpreting the world in political and economic terms for himself and his intended public, it seems unlikely that he regarded philosophizing as itself the kind of activity through which transformative social change could be effected. Indeed, the thrust of his scathing critiques of the philosophers of his time was that they either ignored the need for social change, or mistook the nature and scale of the problems. Marx himself was not particularly successful in unifying his critique of contemporary, class-based society with the kind of communist transformation that he and his (rather few) colleagues envisioned. While his self-styled Marxist successors in the political arena were rather more effective in practical terms, it is questionable whether the ideas involved really bore much resemblance to his in any sense. Paradoxically Marx has been highly but posthumously successful as a philosopher, appropriated by – and reconstructed as such within – a surprising range of traditions, including the continental one.

\(^{48}\) Gavin Kitching and Nigel Pleasants (eds), Marx and Wittgenstein: Knowledge, Morality and Politics (London: Routledge, 2002).

\(^{49}\) See Trân Duc Thao, Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism, Robert S. Cohen (ed.), Daniel J. Herman and Donald V. Morano (trans.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1986) for an early attempt to use Marxist philosophy to make the phenomenological tradition more overtly social, economic, and political; the work was published first in French in 1951.
MAJOR WORKS

The works below are arranged in chronological order of writing, where they are manuscript works that were posthumously published in the twentieth century; works published in Marx’s lifetime are included in the list in chronological order of first publication.

**Kritik des hegelschen Staatsrechts.** Unpublished ms. 1843. Published in English as *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law*, in CW 3: 3–129.


**Thesen über Feuerbach.** Unpublished ms. 1844. Published in English as “Theses on Feuerbach” in CW 5: 3–5.


I. THE WORKS AND THEIR CONTEXT

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, now considered one of the most important writers of the nineteenth century, was born in Copenhagen, the youngest of a family of seven, five of whom died before he was twenty-one, as did his mother. Kierkegaard was brought up strictly both at school and at home, where his father, who was once in feudal bondage but retired as a highly successful tradesman at the age of forty-one, attended personally to his family’s upbringing. After his father’s death in 1838 at the age of eighty-one, Kierkegaard and his surviving elder brother inherited a considerable fortune. His long-delayed theological studies completed, he became engaged to Regine Olsen, and one year later received his doctorate with a dissertation *On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841). Scandalously, and to his own unending personal disquiet, he broke off his engagement immediately afterward and, renouncing an academic career, left for Berlin, where, on the first of four visits to that city, he began the pseudonymous authorship on which his international fame chiefly rests.

Apart from a first publication, *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1838), in which he had criticized a novel by Hans Christian Andersen (1805–75), and the doctoral dissertation three years later, Kierkegaard’s main authorship is divided into two series: the pseudonymous works and the signed “edifying” (or

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1. Søren Kierkegaard (May 5, 1813–November 11, 1855; born and died in Copenhagen, Denmark) was educated at the University of Copenhagen (1830–40; degree in theology), pastoral seminary (1840) and became a Magister (later Doctor) in 1841. He was a freelance writer (1841–55), whose influences included Aristotle, Hamann, Hegel, Luther, and Socrates.
“up-building”) and later “Christian” discourses. The two series were written in parallel, publication from both sometimes occurring simultaneously. The first pseudonymous work was *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (1843), which became an immediate success. It was quickly followed in the same year by *Repetition* and *Fear and Trembling*. Then in 1844 there followed *Philosophical Crumbs* (originally translated as “Fragments”) and *The Concept of Anxiety*, and in 1845 *Stages on Life’s Way*. Kierkegaard intended to bring the pseudonymous series to a close with the lengthy *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs* (1846), but following a famous feud with a satirical weekly and abandoning plans for retirement to a country pastorate, he chose to take up his pen once more.

Notable among the several publications that ensued were the signed *Works of Love* (1847) and two further pseudonymous works. The former expounds an ideal of unselfish, Christian love, while the first of the latter two, *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), offers a systematic analysis of progressively deliberate renunciations of a Christian conception of human fulfillment, all of them characterized as forms of despair and, in the second part of the work, as sin. In *Practice in Christianity* (1850) the same pseudonym resumes the theme of the paradox of the God-Man (that the eternal should have become historical), central in the earlier *Philosophical Crumbs*. Through its emphasis on the degradation suffered by Christ, and against the background of what Kierkegaard saw as an absence of any corresponding self-denial in the Danish clergy, this reworking of the paradox theme paved the way for an open attack on the Danish state church, provoking a conflict that reached its peak at the time of Kierkegaard’s untimely death, in 1855, at the age of forty-two.

On the map of cultural history, Kierkegaard appears, along with Karl Marx, as an archcritic of Hegel. He is also cited as the father of existentialism and more. On closer inspection these identifications speak more of the reception at a later time than of his impact in his own. Kierkegaard’s immediate targets are now recognized as having been the Danish Hegelians, first among them Johan Ludvig Heiberg and Hans Lassen Martensen, rather than Hegel himself. However, since Kierkegaard was well read in Hegel and the Hegelian “right wing,” it would be rash to conclude that Kierkegaard’s concern with philosophy and his times was confined to his settlement with local contemporaries. In order to arrive at a more accurate picture of Kierkegaard’s place in the world of nineteenth-century thought, and a more focused portrait of Kierkegaard himself as thinker, it pays to take into account the context both of his writings as a whole and of their wider cultural and polemical origins.

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*2. For a discussion of existentialism, see the essay by S. K. Keltner and Samuel J. Julian in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.*
Alongside its place as a prosperous trading center, Copenhagen in Kierkegaard’s time was a lively marketplace of ideas. These two sectors are not disconnected, with concentrated wealth both motivating and supporting scientific and cultural progress and generating new political pressures. The previous century’s transition from an agrarian economy to one based on trade (and centered in Copenhagen) generated an increasingly concerted liberal opposition that put an outdated monarchical system of government on the defensive. Freedom of expression and suffrage had become topical issues, and so, too, the problem of creating stability in a society whose current support system belonged to the past. Not least, there was now the question of where to look for authority and guidance: to the church or to philosophy and reason?

II. KIERKEGAARD AND HEGEL

In his student years Kierkegaard, like most of his contemporaries, succumbed to the strong appeal of Hegelian thinking. The five-years-older Martensen later recorded that Schleiermacher’s and Hegel’s names “were [the] two … that glittered in the scientific world and denoted the zenith of the era’s knowledge.” Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the great Romantic interpreter of religion, had visited Copenhagen the year before he died, but in Kierkegaard’s early formative period Hegel had become the dominant influence. Hegel himself had died in 1831, the year Kierkegaard took his two-part first-year university examination (the first part with distinction in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and history and exceptional distinction in lower mathematics, and the second with exceptional distinction in theoretical and practical philosophy, physics, and higher mathematics). A few years earlier his closest mentor Poul Martin Møller (1794–1838) had held introductory courses on Hegelian philosophy at the newly instituted King Frederick University in Oslo (Christiania). And just following Hegel’s death, Heiberg (1791–1860), the most powerful, and in many ways most gifted, cultural personality in Copenhagen in Kierkegaard’s lifetime, provided Copenhagen’s intellectuals, in lectures and in writing, with extraordinarily clear summary versions of Hegel’s thought. Heiberg, a theater director and stage writer, had

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5. Schleiermacher’s work is discussed in detail in the essay by Eric Sean Nelson in this volume.
even managed (in the unpublished “Grundlinien zum System der Ästhetik als speculativer Wissenschaft”) to extrapolate, from his attendance in the summer of 1824 of Hegel’s lectures in Berlin, a version of the latter’s aesthetic theory that anticipated the actual publication more than a decade later of the lectures themselves. As for Martensen (1808–84), he was an astute and up-and-coming academic who was temperamentally Kierkegaard’s opposite. By the time of the latter’s untimely death, Martensen had become primate of Denmark. Early on, prior to a three-year spell in Germany on a research grant, he had on his own suggestion tutored Kierkegaard on Schleiermacher. He returned in 1836 as a convert to Hegel, giving a highly successful series of lectures, some of which Kierkegaard himself attended and on which his notes (and those of others) are preserved.

At this time Kierkegaard showed no sign of antipathy toward Hegelian philosophy. In fact his teacher and friend Frederick Christian Sibbern (1785–1872) spoke later of Kierkegaard himself as having been “Hegelianized.” We also have Kierkegaard’s own word for it. In a journal entry from 1850, he confesses to having been “influenced … by Hegel and everything modern,” so enduringly that as late as his dissertation of 1841 he had been “Hegelian fool” enough to criticize Socrates for having regard only for individuals and not seeing the significance of the collective for ethics.

Too sharp a focus on Kierkegaard’s later obvious opposition to Hegelian thought tends to bring much out of focus, not least the subtle and largely hidden interaction between Kierkegaard as a writer who disdained the academic style and Martensen, who self-consciously represented it. The work most often cited as the *locus classicus* of Kierkegaard’s anti-Hegelianism is *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (subtitled “A Mimic, Pathetic, Dialectic Compilation: An Existential Contribution”). However, the fact that *Postscript* was written at a time when Hegel’s own influence in Germany had sharply declined speaks for some caution in regarding it simply in this light. It is true that in a retrospective “report to history” published posthumously, Kierkegaard appears to confirm the standard view when he says that *Postscript* was designed to guide people “back” from the Hegelian “System,” but circumstances indicate that it is plausible to read this

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8. Søren Kierkegaard, *Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed: En ligefrem Meddelelse, Rapport til Historien* [The point of view of my work as an author: a direct communication,
as an inclusive reference embracing the continuing debate in Denmark among those who were still pursuing Hegelian ideas on their own account.

What appear to be strong arguments for making Hegel directly the focus of Postscript often prove on inspection not to be so. One such argument points to the fact that the work calls itself “unscientific.” Taken in context, this can indicate a demonstrative rejection of the Hegel of Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften. Yet “Wissenschaft” and the Danish “Videnskab” refer far more widely than to what Hegel labels his “science.” They refer to scholarship in general and to what might be called the philosophy of mind (which incorporated many concepts drawn from theology) of the time. It is therefore just as natural to take the contrast here to be with the scholarly approaches to Postscript’s topic detailed and dismissed in the work’s relatively brief first part. These are rejected because they treat what is a subjective problem as if it were objective. Disturbingly for the aforementioned arguments, the working title that Kierkegaard adopted until at least half-way through his preparation of this work was “Concluding Simple-Minded Postscript,”9 suggesting that the book was promoting a democratic point of view, undermining the assumption that the work’s advertised task, how to become a Christian, was reserved for those with sufficient intellectual talent. Why he changed the title is not clear, but perhaps, as the text unfolded under his pen, he realized that it was indeed for this intellectual audience that the book was being written. By amply demonstrating an ability to speak to the elite in its own terms (to mimic them), but doing so in a deliberately “unscholarly” vein, the author might hope to catch that elite’s ear and convey to it, from above rather than below, so to speak, that its expertise was not required.

The association of the label “unscientific” with mimicry suggests another such argument. It has been proposed by several commentators that what appears to be the substantial content of Postscript is intended as a parody of Hegel, an interpretation that brings Hegel directly in focus. What these commentators in effect claim is that Postscript adopts a Hegelian conceptual apparatus simply in order to demonstrate its inappropriateness for the task at hand. One version of the argument finds a piece of deliberately false reasoning in the pseudonymous Johannes Climacus’s account of becoming a Christian. It says that although the work makes every appearance of providing a criterion of Christian faith, the one offered by Climacus fails so conspicuously (to those able to see this) to guarantee Christian faith as its object that the whole thing must be seen as an

elaborate joke. Another version, drawing on a fashionable interpretation of the ladder metaphor in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), construes what appears to be a philosophical project of clarifying what it is to be a Christian as a deliberate *reductio ad absurdum* of the project itself, it being stated at the start that there is no doctrine or method available, simply a practical task. According to both versions, the reader is supposed to detect nonsense beneath the appearance of sense. Supporters of such arguments point to three things: first, the fact that Climacus is a self-ascribed humorist; second, his insistence that the task that concerns him is a practical and not a theoretical one; and third, Climacus’s sudden “revocation” of *Postscript* in its conclusion. It is then inferred that the point of the latter is to say that once you understand *Postscript*, you can simply put the book away and forget it, for there is nothing there that can help you with the practical task of becoming a Christian.

That Kierkegaard had at this time no reason to fasten his polemic on Hegel suggests there may be alternative explanations for all three facts, as indeed there are. The role of humorist, as Climacus himself defines it, in no way disqualifies him from speaking meaningfully and in general terms of what becoming a Christian is and is not. The humor that he himself fictively represents (at, as he says, the boundary between ethics and religiousness) is such as to distance him from the actual task, analogously to the way in which he saw philosophers who seek to solve the matter in thought and understanding also distancing themselves from it, although in their case with a misplaced seriousness. Climacus’s humor contrasts with the earnestness of the real task itself. In his remarks toward the close of *Postscript*, Climacus admits that for all his talk, here and in the previous *Crumbs*, of seeking a point of departure beyond that of Socrates, he himself has come no further. In the earlier work, the Socratic and more-than-Socratic positions are simply “A” and “B,” the former assuming, as in traditional metaphysics, that the eternal preexists human being and can be retrieved in thought, while in the latter human cognitive capacity is confined to time and history. In *Postscript*, the two positions reappear as religiousness A (the religiousness of “immanence”) and religiousness B (“paradoxical” religiousness). For Climacus, the humorist able to talk in general terms of the paradox and without bearing witness himself to what appropriating it personally implies, the eternal is still something “behind” rather than ahead of him, as in the religiousness of immanence. From an existential point of view, however, the eternal can exist only in a frame of mind (in “inwardness”) in which the individual faces the future with

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finite purposes subordinated to an eternal *telos*. As for the mimicry admitted in *Postscript*’s subtitle, although that is something that may well be used in the service of parody, it differs from the latter. Mime is closer to burlesque, itself a good characterization of much of what we find in a polemical work by a self-styled humorist.

### III. REVOCATION

But why then the revocation? Those who see the whole work as a jest might consider reading this too as a joke. But commentators may also bear in mind that this apparent lack of nerve on the part of the author is not something specific to *Postscript*. There is a step in the same direction in Kierkegaard’s first (and signed) publication, *From the Papers of One Still Living*. Its very preface has a postscript, “for readers who might possibly be worse off for reading the preface.” Kierkegaard goes on: “they could of course skip it, and skip so far that they skipped over the dissertation too, which wouldn’t matter.”

This seemingly flippant remark is open to many interpretations. It might conceal anything, from an author’s natural fear of being misunderstood to the hope that he will be read only by those capable of the kind of concern he wishes to implant (in this early work the importance of having a life-view, something he criticizes his contemporary, Hans Christian Andersen, for lacking). That the pseudonymous Climacus appends a similar postscript, in this case to a postscript, is likewise open to several interpretations. There is the motto of the work (*Philosophical Crumbs*) to which it is the postscript: “Better well hanged than ill wed,” a wish to be spared the imperial attentions of those concerned with the world-historical advance of thought. Or the revocation might be seen as not so much the author’s withdrawal of the work as the author’s withdrawal from the work, a matter usually explained by pseudonymity. Here, however, that seems not to be what the still pseudonymous author would have us bear in mind. Rather, assuming that the positive content of the work is not nonsense, but makes sense to those who “have a sense” of the eternal in the way indicated above, Climacus may be saying that, to those with this sense, the book will not be saying anything new that they need to be told, while if they do not possess that sense, there is no use in their going back over it again in order to try to acquire it.

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One unfortunate effect of the parody and jest argument is to draw attention away from what now seems undeniable, namely that Kierkegaard himself inherits and draws heavily on the Hegelian apparatus. As is natural for someone early influenced by Hegel, Kierkegaard’s first criticisms take the form of a careful dissection of dissertations and journal articles by contemporary German and Danish academics. His comments, almost always concerned with the need to separate religion from philosophy, are serious, probing, and indeed generally philosophical except when commenting on Heiberg and Martensen, where animus is present. On the dissertation of a theology student, Adolph Peter Adler (1812–69), who had also converted to Hegelianism on a visit to Germany, he speaks (in 1840) of Hegel as “a conclusion,” but then “only of the development that began with Kant.” Through Hegel “we have arrived in a deeper form at the result which previous philosophers took as their immediate point of departure, i.e., that there is any substance to thinking at all.” This even sounds as though Kierkegaard accepts Hegel’s criticism of Kant’s critical philosophy for leaving the objects of knowledge “in-themselves” out in the cognitive cold. But he adds that “a properly anthropological contemplation is still to come.”¹³ Five years later, in Postscript, this reservation had developed into the thought of a new “in-itself” intractable to thought, namely “existing,”¹⁴ an an sich at the subject end, as it were, replacing the Kantian one that Hegel closed off at the object end.

The argument in Postscript might be roughly summarized as follows: if we take thought to be the instrument with which philosophers establish essential truth, and accept that Hegel has overcome the regrettable “skepticism” in which Kant’s critical philosophy is forced to leave the world-in-itself beyond the reach of thought, we now find our very existence separating being from thought once more, the elusive an sich now the very medium in which we have our own being. The terms philosophy employs to define its own task are the Aristotelian oppositions of the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal, the contingent (historical) and the necessary. Where Hegelians purport to be able to reconcile these, through the operation of mediating between the opposites in a higher understanding, Climacus insists that the oppositions confront us in our lives as a tension defining an ethical space in which reconciliation is possible only within the individual’s “God-relationship.” Mediation, he constantly and humorously repeats, is an operation possible only for those too distracted to see that, besides being thinking beings, they also exist.

This is the basis on which becoming a Christian is to be understood. Christianity offers the existing individual a reconciliation of the finite and the infinite in acceptance of the absurd notion of the God-Man, or the eternal in time. For the understanding, such a concept is an offense. The term Climacus uses, “repulsion,” is drawn from Hegel’s *Science of Logic* but borrowed by Hegel in turn from Kant. It becomes evident, therefore, that the thought expressed in Kierkegaard’s most nearly philosophical pseudonyms follows a pattern meritig the description “dialectical.” It is concerned with the need to make oppositions clear in order, in this case, to reconcile them not in any advance in thinking, as in the case of that other dialectical thinker, Hegel, but in appropriating the both appealing and repellent Christian idea in one’s own existence.

Johannes Climacus owes his name to a seventh-century abbot who acquired it as author of *Scala paradisi* (Divine ascent). Kierkegaard also used the name in the title of a manuscript of an unpublished cautionary tale written while *Either/Or* was in press (Johannes Climacus or *De Omnibus Dubitandum Est* [Everything is to be doubted]). There its possessor is a young student who unsuccessfully seeks eternal consciousness by way of philosophy. In the two works later assigned to him as a pseudonym (*Philosophical Crumbs* and *Postscript*), readers are urged in the language of philosophy to see that philosophy is not the way. Appropriating the Christian idea is a personal project for which the only encouragement or authority is an active interest in an “eternal consciousness” (for Climacus, Christianity’s promise of an “eternal happiness”). The claimed merits of a proffered position can be judged only on the basis of a present ability to grasp in one’s person the force of arguments, examples, and ironic observations in its favor. The “stages” (aesthetic, ethical, and religious), developed in the pseudonymous series culminating in *Postscript*, can indeed be said to form a kind of “divine ascent.” These works present characters in a dialogue of sorts in which the inadequacies of a “lower” position are brought to light, together with the hint of a need for one that is “higher.” However, to follow that need requires a radical change of vision. Someone who maintains a preference for the cultivated melancholy and hedonistic opportunism of the aesthete reveals an undeveloped sense of the nature of the rewards (self-identity, an inner history, public recognition) brought to light by the ethicist. Similarly, failure on the part of the ethicist to see the moral claims of the “exceptional” individual, not covered by the norms of a visible virtue, is due to a failure to appreciate the position of the single individual. It is from this latter position of the single individual, making room for a sense of a need for redemption, that the Christian promise can first be appreciated.

The method employed in the pseudonymous series from *Either/Or* to *Stages on Life’s Way* is what Climacus in *Postscript* calls “indirect communication.” Since Christianity is not a doctrine that one follows, its content or “truth” can be grasped only subjectively in the form of an “existential communication.” The
teacher does not teach but prompts the novice, not, however, as with Socrates in Plato’s *Meno* for the novice to discover what he already knows, but to enable the single individual to face the eternal in the future in the creative form of his or her own actions. Reaching that point is the topic of the “dialectic” pursued by Climacus in his elaboration of the thesis (taken from the eighteenth-century German philosopher and dramatist G. E. Lessing) that you cannot determine an eternal happiness on the basis of contingent historical fact. Increasing awareness of the opposition between time and eternity introduces urgency or “pathos,” which reaches its extreme in the transition from religiousness A to religiousness B in the realization that the absolute can be found only in the unintelligible idea – which Kierkegaard calls in *Postscript* “the absurd” – that the eternal itself has entered time, so that the focus must now be on something historical.

V. KIERKEGAARD AND MODERNISM

The characterization of Kierkegaard as a dialectical thinker invites a reading of him as a modernist, like Kant and the paradigmatic Hegel before him. In this he can be compared to his near-contemporary and fellow critic of Hegel, Karl Marx (1818–83), who also had a Hegelian past. For both writers, reality continued to reveal itself most cogently and truthfully in the form of oppositions whose ultimate resolution forms the goal of human life proper. For Marx the tensions are found in the working arrangements of society, and the corresponding resolutions require political action on the part of those collectives best placed to grasp the situation and to bring them about. The tensions that Kierkegaard brings to mind concern dilemmas faced by individuals in their personal confrontation with life and independently of such historical variables as the political and economic situation. Some recent commentators prefer to read Kierkegaard as a prophet of postmodernism, but it is impossible to ignore the indications or analogies that suggest quite strongly that his authorship is at core modernist though aimed at introducing a not hitherto envisaged radical form of faith.

Up to and even including the infamous attack on the church and “Christendom,” that “theatrical” version of Christian observance prevailing in Denmark into which he spoke of introducing true Christianity, Kierkegaard’s aim looks much like an alternative to Hegel’s, replacing the Hegelian absolute with another (although also, as in Marx too, another kind of) single truth on which, now in faith, every individual’s understanding can converge. However, with Kierkegaard one may raise the same question as can be asked of Marx:

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15. Marx’s relation to Hegel is discussed in the essay by Terrell Carver in this volume, as well as in the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*.
what happens to the Hegelian metaphysics? In Marx it can be seen to reduce, in the end, to theories of social and political development, theories that can be confirmed or proved false by comparison with the facts. Does something analogous happen in the case of Kierkegaard’s use of the familiar oppositions? The fact that the finite/infinite, temporal/eternal, possible/necessary contrasts form the basis of Kierkegaard’s analysis of despair in the late *The Sickness unto Death*, together with the fact that despair itself is subsumed under the concept of sin, speaks against such a view.

That commentators and interpreters may not want to leave it there is understandable when they come upon certain comments by Kierkegaard himself, such as that made on completing his late works: that he must now “dare to believe that [he] can be saved through Christ from the thrall of melancholy in which he has lived” (adding “and I must try to be more sparing with my money”). The thought that Christian belief is a response to a profound existential need parries, as it were, the official Kierkegaardian line that you have to see Christianity from the point of view of that need if you are to recognize its true nature. This complementary thought leads in the direction of a Feuerbach who would translate the metaphysical vocabulary into that of a human pathology that transcribes religious ideals into expressions of corresponding deficits in the human condition, leaving the latter with no “eternal possibility.”

At the very least, comments such as the above by Kierkegaard can hint at some sense of the way in which a Hegelian and a Kierkegaardian way of asking questions about human fulfillment differ in what might be called their teleological mood. It is a not uninteresting fact that Hegel himself in his earlier years expressed views very close to those with which Kierkegaard came to oppose the Hegelians. The suggestion has been made that Hegel’s early comments on God, religion, and the individual (in the *Theological Writings*) earn him and not Kierkegaard the title of father of existentialism. The French philosopher Jean Wahl (1888–1974) was prompted to remark on the “curious phenomenon” that Hegel was a “precursor of his own criticism and of the most violent anti-Hegelianism ever formulated”; or, still more curious, a precursor of the anti-Hegelianism of the one-time Hegelian Kierkegaard.

To an anti-Hegelian, this circumstance can indicate that the mature Hegel’s thought is a failure to follow up an important intuition about human life. The entire Hegelian philosophy, and metaphysics itself, or reason, might then take on the appearance of a diversion, a convenient but illusory substitute for the

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*17. For a discussion of Jean Wahl’s interpretation of Hegel, see the essay by John Russon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
kind of satisfaction Christianity offers to those able to dispel the clouds and see their situation clearly. In one of his notebooks Kierkegaard contrasts the "greater honesty in even the bitterest attacks on Christianity in the past," which still left it "reasonably clear what Christianity is;" with "the danger with Hegel," that he "changed Christianity – and by doing so got it to conform with his philosophy." Pointing to his own time, he adds that it is "characteristic of an age of reason in general not to let the task remain intact," and that "[t]he hypocrisy of reason is infinitely insidious," which is why it "is so difficult to catch sight of."19

In its attempt to reinstate the task, Postscript presents the human condition as in a kind of constant state of emergency. The exclusively finite nature of the world, as we know it, confronts an innate longing for fulfillment (an eternal closure perhaps). The work’s "dialectic" attempts to bring this to the fore and advert to the fact that the distinction between finite and infinite has continually been obscured or "mediated" by Kierkegaard’s Danish contemporaries. In order to reintroduce an element of revelation that Hegel’s bias in favor of philosophy disallowed, Martensen had gone so far as to introduce a speculative theology that mediates between philosophy and religion, thereby muddying the distinction between religion and philosophy that it had been Kierkegaard’s constant preoccupation to keep in view. Martensen is not mentioned by name, but readers, and especially Martensen himself, would have had little difficulty in making the reference, just as, even if they had not been told, they would have immediately recognized the educationist, historian, and reformist pastor N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) as the butt of the arguments in a section in the Postscript’s first part entitled “On the Church.” Kierkegaard describes Martensen in his journals as “asseverative” and as “not at all a dialectician.”20 The latter might be read as implying that, in this respect, Kierkegaard himself was the better Hegelian.

VI. A NEED FOR DISTANCE

That Kierkegaard did not involve himself openly in the exchanges that interested him in the intellectual debates of the time, but only from the sidelines and in an evasively unscholarly style underlined by the literary device of pseudonymity, could be explained by his taking the differences with his would-be colleagues to be too comprehensive, or their positions too entrenched, to offer common ground. That would allow us to bracket Kierkegaard along with Dadaists and the

Theater of the Absurd, or even Aristophanes— not such a far-fetched idea in view of his one foray into this field,21 as a critic of an entire and still well-established intellectual tradition. It would also speak for the parody interpretation. But if, as indicated, there was much that Kierkegaard had philosophically in common with his contemporaries, the explanation could just as well be his own appreciation of where his creative, and not just his destructive, talents lay.

It is easy from the vantage point of Kierkegaard’s acknowledged importance to forget that while most of his illustrious contemporaries in Golden Age Denmark had strong intellectual ties with Germany and sought a response in German culture, he himself wrote exclusively in his native tongue, one that he claimed was particularly well suited to his creative powers. The fact that after defending his dissertation Kierkegaard rejected his teacher’s suggestion that he apply for a position at the university indicates that he was already aware of the uses to which literary writing could be put. His examiners had already noted expressions of a kind inappropriate to the academic setting.

This, however, invites the thought that Kierkegaard himself may nevertheless have had some feelers out in the direction of Germany. His life as a student and writer falls almost exactly within the period (c.1830–50) in which the Young Germany movement (Junges Deutschland) flourished. This group of young writers sought to pursue their goal of political and social justice through a belles-lettres or “poetic” approach, something that would in itself appeal to the Kierkegaard of the “aesthetic” production. But his aims differed from theirs. In a comment in that posthumously published “report to history,” and parallel to the corresponding comment on Postscript and the System, Kierkegaard describes this production as designed to draw readers “back from the aesthetic and toward becoming a Christian.”22 The Young Germans looked on Christianity as just another aspect of petrified convention to be demolished. This would make the dialectical Kierkegaard want to distance himself from the movement and from any inclination for its Danish offshoots to enroll him in their cause. Yet, for the aesthetic Kierkegaard, the example was there to be followed and his library records indicate that he kept himself well abreast of the Young Germans. He would also be alert to their criticism of the later Romanticism. Here again Kierkegaard would have to be on the defensive; the dialectical Kierkegaard’s stress on the passion of faith can easily trap the unwary reader into thinking that Kierkegaard has much in common with the Romantics, and in his younger days he had indeed expressed his appreciation of J. G. Hamann (1730–88), and of the

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22. Kierkegaard, Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed, 106.
humor that allowed that figure of the counter-Enlightenment to rise above his time. But it is clear from what his dialectical alter ego writes that the passion in question is not one that brings you, as Schleiermacher would claim, to the object of faith itself; it merely puts you in the proper position to begin the task of faith. Focused as it is on Christianity, *Postscript* demolishes any belief in the possibility of arriving at a saving truth, whether achieved (as discussed in Part One) through objective means (history, idealist philosophy, or the mere test of time) or (as in the major part of the work) in the form of some truth-guaranteeing quality of experience. For Climacus, subjectivity is a passionate state of what might be called truthfulness in which the meaning of Christianity becomes apparent although without the force of revelation. The democratic aspect of Kierkegaard’s positive remarks on Christianity, that it is available to all equally and requires no special intellectual talent, would have gained an appreciative ear with the Young Germans, but the *Postscript* project of making explicit what it takes to become a Christian would not have found its place on an agenda drawn up by a movement many of whose most prominent members were in any case Jewish. It is nevertheless thinkable that, sensing the surface similarities between his and their approaches, Kierkegaard would feel the need to stress the differences. He might do this simply in order to escape identification with the Young German cause, or with any cause for that matter, preferring to chisel out alone his polemical notion of “the individual,” the “category through which,” as he says, “in a religious respect, this age, history, the human race, must pass.”

VII. PSEUDONYMITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

But what kind of radical was Kierkegaard himself? In his time and locally he appeared to be the opposite. In the ongoing transition to constitutional monarchy, Kierkegaard consistently opposed the rapid introduction of liberal reform, not, however, because he had monarchical sympathies but because he claimed that the ideals that politicians opposed to the established order were unreal because untried. This did not necessarily even mean that he opposed the ideals themselves, but Kierkegaard seems consistently to have believed that ideas and ideals have to be generated in the hearts and lives of individuals. An idea has to acquire form, and form for Kierkegaard is a matter of enthusiasm. In *A Literary Review*, written while *Postscript* was in press, he says that the age of the French Revolution possessed form because in its ideals it had passion: “In the world of individuals, remove the essential passion, the one purpose, then everything becomes an insignificant featureless outwardness; the flowing

current of ideality stops and the life that people share becomes a stagnant lake – and that is rawness [i.e. lack of form].” In that signed work Kierkegaard nevertheless gives revolutionary zeal only qualified approval; it is better than the cool prudence of modern life where everything is settled by something else, be it reason, a committee, the ballot box, a way of life in which passion has to find its outlets in shapeless and short-lived eruptions not informed by a constant ideal. But as with the qualified approval given to the monastic movement by Johannes Climacus (in *Postscript*), that it shows passion but concentrates it in a conspicuous kind of solitude that belies its alleged focus on the eternal, so too Kierkegaard in the *Review* regards revolutionary activity as a misplaced passion for the eternal concentrated here in time. The true revolution will be undertaken by unrecognizable revolutionaries working in indirect ways to bring the passion of the infinite back to individuals. As for the actual turmoil about to beset Europe in 1848, Kierkegaard remained aloof.

Kierkegaard’s own focus on the individual struck many, and not just Martensen, as exaggerated. But in the time to come it was this radical aspect of Kierkegaard’s thought that captured the imagination. In the early 1920s, Kierkegaard was translated into several languages, including Russian, and was widely read in both academic and literary circles in Germany, where as a student the Hungarian and later communist apologist Georg Lukács (1885–1971) was an admirer (and later critic). But it was not until the late 1920s and the 1930s, through the intermediaries of Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), the second of whom is heavily indebted to the Danish thinker, that Kierkegaard became a familiar point of reference among intellectuals and was heralded as the father of existentialism. In a theological context Kierkegaard was perceived as the creator of a radical faith with a new, spare theology. This latter exerted a powerful influence on the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968). In the United States, Kierkegaard acquired a solid Lutheran following, while in more recent times a focus on the variety and complexity of his writings, his recourse to pseudonyms and the refusal of his writings to fit into the traditional academic and literary categories, has attracted

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*25. For a discussion of Lukács, see the essay by Chris Thornhill in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.


*27. Karl Barth’s theology is discussed in detail in the essay by Felix Ó Murchadha in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*. 
the attention of those who see Kierkegaard as a precursor of postmodernism and perhaps even a prophet of styles of thought and literary expression still to come.

However, this emphasis, too, like that on the Hegel critique, easily distorts the fuller picture. It is easy, for instance, to overemphasize the importance of the pseudonyms and to lose sight of what pseudonymity makes possible. As for the first, several pseudonyms were adopted by Kierkegaard only at the last moment. This is true of such central pseudonyms as Johannes Climacus, Vigilius Haufniensis, and Anti-Climacus, for whose appropriation of the authorship Kierkegaard offers explanations in his journals. Some pseudonyms come within the category of private jokes. “Victor Eremita” (Triumphant Recluse), he explains later, signified that the author of Either/Or, having given up all plans for marriage, was “already in a monastery” while writing a work that included over three hundred pages in its defense.28 “Hilarius Bogbinder” (Hilary Bookbinder) serves to combine the initially two separate parts of what became the one-volume Stages on Life’s Way. A pseudonym that has provoked much speculation is “Johannes de silentio” author of Fear and Trembling. That is hardly surprising since, as Kierkegaard predicted, this would be his most widely read book and by itself “enough to immortalize my name.”29 Kierkegaard’s own comments confirm what might be one’s first guess: that Johannes de silentio tries hard to talk about that of which one cannot speak. He was initially considered for authorship of some comments on the art of divine oratory in connection with conveying what one means by saying as little as possible in the way of “results,” or, as one may perhaps put it, in respect of what is or may be the case.30 Fear and Trembling (a “dialectical lyric” in which the poet prepares the ground for the polemicult) sets up Abraham as a counterinstance to Hegel’s ethics. From Johannes’s point of view, which may be Martensen’s or for that matter most people’s, but could also be called Hegelian, anything that might justify Abraham’s intended sacrifice of Isaac is beyond the sayable, which is to say that no generally acceptable justification can be given. In his notes Kierkegaard distinguishes Johannes de silentio from Johannes Climacus as concerned with the “formal definition” of the absurd, while the latter handles the absurd itself as an object of belief.

Regarding the role of pseudonymity, some recent commentators have pointed out that far from being an author’s way of withdrawing his or her factual personality from the written text, it can be a diversionary tactic allowing much more self-revelation than would otherwise be acceptable or, in Kierkegaard’s case,

29. Ibid., vol. X2, A15; Papers and Journals, 425.

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Volume 2
strategically desirable. It seems clear that Kierkegaard found in his own life material for a kind of philosophizing that ran directly counter to the objectifying spirit of his times. Climacus is, as he says, a relation of his, one aspect of his more than usually complex personality, part of an individual life developing also in the form of an authorship that resulted from a kind of inner dia- or even multi-dialogue. Climacus addresses a task that the real author might accept was also his own but that, under pseudonymity, he need not admit to be undertaking. The (aesthetic, ethical, and religiousness A and B) stages or “spheres” of existence whose development from Either/Or to Stages is recounted and commented on in a section of Postscript (“A Glance at a Contemporary Effort in Danish Literature”) have an admitted autobiographical base but are literary products in the service of religion, at least as Kierkegaard retrospectively assures us in the posthumously published “report to history” and elsewhere. In this light the pseudonymous authorship may be seen to complement as well as to stand in clear contrast to the writings of Young Germany. The contrast is underscored even further by the edifying and Christian discourses that appeared alongside under Kierkegaard’s own name and were addressed, under the guise of “that single individual,” to his once fiancée Regine Olsen and dedicated to his father Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard, a man of a simpler faith than that of the luminaries of Golden Age Denmark. These discourses, in a strongly oratorical and compelling form, present stark, cut-to-the-bone readings of a wide range of scriptural texts.

Those who see the separation of texts from their authors as an extension of other forms of desirable freedom, and, perhaps in view of what Climacus has to say about indirect communication, have interpreted the pseudonymity as signaling Kierkegaard’s total personal withdrawal from the texts, as if his aim was to let readers make of his writings what they may. Or even, if the expression of that aim too is an infringement, as if what the texts say is whatever the reader by right and opportunity can make of them. But then they face the problem of what it means to talk of indirect communication. For indirectness is still a relation and assumes that the author is still somehow there, if only indirectly. Another interpretation of the pseudonymity would allow the author to be there in the background hoping for a reader disposed to see things in the way that motivates the authorship. The point of the pseudonymity would then be twofold: to disown any rapport with a reader lacking that disposition, and to prevent the reader who possesses it from appealing to the real author as an authority for accepting what is written, since any acceptance has to be the reader’s alone, as part of his or her own Bildung or development.

VIII. THE RELIGIOUS PREMISE AND ITS PROSPECTS

The issue of Kierkegaard’s modernity or otherwise is also contested. Some will see the answer depending on whether or not, or to what extent and in what form, the “religious premise” is placed in abeyance. Others may see it rather as a matter of whether Kierkegaard’s version of Christianity so departs from anything that could count as modernism as to be either a reversion to something premodern or a pointer to some new and even postmodern version of Christian religiousness. The issue might also be seen in the light of indirect communication. What if the indirect communicator’s hope in this case was that the reader see things in the light of the kind of experience in which notions of repentance and grace assume meaning for the individual? This would bring the Climacus of 1846 into line with the early Kierkegaard of 1835. If that were granted, then the further question would be whether, within that frame, it was possible to read Kierkegaard as having abandoned what has been called the “reassuring framework of a classical, Aristotelico-Hegelian metaphysics of infinity” or, alternatively, as having exploited it in a radically new fashion, even one that makes its reassurances less reassuring and less easy to come by.

The extraordinary richness of Kierkegaard’s writings, both the published texts and the Nachlass now made available, permits the reader to pursue his thoughts and insights in many directions, some perhaps still unsuspected. The religious “premise,” which has led some sympathetic commentators to focus on Kierkegaard the literary innovator, rather than the religious thinker, may harbor still untold possibilities, as indicated by recent interest in Kierkegaard shown by a dedicated defender of reason – Jürgen Habermas – who now dares to herald a “post-secular” age. Although just these innovations may cause some to hesitate (also on Kierkegaard’s own behalf) to call Kierkegaard a “philosopher,” philosophy itself – existential, postmetaphysical, or postsecular – will surely continue to find in his writings a valuable resource for renewal, this in spite of Kierkegaard’s own railing against the profession as he found it in his time. Philosophy may even find reason there, one way or the other, to revise its own professional parameters.

Kierkegaard’s works are collected in Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, edited by the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997–. Hereafter SKS.


Synspunktet for min Forfatter-Virksomhed (1859). In SKS 16 (forthcoming).

Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks. Edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, David


The nineteenth-century Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky¹ hardly needs an introduction. His stories, which masterfully weave together philosophical reflections, unique personalities, and gripping plots, have earned the author praise as a literary genius, a prophetic political thinker, a keen psychologist, and an expert on human nature and the human condition. His work inspired generations of intellectuals, among them prominent figures of the continental tradition including, among others, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus.

Even the most cursory look at Dostoevsky’s legacy reveals an immense body of work in many disciplines and languages; consequently, any brief account of the novelist’s contribution to the development of ideas in Russia and Europe is bound to be incomplete. My presentation of the topic of Dostoevsky and Russian philosophy will be thematic rather than genealogical. I will begin with a brief overview of the novelist’s historical–intellectual milieu and then proceed to explore Dostoevsky’s artistic treatment of two philosophical questions: the limits of rationality and the problem of freedom. Renowned features of Dostoevsky’s oeuvre, these themes are also central to many of the diverse sources composing continental philosophy. For the purposes of this essay, I limit textual references to two seminal pieces – *Notes from Underground*, which was published shortly after the novelist’s return from exile in Siberia, and the “poem” about the Grand

¹. Fyodor Dostoevsky (November 11, 1821–February 9, 1881; born in Moscow, Russia; died in St. Petersburg) was educated at the St. Petersburg Academy of Military Engineering (1837–41). His influences included Balzac, Fourier, Gogol, Petrashevsky, Pushkin, Sand, and Schiller.
Inquisitor from the monumental novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the crown of his literary career.

I. PHILOSOPHICAL REVELATION AS POLITICAL ACTION: PHILOSOPHIZING À LA RUSSE

The nineteenth century in Russia was an epoch of instigation and rapid growth of extremely diverse ideas and movements. They ranged from mystical–religious visions to socialist utopias; from idealism to “scientific” materialism; from moderate reformist programs to extreme nihilist and anarchist manifestoes. Many of these movements were characterized by active engagement with contemporary European philosophy – predominantly German idealism and French social–political thought – and its creative, often quite radical, interpretations. Ubiquitous censorship and constant governmental persecution of free-thinking did not stifle private philosophical discussions. To the contrary, they intensified the intellectuals’ profound dissatisfaction with their country’s socioeconomic conditions and their eagerness to put new ideas into practice. Long before Russian thinkers had heard of Feuerbach or Marx, they were determined to forgo theoretical speculations about the world in favor of changing it.

For young Dostoevsky and his contemporaries, philosophical education, study of European thinkers, and exchange of ideas commonly took place in informal settings: private conversations, literary salons, and kruzhki (circles or discussion groups). Having emerged from heated debates, ideas and theories found expressions in popular essays, novels, sociopolitical commentaries, literary criticism, and philosophical correspondence. William Barrett in his study of existentialism observes:

> precisely because Russia … had no developed tradition of professional or professorial philosophy there was no insulating screen between the questions and the personal passion such questions ought to arouse. The absence of a philosophical tradition, however, does not mean necessarily the absence of philosophical revelation: the

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*2. Several of the essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1* address these German and French philosophical developments.*

*3. It is interesting to note that in the preceding years (late 1700s–early 1800s) the Russian language itself was considered *dialectus vulgaris*, not suitable for literary or philosophical purposes. In her book *Fiction’s Overcoat* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), Edith Clowes traces the development of Russian philosophical discourse in an atmosphere of opposition created by many intellectuals who did not believe in the possibility of expressing philosophical ideas in their native language and would rather communicate in German or French.*
Russians did not have philosophers, but they did have Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.  

From the very beginning of his intellectual career Dostoevsky was deeply immersed in the contemporary discussion. As a young writer he was sympathetic to Romantic and utopian socialist ideas, and in the late 1840s he belonged to the infamous Petrashevsky circle, an ill-fated secret society of young intellectuals. His involvement resulted in his arrest, imprisonment, and a subsequent death sentence, which, however, was commuted at the very last moment to hard labor and exile in Siberia. By his own account, the terrifying experience of being subjected to a mock execution instilled in him an insatiable feeling of the fullness of life that never failed him, even at the most unbearable moments of loss and despair. Conspicuous in his post-Siberian writings are profound meditations on human existence in the face of death coupled with a sense of passionate life affirmation.

In 1861, on his return to St. Petersburg, Dostoevsky published *Notes from the House of the Dead* – a thrilling fictional account of his Siberian impressions, offering unique insight into the criminal psyche, its violent, self-destructive impulses, and its all-too-human longing for appreciation. This book marks the birth of Dostoevsky the psychologist, or the “realist in the highest sense,” as he later came to characterize himself. The tragic, dark, and irrational traits of humanity he observed in Siberian prison continued to inform his later works. *Notes from the House of the Dead* was soon followed by Dostoevsky’s celebrated *Notes from Underground* (1864), which, one hundred and fifty years later, is still praised as one of the most poignant portrayals of modernity and its discontents.

II. DOSTOEVSKY’S UNDERGROUND

A peculiar blend of confession, psychological struggle, buffoonery, and philosophical dispute, the *Notes* is written from the perspective of a spiteful “anti-hero” who rages against the contemporary rationalist, determinist, and socialist-utopian projects. Because of its uncompromising exploration of the irrational in human nature and its precise, if bizarre, formulation of the paradoxes of freedom, *Notes from Underground* is considered a classic of existentialist literature. It is this book that deeply impressed Nietzsche, who ranked Dostoevsky as the only psychologist from whom he had something to learn. Nietzsche considered his accidental discovery of the French translation of the

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Notes in a bookstore one of the “most beautiful strokes of fortune in [his] life,” not least because the novelist’s lacerated prose apparently challenged the philosopher by “off ending [his] most basic instincts.” Let us take a closer look at the story and its narrator.

The nameless protagonist, the “underground man,” is an intellectually agitated loner who is up in arms against some of the most influential philosophical ideas of his time. Characteristically, his attacks on “the statisticians, sages, and lovers of mankind” take the form of a personal polemic with both individual thinkers (among whom one easily discern Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel) and whole intellectual movements. In striking contrast with both Rousseau’s *l’homme de la nature et de la vérité* and Kant’s autonomous rational agent, the anti-hero describes himself as “the man of heightened consciousness”: someone who is painfully aware of the existential angst that accompanies self-reflection but who thrives on contradiction and doubt. The problem of human nature is at the very center of his diatribe and he approaches it by first taking issue with rationality as a proposed final end of humanity and reason as foundational for human existence.

“Reason, gentlemen, is a fine thing,” the underground man argues:

> but reason is only reason and satisfies only man’s reasoning capacity, while wanting is a manifestation of the whole of life – that is, the whole of human life, including reason and various little itches. And though our life in this manifestation often turns out to be a bit of trash, still it is life and not just the extraction of a square root.

Here one of the underground man’s interlocutors is the ideologue of the nihilist–socialist movement in Russia – Nicolai Chernyshevsky – whose theories were largely based on truncated versions of Feuerbach’s historical anthropologism, Comte’s positivism, and John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism. Chernyshevsky’s “realism” efficiently reduced human nature to a sum of psychological and physiological factors: people were considered good or evil depending on their circumstances and the key to moral development lay in the improvement of social

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5. For these and other references to Dostoevsky in Nietzsche’s writings and correspondence, see C. A. Miller, “Nietzsche’s ‘Discovery’ of Dostoevsky,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 2 (1973).


7. Nicolai Chernyshevsky (July 12, 1828–October 17, 1889; born and died in Saratov, Russia) was educated at St. Petersburg University (1846–50). His influences included Comte, Feuerbach, Fourier, John Stuart Mill, Proudhon, Ricardo, and Adam Smith. His works include *Aesthetic Relations to Art of Reality* (1855), *What is to be Done?* (1863), and *The Nature of Human Knowledge* (1885).
and material conditions. Along the same lines, his doctrine of “rational egoism” grew from the alleged psychological fact that people invariably act in accordance with their idea of what is beneficial for them. In his novel *What is to be Done?* (1863), Chernyshevsky portrayed a pleiad of “new people” – rational egoists with a socialist vision – determined to build a harmonious society of rational agents who, while seeking their own benefit, would benefit society as a whole. It is against this worldview – which stirred up a whole generation of revolutionaries and whose future admirers included Marx, Plekhanov, and Lenin – that Dostoevsky’s underground man fires his most acid remarks.

How does it happen, he asks, that all these philosophers, in calculating human profits, constantly omit one profit? Yet this omitted “profit” happens to be the most essential, “the most profitable profit,” for which some are ready to go against reason, honor, peace, and prosperity. According to the underground man, this most essential component of human existence is nothing else but *volia* – the Russian word that means at the same time “freedom,” “liberty,” “spontaneity,” “unfettered will,” and “arbitrariness.” Thus, the underground man argues:

One’s own free and voluntary wanting, one’s own caprice, however wild, one’s own fancy, though chafed sometimes to the point of madness – all this is that most profitable profit, the omitted one, which does not fit into any classification, and because of which all systems and theories are constantly blown to the devil. And where did all these sages get the idea that man needs some normal, some virtuous wanting? What made them necessarily imagine that what man needs is necessarily a reasonably profitable wanting? Man needs only *independent* wanting, whatever this independence may cost and wherever it may lead. … I believe in this, I will answer for this, because the whole human enterprise seems indeed to consist in man’s proving to himself every moment that he is a man and not a [piano key]! With his own skin if need be, but proving it. (NU 25–6, 31)

For the underground man, a human being is not merely an arbitrary creature; he is a creature that possesses the power of arbitrariness, which allows him, being “predominantly a creating animal,” at the same time to “swerve aside” and do something completely unfitting, unreasonable, and destructive. But the originality of the underground man’s message consists not in his asserting the existence of such power (although this is still something that some determinists and rationalists would dispute) but in his prescriptive claim: not only does man act out of his *volia*; he sometimes “positively must” (NU 25) live solely by *volia*, be it against reason, security, or even happiness. For the underground man, it is
precisely this primordial freedom for good or evil that makes a person who he is: a human being and not a “piano key” played on by the laws of nature.

The view of a human being as a creature endowed with freedom is not new in the history of philosophy. The question is what one understands by “freedom.” The underground man insists on a radical understanding of free will – volia, sometimes translated as “self-will” – as arbitrary, indiscriminate will, a congenital wild force that finds its expression in anything from the most sublime human deeds to the most base and cruel. Volia could be the attribute of a genius or that of a criminal, for its very nature is transgression, and it does not discriminate between creation and destruction. This view poses a serious challenge to the liberal rationalist tradition, which focuses on identifying freedom with moral autonomy on the one hand and reason on the other. This powerful existential critique is carried over to the issue of human progress in general – historical, technological, moral.

The underground man cannot help but laugh at Rousseau’s nostalgic view of the “natural” state of man and his belief that people can be brought up to rediscover their original goodness in a carefully planned civil community. He is equally dismissive of the views of modern materialists, who associate economic and technological progress with moral development and cessation of violence:

What is it that civilization softens in us? Civilization cultivates only a versatility of sensations in man, and … decidedly nothing else. And through the development of this versatility, man may even reach the point of finding pleasure in blood. Indeed, this has already happened to him. Have you noticed that the most refined blood-shedders have almost all been the most civilized gentlemen …? (NU 23)

Even a cursory glance at world history would show that no unified theory can explain all the conflicting differences, senseless suffering and sacrifice, unjustified violence and destructiveness that accompany both human achievement and failure. Yet philosophers continue to offer such theories, or metanarratives, because, as the underground man notes, “man is so partial to systems and abstract conclusions that he is ready intentionally to distort truth, to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear, only so as to justify his logic” (ibid.). This accusation, voiced earlier by the Romantics, may be equally applied to the nineteenth-century idealists and materialists.

Thus, it is suggestive that Hegel’s description of “human history as an altar on which individuals and entire nations are immolated” appears as a quick

8. To be sure, the underground man takes issue with Romanticism as well. The analysis of his critique of the Romantic tradition lies beyond the scope of the present essay.
remark in an afterword to his grand philosophical vision of the world-historical process in which conflicts get resolved as particular ends get “submerged” in the universal end.9 The Absolute Spirit develops in and through individuals and nations toward self-knowledge, rationality, and freedom;10 and while empirical history may appear tragic and disjointed, it is in effect an embodiment of the necessary dialectical movement of the Absolute.

Dostoevsky’s fictional character belongs to the generation of Russian intellectuals familiar with Hegel’s dialectics and his philosophy of history. In the 1840s it captured the minds of the educated Russians to the extent that some of them would stop speaking to each other if they disagreed over some key passage in Hegel’s work. At the time of the underground man’s writing, many versions of historical progressivism, directly or indirectly influenced by Hegel, were being developed and discussed. The underground man’s response to such attempts is quite blunt: “In short, anything can be said about world history, anything that might just enter the head of the most disturbed imagination. Only one thing cannot be said – that it is sensible” (NU 30). Moreover, even if it turned out to be the case that there is some final, reasonable, noble purpose to the existence of the human race, could this glorious end possibly justify individual sacrifices at the altar of history here and now?

What is at stake here is more than just a theoretical polemic with Hegel, the Left Hegelians or other progressivists. For Dostoevsky and for some of his philosophically inclined characters, the issue is first of all ethically and politically charged. He insists that a universal theory that dismisses the destiny of a particular person has a tendency to degenerate into an ideological dictatorship in the name of justice and future happiness of mankind. In the novels following Notes from Underground, Dostoevsky develops this theme in painstaking detail. Its psychological, ideological, and political implications unfold in the analysis of nihilism and revolutionary terror in Demons (1871–72); the same issue, among others, is presented in its metaphysical and existential complexity in the “Grand Inquisitor,” an extraordinary chapter in The Brothers Karamazov.

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10. Interestingly, Hegel’s philosophy of history labels whole geographical regions as not capable of attaining “a distinct form in the world-historical process.” Thus, according to Hegel, Siberia is a quintessential Geist – forsaken place. It is ironic that Dostoevsky’s study of Hegel, however fragmentary, took place during his exile in Siberia, “outside history and culture.” László Földényi offers a fascinating discussion of this ironic juxtaposition in his essay “Dostoevsky Reads Hegel in Siberia and Bursts into Tears,” Common Knowledge 10(1) (2004).
The prophetic “poem” about the Grand Inquisitor is a culmination of Dostoevsky’s lifelong preoccupation with a cluster of problems surrounding the human quest for freedom. The ninety-year-old Inquisitor is a literary creation of one of Dostoevsky’s beloved characters, a passionate young philosopher–dilettante, Ivan Karamazov. Ivan tells the story to his brother Alyosha, an aspiring monk.

The poem imagines the second coming of Christ and is set in the dark and gloomy days of the Spanish Inquisition. In the hot streets of Seville, where hundreds of heretics are burned every day, the Grand Inquisitor recognizes Christ and orders his guards to take him to prison. Their conversation–or rather the Inquisitor’s monologue, for Christ is silent throughout the poem–takes place in the dungeon of the Sacred Court. The story of the three temptations of Christ in the desert becomes the pivot of their encounter. The Grand Inquisitor dramatically asserts that in the three temptations, or questions posed by the wise spirit in the desert, “all of subsequent human history [was] as if brought together into a single whole and foretold; three images [were] revealed that will take in all the insoluble historical contradictions of human nature over all the earth.”11

The Grand Inquisitor’s words reveal Dostoevsky’s own perception of the “scale of the event.”12 For him the three questions represent, in the most forceful and concentrated form, the three ultimate challenges of the human condition: the need for material comfort and security; a longing for spiritual guidance that would alleviate the existential anxiety associated with freedom of choice; and, finally, a quest for universal harmony and the unity of all people on earth. All three are also the supreme expressions of a human being’s search for happiness.

The Grand Inquisitor powerfully questions the motivation of his prisoner, who apparently was given the opportunity to address these needs on behalf of humanity but rejected the offer. How could Christ, who loves people and knows their aspirations and weaknesses, refuse to alleviate their physical suffering and their spiritual angst? The cardinal accuses Christ:

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12. Thus, addressing one of the readers of his Diary of a Writer, Dostoevsky stresses that “in the temptations of the devil are blended three colossal universal ideas and after eighteen centuries the more difficult of these ideas have not and still cannot be settled” (“Letter to V. Alekseev of June 7, 1876,” in Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh [Complete collection of Dostoevsky’s writings in 30 volumes], G. M. Fridlender [ed.] [Leningrad: Nauka, 1986], vol. 29(II), 84–5, my translation).
Instead of taking over men's freedom, you increased it and forever burdened the kingdom of the human soul with its torments. You desired the free love of man, that he should follow You freely, enchanted and captivated by You. Instead of the firm ancient law, man had henceforth to decide for himself, with a free heart, what is good and what is evil, having only Your image before him as a guide – but did it not occur to you that he would eventually reject and dispute even Your image and Your truth if he was oppressed by so terrible a burden as freedom of choice? .... Is it the fault of the weak soul that it is unable to contain such terrible gifts? Can it be that you indeed came only to the chosen ones and for the chosen ones?

(BK 255–6)

Initially as a follower of Christ, the Grand Inquisitor himself spent years in the wilderness preparing for the spiritual ordeal. Yet, unlike Christ, he “awoke” and refused to “serve madness” (BK 260). His decision was based on his penetrating knowledge of human nature, which, according to him, Christ deliberately ignored in the name of a higher ideal. He bitterly questions his prisoner as to how he could treat people as equals and expect them to transcend their limited nature. By contrast, the Inquisitor claims to be committed to people's happiness and security and he does not ask for anything that is beyond his subjects' abilities.

The cardinal's monologue deepens into an almost biblical rhetoric when he accuses his prisoner of not loving humanity at all. He goes so far as to suggest that Christ himself must be a messenger from Hell because of the unbearable suffering and unhappiness his Promethean gifts have brought to the poor rebels. What people need, according to the Grand Inquisitor, is not freedom but an illusion of freedom; radical freedom for good or evil not only demands too much; it breeds anxiety, uncertainty, and misery. Furthermore, even for God's elect a quest for spiritual freedom proves to be a double-edged sword: the stronger one becomes, the more susceptible one is to the ideas of spiritual superiority and domination.

The perennial conflicts between freedom and happiness, freedom and security, freedom and human nature, are not resolved within Ivan's poem. According to Dostoevsky's design, The Brothers Karamazov as a whole functions as a response to the Grand Inquisitor. “The burden of freedom” becomes the central theme for later existentialists, most notably for Sartre, who famously proclaimed that we are “condemned to be free.”

forfeit one’s freedom. Indecisiveness, indifference, cowardice, and weakness are not just human traits; they are chosen attitudes. At the same time, no attitude ever defines a human being completely. Even under the direst of circumstances, a human being remains freedom incarnate and no one can deprive him of that. Yet, the Grand Inquisitor’s question still stands: why does one have to live under the curse of freedom? What is wrong with one’s freely choosing a comfortable bondage? In other words, by urging individuals to take full responsibility for their character and destiny, Sartre seems to be putting an unrealistically positive spin on what the Grand Inquisitor brilliantly identifies as the central existential–spiritual challenge of humanity: our burning desire for independence and our inability to bear the burden of ultimate existential responsibility.

It may seem as if at the beginning of the twenty-first century, after the collapse of several sinister totalitarian systems, we have achieved a much better understanding of the consequences of forfeiting freedom in favor of material security and peace of mind. Some protest banners used in the demonstrations in East Germany in 1989 before the fall of the Berlin Wall directly invoked der Gross Inquisitor as a symbol of ideological enslavement, deception, and brazen contempt for humanity disguised as love and care.14 However, despite crucial shifts on the contemporary political stage, it is far from obvious that we have learned enough from Dostoevsky’s psychological and political insights. Dostoevsky clairvoyantly predicted the rise and fall of totalitarian regimes; yet most importantly, he spoke of the totalitarianism of the mind, which, in its many forms, ranges from banal domestic despotism and degrading paternalism to sophisticated operations of self-tempting consciousness that act on behalf of all suffering humanity. This internal enslavement still looms large in the aftermath of the massive twentieth-century struggles for political liberties and economic independence. For example, one is prompted to ask why Russia, the country that produced so many “fanatics of freedom,” the birthplace of modern anarchism and nihilism, the testing ground of all possible revolutionary lunacies, keeps losing its battle with the shadow of the Grand Inquisitor.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Nikolai Berdiaev15 offers one of the most perceptive commentaries on the phenomenon of totalitarianism. Taking Dostoevsky’s “Grand Inquisitor” as a point of departure, Berdiaev eloquently describes dangerous metamorphoses of libertine mentality into a tyrannical

15. Nikolai Berdiaev (March 6, 1874–March 24, 1948; born in Kiev, Ukraine; died in Paris, France) was educated at the University of Kiev (1894–98). His influences included Dostoevsky, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, and his works included The Meaning of the Creative Act (1916), The Meaning of History (1923), Dostoevsky’s Worldview (1923), The Origin of Russian Communism (1937), and Slavery and Freedom (1939).
Dostoevsky and Russian Philosophy

one. Thus, in the *Origin of Russian Communism* and the *Russian Idea*, Berdiaev exposes the pseudoreligious, messianic rhetoric of Russian revolutionaries and predicts the devastating consequences of the state-sponsored ideological infiltration of people’s conscience. According to Berdiaev, all radical movements in Russia, including nihilism and Marxism, were man-created religions, illegitimate children of Orthodox mysticism. As such, they may all claim the Grand Inquisitor as their forefather. Berdiaev’s brilliant work in Christian existentialism, personalism, and philosophy of creativity during his exile years in Europe (1922–48) exhibit a clear mark of Dostoevsky’s influence. And his heroic attempts at keeping philosophy alive in Bolshevik Russia before he was forced to leave the country reflect his devotion to the individual freedom of conscience which both he and Dostoevsky so passionately defended.

IV. DOSTOEVSKY’S LEGACY: UNDERGROUND AND BEYOND

Dostoevsky’s well-known critique of scientism, positivism, and utilitarian ethics aligns him with the continental tradition, as does his wariness of the alleged power and coherence of rational discourse. He masterfully depicted the precarious metaphysical situation of a modern man who finds himself confronted with a world that defies rational explanations. Reason demands consistency, intelligibility, order; it craves justice and purpose. But life is ambiguous and messy; it does not cater to rational demands. Yet it would be a mistake to view Dostoevsky as an antirationalist, for he does not oppose reason as such. Instead, he rejects the hegemony of abstract reasoning that tends to subsume the paradoxes and controversies of human existence under the laws of necessity and universality. Albert Camus, whose encounter with Dostoevsky has been aptly described as “intellectual intoxication, a life-time attraction, due to a genuine

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16. As early as 1901, Vladimir Lenin identified Berdiaev as someone he and his comrades “need to smash and not just his philosophy.” Shortly after coming to power, Lenin ordered the arrest and deportation of many writers and scholars, whom he considered “the lackeys of capital.” In the summer of 1922, 160 intellectuals and their families, Berdiaev among them, were involuntarily sent abroad on two German cruise ships that later became known as “philosophy steamers.” See Lesley Chamberlain, *Lenin’s Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007).

*17. Other representatives of Christian existentialism and personalism are discussed in essays by Felix Ó Murchadha and Andreas Grossman in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.

and deep affinity,”19 made much of this tragic confrontation between the mind and the world. In the exploration of his two major themes – philosophy of the absurd and rebellion – Camus continually chooses Dostoevsky’s characters as his interlocutors because of their unprecedented openness to the absurd and the paradoxical.20

Likewise, many of Jean-Paul Sartre’s novellas and plays invoke both Dostoevsky’s protagonists and his major themes. Sartre’s heroes engage in Dostoevsky-inspired self-experiments when they rebel against conventional values and principles, drive themselves to the limit in political action, and reflect on their own thinking to the point of nausea. The novelist and the philosopher also converge in their penetrating depictions of self-deceiving consciousness and their belief in the dynamic volatility of human personality and intention.

As a champion of paradoxes and contradictions, Dostoevsky is often linked to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka. Kierkegaard once said that “the thinker without the paradox is like the lover without passion – a mediocre fellow.”21 Neither Dostoevsky nor his protagonists could ever hope to be seen as mediocre on this count. Paradox is a driving force behind many transformations of characters and ideas in his novels: hyperconsciousness paralyzes thinking in the underground; Demons and The Brothers Karamazov flesh out horrific mutations of freedom into tyranny and humanism into unabashed misanthropy; libertarian ideas solidify as suffocating dogmas; social reformers prove to be degenerates; and revolutionaries become ruthless dictators.22

These mutations are closely connected with another “continental” theme of Dostoevsky’s art, namely, his preoccupation with the gap between abstract principles and their practical consequences, between conjuring up theories and living them through. Take the underground man’s revolt against “bookishness” and his glorification of “living life.”23 It is, of course, deeply ironic that the denizen of the underground, an avid reader, compulsive writer, and himself a literary creation, would rage against the written word; it is also bizarre to hear the life-affirming speech from someone who spends most of his energy assiduously avoiding life. Yet quite true to his intent to depict a “paradoxalist,”

20. For detailed study of the connection between Dostoevsky and Camus, see, for example, Ray Davison, Camus: The Challenge of Dostoevsky (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997).
23. The “living life” is a theme that runs through all Dostoevsky’s post-Siberian novels. Notes from Underground contains one of its early expressions.
Dostoevsky again entrusts his anti-hero with the task of delivering a speech on a modern intellectual’s terror in the face of life:

[W]e’ve reached a point where we regard real “living life” as almost a labor, almost a service, and we all agree in ourselves that it’s better from a book …. Leave us to ourselves, without a book, and we’ll immediately get confused, lost – we won’t know what to join, what to hold to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. It’s a burden for us even to be men – men with real, our own bodies and blood; we’re ashamed of it, we consider it a disgrace, and keep trying to be some unprecedented omni-men. We’re stillborn, and have long ceased to be born of living fathers, and we like this more and more. We’re acquiring a taste for it. Soon we’ll contrive to be born somehow from an idea.  

(NU 129, 130)

In this passage one hears Dostoevsky’s own voice with an adamant diagnosis of his society and his century. The novelist’s portrayal of tragic estrangement from life and the hypertrophy of self-defeating consciousness, two maladies of modernity, fits quite well with the philosophical sensibilities most clearly pronounced in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

As we have already seen, the other leading underground motifs are obvious forerunners of existentialism. The narrator is an impersonation of raging individuality. He insists that some differences cannot and should not be reconciled; that freedom and rationality often clash in a grave conflict; that the human condition is not a sum total of observable social and psychological influences; and that life is irreducible to the laws of nature. The avid rejection of reason as a source of meaning, on both the individual and the global level, would become a common theme in twentieth-century philosophy and literature, as would the underground man’s uncompromising focus on radical freedom, with all the misery and anxiety accompanying it.24

24. Joseph Frank thus characterizes the appeal of the anti-hero: “The term ‘underground man’ has become part of the vocabulary of contemporary culture, and this character has now achieved – like Hamlet, Don Quixote, Don Juan, and Faust – the stature of one of the greatest archetypal literary creations. No book or essay dealing with the precarious situation of modern man would be complete without some allusion to Dostoevsky’s explosive figure. Most important cultural developments of the present century – Nietzscheanism, Freudianism, Expressionism, Surrealism, Crisis Theology, Existentialism – have claimed the underground man as their own or have been linked with him by zealous interpreters; and when the underground man has not been hailed as a prophetic anticipation, he has been held up to exhibition as a luridly repulsive warning” (Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860–1865 [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986], 310).
The underground is also the place where Dostoevsky’s famous narrative style first takes shape. The very manner in which the anti-hero addresses his reader—whether in the form of self-mocking confession, sarcastic questioning, provocation, or insult—was eagerly adopted by twentieth-century authors as a form of literary philosophizing. Indeed, why would someone suspicious of reason’s ability to address vital, painful questions of human existence resort to systematic rational argumentation? As Lev Shestov pointed out, Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* can be considered the most effective and consistent critique of pure reason because it manages to capture the convulsive movements of the irrational and the absurd.

Following Shestov’s lead, Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* scorns the “thesis-writers” whose speculations serve to support a preconceived idea but could never reach the depth of insight characteristic of “philosophical novelists.” In his writings and interviews, Camus never fails to credit Dostoevsky as one of the greatest masters of philosophical narration. But what exactly is the style of Dostoevsky’s literary philosophizing? While some commentators emphasize Dostoevsky’s fascination with irrationality and contradiction, others defend the analytical and argumentative aspects of his work.25 Volumes have been written, in the spirit of Mikhail Bakhtin’s classic, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, on the dialogic–polyphonic nature of Dostoevsky’s writing, the style that corresponds to the challenge of depicting the ambiguity of the themes he was set to explore. These features of Dostoevsky’s narrative style have been much studied and there is no need to revisit them here. It is a less popularized connection between Dostoevsky and the acclaimed “masters of suspicion” that I would like to discuss.

In their recent book on Dostoevsky and modernity, Travis Kroeker and Bruce Ward suggest that the novelist should be recognized as a preeminent teacher within the “school of suspicion.” They write:

> Was it not Dostoevsky, before Nietzsche and before Freud, who began to teach readers to observe what a character reveals only in order then to ask: “What is it supposed to hide? From what is it supposed to distract our attention?” The underground man, himself the most striking early instance of the artistic embodiment of *hinterfragen*, prods, even bullies the reader into an attitude of suspicion …. To seek meaning in Dostoevsky’s work is not simply a matter of explicating the consciousness of meaning but of “attempting to decipher its expressions.”26

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Indeed, Dostoevsky not only practiced the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” but he kept perfecting this technique throughout his career. In the Grand Inquisitor’s monologue and surrounding chapters, it reaches its pinnacle. The story of Christ’s ordeal, the Inquisitor’s own story, and their setting within Ivan’s conversation with Alyosha invite the reader to decipher a whole cluster of hidden motives: the Grand Inquisitor seduces people and he was himself seduced by the wise spirit; the cardinal’s speech, the aim of which is to tempt Christ, is itself a reflection of Ivan’s tempted consciousness. Ivan’s poem becomes an epicenter of his larger argument, whose seductive power is eventually turned on Alyosha; finally, behind all these layers there is Dostoevsky – the tempted and the tempter. In confronting his heroes with the “cursed questions” with which he struggled all his life, the novelist invites his readers to share the struggle and question their own deepest commitments.

With this multilayered narrative methodology, Dostoevsky not only establishes a personal dialogue with the reader but also effectively calls into question the traditional philosophical approach to the problem of truth. While the rationalists put an emphasis on what is being said, their critics would shift the focus on how and by whom it is said. Kierkegaard’s famous rendering of truth as subjectivity drives the point home: the only truth that matters is sustained in the existing individual’s committed, passionate relation to it. It is precisely what Kierkegaard calls “the inward ‘how’” that Dostoevsky is depicting through an extraordinary array of diverse characters. He also speaks directly about one’s relation to one’s truth, if only in the underground man’s merciless internal dialogue with himself:

You thirst for life, yet you yourself resolve life’s questions with a logical tangle. And how importunate, how impudent your escapades, yet at the same time how frightened you are! … You may indeed have happened to suffer, but you do not have the least respect for your suffering. There is truth in you, too, but no integrity; out of the pettiest vanity you take your truth and display it, disgrace it, in the market place …. You do indeed want to say something, but you conceal your final word out of fear, because you lack the resolve to speak it out, you have only cowardly insolence. (NU 38)

As both Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky knew very well, it is not enough to know or tell the truth; one must live it and be truthful to it. Yet Dostoevsky would not be himself if he did not allow this very truth to be subverted as well. The anti-hero remarks snidely: “To be sure, I just made it all up. This, too, is from underground” (ibid.). The seemingly genuine, living words about truth and integrity are dropped like lifeless fossils. By making this happen, Dostoevsky
shows that it would take much more than bloodless moralizing to bring back to life a deprived, unloved, spiteful anti-hero disabled by endless self-reflection.

The distinction between the abstract truth of speculative philosophy and the personal, passionate truth of a living individual separates two incommensurable ways of philosophizing. As I mentioned at the beginning, Russian philosophy, for all the diversity of its subject matter, has always been characterized by engagement and existential commitment. For better or worse, the risk-taking nature of Russian philosophy, its favoring of ideas for which one could live or die, was a powerful symptom of the intellectual climate in which Dostoevsky wrote. This intellectual energy of the epoch was creatively transformed in Dostoevsky’s novels, whose tremendous success in turn inspired many European and Russian thinkers and legitimized the connection between philosophy and literature.

Indeed, it is one of Dostoevsky’s greatest artistic achievements that in his novels he created a unique forum for personal, engaged discussions of the most pressing philosophical questions, the questions that the readers of the twenty-first century still find vitally relevant. In an impassioned speech at the recent International Dostoevsky Symposium, the prominent Dostoevsky scholar Robert Louis Jackson said:

Dostoevsky is ours. We were educated on him, he is native to us, he is reflected everywhere in European development. His moral vision, his spiritual outlook, his profound understanding of the human psyche, his grasp of the deep crises of our times – the crisis of faith, of reason, of the moral principle itself, and of the ideal, and above all his deep humanity and sensitivity to suffering – all this, embodied in the imagery of sublime art – is our heritage.27

Undoubtedly, Dostoevsky’s legacy is present everywhere; for this reason any study that focuses on thematic connections between his art and a whole intellectual tradition (in this case continental philosophy) is bound to be incomplete. In this essay, structured around Dostoevsky’s philosophy of freedom and his critique of rationality, many Russian and European thinkers, as well as many topics, remain unexplored. However, I hope that my brief study nonetheless succeeds, at least in part, in conveying the philosophical depth and complexity of the novelist’s contribution to the development of some distinctly “continental” themes.

MAJOR WORKS


5
LIFE AFTER THE DEATH OF GOD:
THUS SPOKE NIETZSCHE

Daniel Conway

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. “Whither is God?” he cried; “I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? … Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, §125)

As we approach the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century, no European philosopher of the nineteenth century is more influential, notorious, and controversial than Friedrich Nietzsche.1 Even Marx, who not so long ago was reviled as the gray eminence behind the red menace – and, so, as the scourge of free-market democratic societies throughout the West – is now regarded as far less relevant, and considerably less threatening, than Nietzsche. Whereas Marx is now widely regarded as passé, which may explain why scholars are free to introduce his “revolutionary” ideas to impressionable college students, Nietzsche presents an enduring, dangerous temptation to young people, malcontents, outcasts, loners, free-thinkers, subversives, sociopaths, iconoclasts, and

1. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (October 15, 1844–August 25, 1900; born in Röcken, Germany; died in Weimar) was educated at the University of Bonn (1864–65) and the University of Leipzig (1865–69). His influences included Burckhardt, Dostoevsky, Emerson, Schopenhauer, Voltaire, and Wagner, and he held an appointment in classical philology at the University of Basel (1869–79).
free spirits. The persistence of his influence and notoriety is attributable to a
diverse array of insights, allegations, pronouncements, and provocations – he
was, after all, a master aphorist and sloganeer – but one teaching in particular
stands out as quintessentially Nietzschean: the death of God. Even those who
know nothing else about Nietzsche know that he dared to announce the death
of God and that he has been memorialized for having done so by poets, play-
wrights, anarchists, and graffiti artists.2

As it is popularly understood, in fact, this signature teaching neatly divides
Nietzsche’s disciples and defenders from his enemies and critics. For those
who have suffered and stumbled under the burdens of divine law, original sin,
Church dogma, and ecclesiastical authority, Nietzsche’s announcement of the
death of God heralds the possibility of a life of unimagined independence and
unprecedented freedom of thought and action. Such readers would happily live
without the constraints, order, and guilt that are popularly associated with God,
organized religion, and morality. For those who have drawn sustenance and
support from the traditions and routines associated with the practices native
to Christianity, Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God augurs a poten-
tially terrifying slide into relativism, uncertainty, disorientation, and chaos. With
respect to Nietzsche’s teaching of the death of God, both camps agree, one is not
free to remain indifferent. The presumed authority of God has simply meant too
much for too long to too many Europeans for Nietzsche’s readers to fail to form
an opinion one way or the other.

Both camps also agree that Nietzsche fully intended for this teaching to
provoke his readers and to contribute thereby to the realization of its stipu-
lated truth. This teaching is typically received, that is, not as a simple state-
ment of fact, along the lines of a conventional obituary, but as a rallying cry and
galvanizing call to action. The intended perlocutionary effects of Nietzsche’s
teaching are generally recognized as twofold: (i) it is meant to expose the vulner-
ability of Christian authority to internal and external challenges; and (ii) it is
meant to encourage Nietzsche’s readers to probe and exploit this vulnerability,
by any means available to them. As we might expect, the value of these perlocu-
tionary effects is assessed very differently by the two camps. Whereas Nietzsche’s
supporters cheer his efforts to challenge the authority of the Church and the
viability of Christian morality, his critics warn that civil society may not survive
a reckless, intemperate assault on its sustaining institutions. Nietzsche’s teaching
is thus received as enfl aming the embers of rebellion – and, it must be said, of

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2. Peter Berkowitz, for example, asserts that “The death of God is the great speculation that
drives Nietzsche’s contest of extremes” (Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist [Cambridge,
MA: Harvard University Press, 1995], 2). He also points out that Nietzsche offers very little
by way of evidence in support of this speculation (ibid., 270–71).
resentment – that lie smoldering within so many of his late modern European readers. Those readers who find themselves drawn to both Nietzsche and Marx, for example, may discover that the source of this dual attraction lies in the anarchic implications of their respective (and very different) confrontations with European modernity.

It is generally agreed, moreover, that Nietzsche did not intend to restrict the challenge encoded in this teaching to the relatively narrow precincts of religion and theology. His declaration of the death of God is understood to report an escalating crisis of confidence that permeates (and weakens) all spheres of endeavor that fall under the general umbrella of late modern European culture. His teaching of the death of God thus issues a challenge to all forms of traditional or conventional authority, regardless of whether they are social, political, aesthetic, cultural, or ecclesiastical in nature. As such, this teaching is understood to underwrite a generic declaration of independence from the established order in all of its familiar manifestations.

That this teaching was intended to provoke is perhaps beyond dispute. But how well known is the content of this teaching? How many of Nietzsche's readers venture beyond their initial impressions of this teaching, whether pro or contra, to explore its intended meaning? Most readers, confident in their immediate, prereflective grasp of the truth or blasphemy this teaching conveys, never pause to ask after the full meaning of the death of God. On the one hand, self-assured atheists, staunch humanists, and confirmed secularists are all certain that Nietzsche, much like Feuerbach before him, meant to expose the God of Christianity as a persistent infantile fantasy, as a psychological projection of those virtues that humankind has been unwilling, until now, to acknowledge as its own. For such readers, the announcement of the death of God is supposed to put an immediate end to a pernicious fiction that has retarded the spiritual and emotional maturation of humankind. On the other hand, devout and sympathetic Christians are just as certain that Nietzsche wishes to subvert the authority of the Church, precisely so that he might deprive civil society of its single most reliable stabilizing institution. They point, plausibly, to the ongoing authority of the Church and to the continued relevance of the altruistic virtues that are integral to the practice of Christian morality.

In both cases, or so it would seem, the rhetorical success of Nietzsche's teaching has been achieved at the expense of a more general appreciation of the philosophical complexity of its motivating insight. As we will see, in fact, Nietzsche's philosophical insight is far less scandalous in its totality than its most provocative rhetorical presentations would tend to suggest. It is not meant, for example, either as an affront to Christian theology or as a challenge, narrowly construed, to the ecclesiastical authority of the Church. Rather than ridicule Christians for their persistent belief in a deceased deity, Nietzsche’s teaching
actually explains both why and how the belief in God has become inextricably entangled with those other beliefs that collectively have sustained the development and expansion of European civilization. As slogans go, in fact, we could do much better. *God is dead* is not nearly as close a fit to Nietzsche’s signal insight as, for example, *The end is near.*

### I. NIETZSCHE’S LIFE

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844, in the village of Röcken, in Prussian Saxony. The son and grandson of Lutheran ministers, young Fritz spent his early years in and around the local parsonage. Bereaved early on by the premature deaths of his younger brother and father, he was raised in a matriarchal household that included his mother, grandmother, maiden aunts, and sister. Finding solace in his books, his music, and in the Pietism of his family, he acquired early on the serious, reflective cast of mind that would suit him for a life of quiet study and contemplation.3

After the death of his father in 1849, his mother moved the family to the town of Naumburg, where young Fritz attended the local *Gymnasium*. He was later selected for matriculation at the prestigious boarding school in Pforta, where he received a traditional education in classical studies. At the University of Bonn, he initially studied theology before studying classical philology under the direction of Friedrich Ritschl (1806–76), whom he subsequently followed to the University of Leipzig. Largely on the strength of Ritschl’s effusive recommendation, Nietzsche was appointed in 1869 to the Chair in Classical Philology at the University of Basel in Switzerland, even though he had not yet completed the requirements for his doctorate.

Nietzsche’s tenure at Basel was interrupted by military service (as a medical orderly in the Franco-Prussian War), punctuated by recurring bouts of illness, and clouded by a growing sense of disenchantment with the field of academic philology. While posted at Basel, he published a number of books and essays, which failed to attract the (positive) attention he thought they deserved. Citing poor health, he resigned his university appointment in 1879 and was granted a modest pension from the Swiss government.

Nietzsche spent the remainder of his sane life writing books and leading a nomadic existence. In restless pursuit of a more suitable climate for his various

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maladies – he was unusually sensitive to even slight variations in temperature, atmosphere, and climate – he shuttled regularly between the Upper Engadine region in Switzerland and various destinations in Italy, including Venice, Nice, and Turin.\(^4\) In this prolific postacademic period of his career, Nietzsche slowly began to acquire an international reputation as a thinker and critic.

In January 1889, Nietzsche’s sanity and philosophical career came to an abrupt end. As legend has it, he collapsed into madness while protecting a carriage horse from the cruel blows of its driver.\(^5\) After a brief period of hospitalization in Basel, followed by a year-long period of institutionalization in Jena, he returned with his mother to her Naumburg home. In 1893, Nietzsche and his mother were joined in Naumburg by his sister, Elisabeth, the opportunistic widow of Bernhard Förster, a prominent Aryan supremacist whom Nietzsche had despised. Elisabeth had married Förster against the wishes of her brother, who refused to attend their wedding ceremony and subsequently broke off all contact with them. Shortly after their wedding, Elisabeth and her new husband sailed for Paraguay, where they contributed to the founding of a colony devoted to the protection of the purity of the Aryan race.\(^6\)

Following the suicide of her husband and the failure of their colonial adventure in Paraguay, Elisabeth returned to Germany and promptly set out to capitalize on her estranged brother’s growing fame and reputation. She fostered a cult-like enthusiasm for Nietzsche’s books and teachings, oversaw the founding of the Nietzsche Archive, and eventually convinced their mother to cede to her (and a cousin) the trusteeship of Nietzsche’s writings. At the time of their mother’s death in 1897, Elisabeth had already moved her brother and the archive to Weimar, where she redoubled her efforts to exploit his fame and notoriety.

Nietzsche finally died on August 25, 1900. Against his wishes, he received a traditional Protestant funeral service and burial, authorized by his friend and amanuensis, Heinrich Köselitz (aka Peter Gast). Following his death, Elisabeth oversaw the renovations of the Nietzsche Archive, from which she launched her aggressive campaign to promote international interest in what she understood to be the political expression of her brother’s philosophy. In the process of steering her brother’s teachings into progressively closer conformity with her own (strongly nationalistic) convictions, she offered her brother’s reputation and legacy to admirers such as Mussolini and Hitler, each of whom claimed to


find inspiration in Nietzsche’s writings.7 Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche died in Weimar in 1935. Her lavish, state-sponsored funeral was attended by none other than der Führer himself.8

II. NIETZSCHE’S WRITINGS

Nietzsche’s first book, The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (1872), is now widely esteemed as a classic text of nineteenth-century European philosophy. His seminal insight into the Dionysian roots of Greek tragedy has been confirmed beyond reasonable dispute. In the nineteenth century, however, the received opinion of Professor Nietzsche’s first book was strongly negative, owing in large part to the author’s apparent disdain for the scholarly customs and manners of academic philology. Still, no critic was as unrelenting as Nietzsche himself. In 1886, he issued a new edition of The Birth of Tragedy, as it was to be known henceforth, to which he appended a preface entitled “An Attempt at a Self-Criticism.” In this brief preface, Nietzsche lampooned the romantic sentimentalism of his youth, exposed and lamented the influences of Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner, and generally chastised himself for continuously misplacing his central insights. Later, in Ecce Homo (1888), he took another swipe at his first book, ridiculing its Hegelian pretensions while celebrating the “tremendous hope [that] speaks out of [it]” (EH:bt 4).9

Nietzsche followed The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music with his four Untimely Meditations, wherein he articulated his unorthodox (= “untimely”) reception-cum-judgment of four influential intellectual trends of his day: the deflationary, miracle-debunking Christology of David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74), which he exposed as symptomatic of the creeping philistinism of the newly unified Reich (David Strauss, The Confessor and Writer); the Hegelian and neo-Hegelian fascination with history, which he identified as potentially disadvantageous for life itself (The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life); the pessimism of Schopenhauer, whose salutary influence on his own development he presented as emblematic of genuine education (Schopenhauer as Educator); and the larger cultural significance of Richard Wagner’s move from Tribschen

7. Ibid., ch. VIII.
8. Ibid., 196–9; see also Young, A Philosophical Biography of Friedrich Nietzsche, 558.
9. Citations identify Nietzsche’s works using abbreviations as follows: The Antichrist (A); Beyond Good and Evil (BGE); The Birth of Tragedy (BT); Ecce Homo (EH); On the Genealogy of Morality (GM); The Gay Science (GS); Twilight of the Idols (TI); Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Z). Lower case instances of these abbreviations refer to Nietzsche’s reviews of his “good books” in Ecce Homo. Roman numerals refer to parts of a work, Arabic numerals refer to sections rather than to pages, and P refers to prefaces.
to Bayreuth, which was to become synonymous with the annual music festival staged there (Richard Wagner in Bayreuth).

In preparation for his next book, Human, All Too Human (1878–80), 10 Nietzsche abandoned the essay form and began to perfect the aphoristic style for which he is now well known. Human, All Too Human constitutes his first attempt to illuminate the rudiments of moral psychology and moral epistemology. He continued these efforts in his next two books, Daybreak (1881) and The Gay Science (1882), wherein he endeavored to expose the basic “prejudices” (or unexamined presuppositions) of contemporary morality.

Nietzsche’s most influential book was Thus Spoke Zarathustra, which was published in four parts over the period 1883–85. Although originally envisioned as a tripartite work, culminating in the central character’s lyric expression of love for eternity, Zarathustra also comprises a parodic fourth part that places into question the larger aims (and accomplishments) of the book. The central character, modeled loosely on the Persian prophet Zoroaster, is best known for his peripatetic teaching of the Übermensch, which has been widely received as conveying Nietzsche’s postmoral, post-theistic ideal of human (or transhuman) flourishing. Throughout the course of his travels, however, Zarathustra is routinely frustrated by his failure to disseminate this novel teaching to his disciples. Convinced that his obtuse auditors are largely responsible for this failure, he experiments with various forms of delivery and address while attempting to tailor his teaching to the diverse audiences he encounters. These experiments are punctuated by his occasional retreats to, and returns from, the solitude of his mountaintop cave, where he reflects on his pedagogical successes and develops his plans for establishing an improved rapport with his auditors.

As Nietzsche explains in Ecce Homo, he devoted his post-Zarathustran writings to the task of cultivating a sympathetic readership for his Zarathustra (EH:bge 1). Toward this end, he endeavored in his first post-Zarathustran book, Beyond Good and Evil (1886), to expose the illusions, fictions, and prejudices that have dominated the practice of philosophy and science thus far and stalled their progress. In support of this endeavor, he advanced a sustained criticism of the metaphysical oppositions on which philosophers have typically relied for their normative evaluations, recommending instead a more nuanced appreciation for the (non-oppositional) differences that obtain between varying perspectives, shades, and gradations. Having exposed the prejudices at work in

10. When Nietzsche authorized a new, two-volume edition of Human, All Too Human in 1886, he bundled together the original book (now Volume I), the Assorted Opinions and Maxims that he had published in 1879 as an “Appendix” to Human, All Too Human (now Volume II, Part One), and The Wanderer and His Shadow, which he originally had published late in 1879 as a separate work (now Volume II, Part Two). See Young, A Philosophical Biography of Friedrich Nietzsche, 564–66.
contemporary philosophy and science, he then interpreted the currency of these prejudices as symptomatic of the decline and disintegration of European culture. The recommended emigration “beyond good and evil” would happily coincide, he believed, with the renewal of a distinctly European culture.

In On the Genealogy of Morality (1887), Nietzsche advanced his influential hypothesis that contemporary Christian morality is descended from an ancient slave morality, which arose in reaction and response to the oppressive material conditions that both expressed and reinforced the primacy of a historically prior noble morality. Although the material conditions of slavery have largely disappeared from late modern Europe, the servile pedigree of contemporary Christian morality is apparent in its beatification of suffering and inwardness, its praise for the virtues of passivity and hostility toward the virtues of activity, its simplistic opposition of “good” to “evil,” its allegiance to the ascetic ideal, and its orientation to reward (and revenge) in a promised afterlife. By employing terms that immediately recall Hegel’s famous “master–slave dialectic,” Nietzsche hoped to correct for what he perceived to be the undue optimism of Hegel’s familiar story. Without discounting the importance of the struggle for recognition in the formation and maturation of the self, Nietzsche wished to disclose the full, sordid truth of the triumph of the “slave” over the “master.” Rather than lead to the development of self-consciousness and the proliferation of political freedom, the victory of the self-loathing “slave” may eventuate in the eradication of nobility and the extinction of the human species.

The slave revolt in morality is Nietzsche’s term for the process that culminated in the founding of a morality in which unwarranted suffering is honored as the primary index of one’s “goodness.” The noble morality, he explains, was predicated on the virtues of spontaneous self-assertion, uncompromising self-possession, and martial physicality. Noble types naturally and instinctively celebrated themselves (and everything pertaining or belonging to them) as good (gut), while regarding everything and everyone else as common or bad (schlecht). By way of contrast, slavish types always launch their evaluations by first denouncing the hostile external world against which they must struggle. The slaves pronounce their masters evil (böse), and only as an afterthought proclaim themselves good on the basis of the suffering they endure. The most enduring and potent creation of the slave morality is thus a triumph of recategorization: Those deemed good by the noble morality are in fact evil. Whereas someone or something deemed bad by the noble morality is thereby marked as common, other, different, and therefore insignificant, someone or something deemed evil by the slave morality is thereby marked as lacking adequate warrant to continue to exist as such.

The psychological key to the slave revolt in morality is the creative expression of ressentiment (or resentment), which Nietzsche identifies as the propensity of
the slave type to repudiate everything that it is not, as a means of generating affect and thereby distracting itself from its failure to establish an integrated identity. Because the slave type has no coherent self to affirm, moreover, it is utterly reliant on its enabling fantasy of a hostile external world. In order to ensure the permanence of the hostility it detects in the external world, and thereby preserve the intensity of its animating resentiment, the slave type targets as its mortal enemies all earthly exemplars of beauty, nobility, self-possession, and goodness.

In developing his genealogical approach, Nietzsche made novel use of resources and methods drawn from scholarly disciplines as diverse as etymology, psychology, history, psychology, and anthropology. He did so while attempting to pursue his investigations squarely within the emerging paradigm of scientific naturalism. He consequently refused himself recourse to all principles of explanation that appealed to occult forces, supernatural causes, and spectral agencies. Even the venerable conscience, long thought to be “the voice of God in man” (EH:gm), was to be understood as a naturally occurring outgrowth of human psycho-physiology. Toward this end, Nietzsche explained the emergence of human interiority, of which the conscience is emblematic, as resulting from the mandatory inward discharge of instinctual energy. Prohibited from visiting upon others their natural instinct for cruelty, he hypothesized, the earliest civilized human beings were obliged to vent their pent-up aggression against themselves. Under the civilizing influence of this enforced regimen of self-directed aggression, human beings involuntarily acquired with respect to themselves an internal point of reference and a corresponding set of self-regarding relationships and prohibitions, which became popularly associated with the hectoring voice of God.

The typical human experience of interiority thus manifests itself as what Nietzsche calls the bad conscience, inasmuch as this experience pertains exclusively to a reckoning of one’s failings, shortcomings, debts, disabilities, errors, vices, and sins. The suffering one endures as a consequence of this inward discharge of instinctual aggression is thus interpreted as a nagging reminder of one’s unfulfilled promise and unrealized aspirations. From here it is but a short step to the guilty conscience. According to Nietzsche, the experience of guilt is nothing more than a particular, moralized interpretation of the suffering associated with the “bad conscience.” Guilty parties suffer, or so they have come to believe, because they deserve to suffer — owing, supposedly, to an irreparable flaw or defect in the very nature of their being. This interpretation of the pain of the “bad conscience” is ingenious, Nietzsche concedes, for it renders our suffering meaningful and charges us with the impossible task of atoning for our guilt.11

11. On the Genealogy of Morality has recently received considerable attention in the secondary literature. Book-length treatments of note include: my Reader’s Guide to Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals (London: Continuum, 2008); Lawrence J. Hatab, Nietzsche’s On the
In the following year, 1888, Nietzsche produced several short books that collectively elaborated his critique of modernity and its representative institutions. In these books, he developed his earlier account of European nihilism and advanced his diagnosis of late modernity as a decadent epoch. The crisis of will that he earlier associated with the onset of nihilism is presented in these books as symptomatic of a much larger (and inevitable) process of cultural decay. It is the decay of European culture, he conjectured, that explains the rise and currency of those projects in terms of which European modernity tends to define its putative success, including democracy, liberalism, science, progress, cosmopolitanism, feminism, and secularism. While questions remain about his prescriptions, if any, for treating the decadence he claimed to detect, these books present a deeply skeptical appraisal of the generative and regenerative resources available to late modern European culture.

The first of these books, *The Case of Wagner*, lays out the particulars of his case against Richard Wagner, the great German composer who had exerted such a profound influence on the young Nietzsche. His subsequent estrangement from Wagner, he now explains, was a necessary – if excruciatingly painful – element of his own development as an independent thinker. This development, he now reveals, has positioned him to appreciate Wagner’s magisterial music-drama as symptomatic of the degeneration of German culture, and not, as he had once believed, as indicative of the rebirth in Europe of a genuinely tragic culture. In his next book, *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche took aim at the bloated idols of his epoch, delivering blistering indictments of the contemporary scene in morality, science, politics, religion, literature, and the arts.

Nietzsche followed *Twilight of the Idols* with *The Antichrist(ian)*,12 which was meant to constitute Book One of his proposed Hauptwerk, provisionally entitled *The Revaluation of All Values*. *The Antichrist(ian)* is known both for its angry, no-holds-barred attack on Christian morality, and for its original psychological profile of the historical Jesus. Rather than rush *The Antichrist(ian)* into print, however, Nietzsche decided that he first needed to prepare his German readers for its appearance, which he immodestly believed would be explosive. Toward this end, he quickly penned his faux autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, which he apparently believed would cultivate a readership keen (or at least curious) to

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12. Nietzsche’s title, *Der Antichrist*, carries the meaning both of the biblical Antichrist (Satan) as well as the anti-Christian (analogous to the anti-Semite).
receive *The Antichrist(ian).* Ecce Homo delivers an idealized – and occasionally fictitious – account of Nietzsche’s life and works, which he endeavored to present as culminating in his accession to his “destiny” as the first immoralist. In this capacity, or so he claimed, he became the first critic to discover and expose the real truth of Christian morality – namely, that it is a decadent morality, bent on eradicating from the world all remaining traces of truth, beauty, nobility, and the natural order of rank.

Nietzsche closed this remarkably productive year with two relatively minor works: *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in which he diagnosed the decadence of Richard Wagner while documenting his longstanding aversion to Wagner; and *Dithyrambs of Dionysus*, a collection of poems and songs dedicated to Catulle Mendès, the librettist of *Isoline*. His oft-promised Hauptwerk, envisioned first under the title *The Will to Power* and subsequently under the title *Revaluation of All Values*, never materialized. The book that first appeared in 1901 under the title *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values* was produced without Nietzsche’s knowledge or consent. Working from a plan developed (and discarded) by Nietzsche for a four-volume Hauptwerk, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, assisted by others (including Köselitz), arranged and edited 1067 entries drawn from his various notebooks. Although *The Will to Power* affords Nietzsche’s readers a wealth of valuable insights into the development of his philosophy over the period 1883–88, it cannot be regarded, as Elisabeth hoped it would, as a reliable statement of Nietzsche’s mature philosophizing. Nor should it be understood to confirm, as Elisabeth also hoped it would, the validity of her wishfully opportunistic, broadly nationalistic interpretation of her brother’s philosophy.

### III. NIETZSCHE’S PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger began his 1940 lecture course on Nietzsche by noting that Nietzsche’s philosophical thinking may be collected

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13. Nietzsche’s plan was thwarted by the onset of madness, which delayed the eventual publication of these books. *Ecce Homo* did not appear until 1908, some fourteen years after the appearance of the book for which it was meant to create a sympathetic audience.


15. See Young, *A Philosophical Biography of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 534–42.
under “five major rubrics,” each of which affords us a distinct route of entry into Nietzsche’s “metaphysics,” which was the focus of Heidegger’s investigation.16 (Heidegger famously identified Nietzsche as “the last metaphysician of the West,” suggesting thereby that Nietzsche had succeeded in articulating a critique of metaphysics that relied only minimally on the basic presuppositions of Western metaphysics. Presumably, successor critics, including Heidegger himself, would be poised to complete Nietzsche’s attempted overcoming of Western metaphysics, “twisting free” once and for all of its unwanted legacy.17) While Heidegger’s interpretive aims may not coincide with our own, the “rubrics” he identifies nevertheless suggest a useful heuristic for an initial survey of Nietzsche’s contributions to philosophy. These “five major rubrics,” which we will review in order, are nihilism, the revaluation of all values hitherto, will to power, the eternal recurrence of the same, and the overman.18

**Nihilism**

Nihilism is Nietzsche’s term for the general condition in which human beings find themselves beset by a crisis of will, which renders them unable to invest resolute belief in anything, including (or especially) the authority of God (or any other putatively transcendent value). In the shadow of nihilism, in fact, human beings lose the capacity to muster a will for – that is, a commitment to – the very future of humankind itself. Future-oriented projects, especially those of the sort that have founded enduring cultures and civilizations, give way to goals and tasks of a far more modest scope. As life itself is drained of its former meaning, human beings turn ever more aggressively to ascetic practices of self-destruction. Bereft of a goal whose pursuit might justify the suffering that attends the human condition, human beings inevitably will commit themselves to the goal of self-annihilation. According to Nietzsche, the persistence of nihilism thus signals the advent (or activation) of the “will to nothingness,” which he identifies as the last will of human beings, the will never to will again.

Nietzsche often presents his diagnosis of nihilism as pertaining to the history, culture, and destiny of Europe itself. As such, this diagnosis presupposes a particular understanding of the historical development of a unified European culture, the recent disintegration of which Nietzsche links to the current experience of nihilism. Integral to the development of this unified culture, he insists, was the

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uniquely European reverence for a kind of human being – amoral, creative, and semi-barbarian – whose exploits could inspire both fear and admiration. With the rise of the Church and the spread of its timid virtues, however, this kind of human being – affectionately likened by Nietzsche to a “beast of prey” – has all but disappeared from the cultural landscape of late modern Europe. Although hailed by progressives as indicative of the moral improvement of European culture, the disappearance of these “beasts of prey” strikes Nietzsche as a grave and potentially fatal development: “The sight of humankind now makes us weary – what is nihilism today if it is not that?” (GM I: 12).

Nietzsche’s own relationship to nihilism is widely debated. On the one hand, he is regularly credited with identifying the harrowing prospect of nihilism and rallying his readers to resist its thrall. On the other hand, he is often accused of promoting the spread of nihilism, perhaps in support of his own designs on a legacy of world-historical significance. What is undeniable in this debate is that Nietzsche was and is widely understood by his readers as urging them to hasten or facilitate the collapse of those social institutions that were and are indicative of the decadence of late modern European culture. Those who applaud Nietzsche’s diagnosis and celebrate his candor typically appeal to his image of the wise vintner who prunes an overburdened vine so that it might produce more perfect grapes. Those who refuse Nietzsche’s diagnosis and recoil from his amoral calculations typically point to the anarchic impulses that inform his critique of modernity. These critics maintain, for example, that Nietzsche’s uplifting rhetoric of restoration and rejuvenation serves, at least in part, as a pretext for his more basic pursuit of the joy that attends acts of gratuitous destruction.

Revaluation of all values

Revaluation of all values is Nietzsche’s term for a decisive, pivotal re-orientation of human beings either to their defining values or to the act (or process) of determining and assigning values. The slave revolt in morality, by means of which oppressed human beings convinced themselves (and others) of their genuine preference for the suffering, humiliation, poverty, and destitution they were made to endure, marks one such revaluation of values. For several millennia, Nietzsche maintains, the dominant religious and moral traditions of Western civilization have succeeded in promulgating ascetic, anti-affective values that have placed human beings at odds with themselves and their natural environment. As an expression of these values, Western civilization has promoted ideals of human flourishing that rely heavily on suffering, guilt, self-deprivation, and alienation. While indirectly productive of the art, politics, and culture that define the glory of Western civilization, the reign of these ideals has exacted from

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humankind a nearly mortal toll. Centuries of self-inflicted aggression have so thoroughly wearied the species that Nietzsche now fears for its future. As we have seen, he understands the historical situation of late European modernity in terms of the ominous re-awakening of the will to nothingness.

Nietzsche both anticipates and claims to work toward the possibility of another revaluation of all values, which effectively would reverse or negate the slave revolt in morality. As envisioned by Nietzsche, the coming revaluation of values would accomplish, first of all, a reversal of the ascetic, anti-affective values that have sustained the metaphysical systems of Western religion and philosophy. The highest value will be re-assigned to what is most real: the body and its affects, the earth and its ecosystems, and the cosmos and its constituent quanta of power. The envisioned revaluation of values also will accomplish a change in the source or provenance of values. Humankind will no longer orient its future to values that reflect a condition of lack, deprivation, or defect, but will take its bearings instead from values that express a condition of surfeit, overflow, and wealth. The precise target of Nietzsche’s revaluation of values is Christian morality, which has succeeded in denaturing human beings and setting them at odds against themselves.

Nietzsche’s understanding of his own relationship to the envisioned revaluation of all values is not entirely clear. On some occasions he presents his writings as preliminary to the envisioned revaluation of values, while on other occasions he presents himself as participating in the envisioned reversal. In the course of explaining why he is a “destiny,” for example, he intimates that he in fact embodies the revaluation of all values, which, he insists, has “become flesh and genius in [him]” (EH: “destiny” 1). As this passage suggests, and as Nietzsche goes on to confirm, his contribution to the revaluation of all values lies in his discovery and subsequent exposé of the truth of Christian morality – namely, that it both promotes and exacerbates the decay of the highest human types. As he also indicates, his contribution to the revaluation of all values also includes his contradiction (or negation) of Christian morality itself (ibid.).

Finally, Revaluation of All Values is the title Nietzsche proposed for his ill-fated Hauptwerk, of which he completed only the Preface and “First Book,” which we know as The Antichrist(ian). He concluded this vituperative book by pronouncing on Christianity a summary “curse,” which he apparently believed would play a decisive, catalytic role in the historical destruction of Christian morality. As such, the “curse” he pronounced on Christianity may have been meant either to inaugurate or to accomplish the anticipated revaluation of all values. Even if his rhetorical aims in The Antichrist(ian) are difficult to sort out, however, he clearly regarded his challenge to Christian morality as contributing uniquely to the re-appraisal of Christianity that would inform the envisioned revaluation of all values.
Will to power

Will to power (Wille zur Macht) is the name Nietzsche gives to his central cosmological hypothesis and to the active principle featured therein. First elaborated in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, this hypothesis maintains that every being, whether animate or inanimate, both shares in and articulates a will to express its native power. Nietzsche thus envisions a cosmos in constant flux, as “centers” of power aggregate, grow, and disaggregate in accordance with the blind, impulsive strivings of their constituent beings. The hypothesis of will to power thus suggests an amoral, chaotic cosmos, whose “quanta” continuously re-organize themselves into transient configurations that promise, at any given moment, the greatest possible expression of power. In an influential passage, Nietzsche speculates that “The world viewed from inside … would be ‘will to power’ and nothing else” (BGE 36).

Although best known as a proposed contribution to physics and/or cosmology, Nietzsche’s hypothesis of will to power appears most frequently – and, some scholars believe, most persuasively19 – in the context of his attempt to account for the basic processes of life itself. When first elaborated in Zarathustra,20 in fact, the will to power is presented as the very essence of life itself (Z II: 12).21 In his post-Zarathustran writings, Nietzsche consistently identifies the will to power – and not the will to self-preservation – as the “cardinal impulse [Trieb]” of all living beings (BGE 13). Every living being, he explains, blindly pursues the optimal conditions under which it might express its native “strength” and thereby achieve the desired “feeling of power” (GM II: 12). Just as surely, he continues, every living being instinctively avoids any impediment or obstacle it might encounter in the path of its pursuit of these optimal conditions (ibid.). He is quick to add, however, that the pursuit of these optimal conditions does not place a living being on “its path to ‘happiness,’ but its path to power, to action, to the most powerful activity, and in most cases actually its path to unhappiness” (GM III: 7). As this last remark is meant to convey, living beings pursue

19. Maudemarie Clark maintains that this restricted, psychological interpretation of the will to power, as what she calls “a second-order drive that [Nietzsche] recognizes is dependent for its existence on other drives,” is all that he may “claim knowledge of” (Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 227). The extensions and applications of this account, especially into the realms of metaphysics and cosmology, may be more famous and influential, but they amount to unwarranted “generalizations” of his basic psychological thesis (ibid.).

20. The first reference to will to power in Zarathustra appears in Z I: 15. See Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Graham Parkes (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xx–xxii. This reference is not explained until Z II: 12.

21. For a persuasive statement of the objection that Nietzsche already goes astray in presenting life as will to power, see Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy, 218–27.
the desired “feeling of power” even at their own expense. In a healthy organism, that is, the will to power always trumps the will to self-preservation.

Although Nietzsche fancied himself an opponent of Darwin, the actual target of his opposition was the “social Darwinism” espoused by those popular figures – he mentions Herbert Spencer and Thomas H. Huxley by name (GM II: 12) – who asserted the primacy of reactive forces in the microcosm of molecular biology and in the macrocosm of European culture. He thus condemned “the whole of English Darwinism” (GS 349), which, he insisted, mistakenly confused the exceptional circumstances of late modernity with the normal circumstances in which human beings have pursued the optimal conditions under which they might accumulate, reserve, and expend their native strength. That bourgeois Europeans value self-preservation above all else is indicative, he allowed, of nothing more than the abject decadence of late modern European culture, that is, of its decline from the norms and standards established in bygone epochs. While it is true that sick and declining organisms naturally seek to preserve themselves, healthy and ascending forms of life naturally seek to accumulate and expend their strength – even at the expense of their own self-preservation.

Eternal recurrence

The teaching of eternal recurrence is presented by Nietzsche as performing a divided office: (i) it advances a model of an amoral, godless cosmos in which all atoms and their transient configurations eternally recur; and (ii) it articulates an emblematic expression of one’s affirmation of life within such a cosmos, stripped bare of all supernatural contrivances and metaphysical comforts. In Nietzsche’s most influential formulation of the idea of eternal recurrence, as found in Section 341 of The Gay Science, his readers are asked how they would respond if they were to learn (from a demon, no less) that their lives have recurred in every detail innumerable times and will continue indefinitely to do so.

Two general lines of response are anticipated: either we will curse the impudent demon, gnashing our teeth in despair (and thereby failing the implicit test...

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22. As scholars have noted, Nietzsche’s understanding of Darwin was at best sketchy and at worst uninformed. It is not clear that he ever undertook a careful study of Darwin’s theories, and he was in any event far more concerned to combat the pernicious influence of these theories – distorted or not – on science and culture. See, for example, Keith Ansell-Pearson’s excellent discussion in Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition (London: Routledge, 1997), ch. 4, “Nietzsche contra Darwin.” See also John Richardson, Nietzsche’s New Darwinism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 11–26.

23. Here I depart somewhat from Heidegger’s proposed “rubrics,” preferring the more familiar “eternal recurrence” to the less familiar (although friendlier to Heidegger’s peculiar interpretation) “eternal recurrence of the same.”
of affirmation), or, recognizing the demon as a god, we will rejoice and will the eternal recurrence of our lives in every detail (thereby passing the implicit test of affirmation). This section ends by posing the following question, which has led some scholars to conclude that the thought of eternal recurrence is meant to perform a diagnostic function not unlike that of Kant’s famous “categorical imperative”: “[H]ow well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this eternal confirmation and seal?” (GS 341). If we assume that becoming well disposed to oneself and to life ranks among the highest goods available to human beings, then the thought experiment described in this section would appear to serve the diagnostic function that is popularly assigned to it. To be capable of affirming the eternal recurrence of one’s life in every detail is thus presented as the single most reliable index of human flourishing.

The teaching of eternal recurrence is apparently meant to express or represent an epiphany Nietzsche experienced in 1881 while walking, as was his wont, in the mountains near Sils-Maria in the Upper Engadine region of Switzerland. “6000 feet beyond man and time” is how he described his experience at the time. Translating this personal epiphany into a communicable philosophical teaching proved to be extremely challenging, however, and Nietzsche’s success in doing so remains difficult to gage. Even today, scholars vigorously dispute what, if anything, this teaching is meant to convey. Part of the problem here is that the teaching of eternal recurrence receives relatively little treatment in Nietzsche’s published writings. It figures prominently in only one book (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, whose form is closer to a prose-poem than a philosophical treatise), while in other books it is scarcely mentioned. When the teaching is presented, moreover, it is often placed in the mouths of characters and personae (e.g. the “demon” in GS 341) whom Nietzsche’s readers cannot trust to profess reliably on his behalf. In his autobiography, Nietzsche further confuses his readers by attaching “[his] formula for greatness in a human being” not to the teaching of eternal recurrence, but to the (potentially kindred) teaching of *amor fati* (love of fate) (EH: “destiny” 10). Finally, it is not at all clear how we are supposed to reconcile the cosmology suggested by the teaching of eternal recurrence, wherein each of us is but a “speck of dust” within the perpetually overturned “eternal hourglass of existence” (GS 341), with the broadly ethical implications of its diagnostic function.

24. As Clark points out, the demon does not offer us a choice between these two responses (*Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 281).

25. This interpretation of the eternal recurrence has been advanced most influentially by Bernd Magnus, *Nietzsche’s Existential Imperative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1978), esp. 111–54. See also Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 245–86.
Nietzsche describes the idea of eternal recurrence as the “fundamental conception” of his greatest work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85). (The “tragedy” of Zarathustra is introduced to Nietzsche’s readers in Section 342 of *The Gay Science*, which immediately follows his introduction of the idea of eternal recurrence in Section 341.) Zarathustra’s struggles to embrace this elusive idea, presumably so that he might someday promulgate it to others, furnishes the book with its central dramatic structure.26 Throughout his various journeys and speeches, Zarathustra strives to grow into the role supposedly reserved for him as the teacher of the eternal recurrence.27 While his growth is in many respects remarkable, and even quasi-heroic, the open-ended conclusion of the book (in Part IV) leaves some doubt about the success of his endeavor to embrace the teaching of eternal recurrence.28 In the final scene of the book, he sets out to meet his ideal companions (whom he calls his “children”) and, presumably, to commence the postmoral, post-theistic epoch of human history. Indeed, the dramatic trajectory of the book suggests that a successful meeting between Zarathustra and his “children” could take place only if he has in fact become the teacher of the eternal recurrence. But the book closes on an inconclusive note: the narrator neither confirms nor denies the eventuality of this fateful meeting. We therefore cannot know if Zarathustra has in fact grown into the role reserved for him, or if he has simply failed once again to connect with his chosen audience.

**The overman**

*The overman (der Übermensch)* is the other teaching of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra and, by association, of Nietzsche himself. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the central

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27. After Zarathustra completes his seven-day period of convalescence, his companion animals inform him that it is his “fate” to be “the teacher of eternal recurrence” (Z III: 13). He does not respond, however, and nothing that follows this exchange indicates that he accepts their determination of his fate.

28. Such doubts are viable, of course, only if Part IV is understood to conclude *Zarathustra*. For an alternative account of the basic structure of *Zarathustra*, see Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, esp. 86–101.
character is initially concerned to acquaint his auditors with the mysterious figure of the “overman,” who supposedly embodies a new ideal of human (or transhuman) flourishing. Upon descending to the marketplace from his mountaintop retreat, Zarathustra devotes his very first public address to his teaching of the “overman,” which he presents as both an alternative and antidote to the moral and religious ideals that have presided over the development of the Western tradition. Whereas these ideals have collectively demeaned humankind, teaching us to despise our finitude and frailty, the overman is presented as a celebration of humankind as it is, including what is most powerful and unique about us. Zarathustra’s teaching of the overman is thus meant to promote and facilitate a life of self-possession, self-mastery, and self-sufficiency, wherein human beings might lay undivided claim to their passions, creativity, physicality, and sexuality.

The teaching of the overman is inextricably linked to Zarathustra’s (and Nietzsche’s) pronouncement of the “death of God,” by which they mean to convey the erosion of theological authority that is specific to the epoch of late modernity. With God out of the picture, or so Zarathustra initially believes, humankind may finally take its rightful place at the value-positing center of the cosmos. Unencumbered by the crushing weight of religious tradition and theological superstition, humankind may finally accede to full maturity as a species. The “death of God” thus furnishes the historical context for Zarathustra’s teaching of “the overman,” which heralds the advent of human beings who are prepared to serve as guarantors of their own value and meaning.

With the exception of his Zarathustra, Nietzsche’s writings scarcely mention the overman. It may be more accurate, in fact, to think of this teaching as belonging more fundamentally to Zarathustra than to Nietzsche. Nevertheless, many readers interpret the teaching of the overman as generally continuous with Nietzsche’s more common references to those higher human beings – typically architects of empire (e.g. Caesar and Napoleon) and artists (e.g. Goethe and Stendhal) – who command our admiration on the strength of their amoral imposition of form and order onto an otherwise unruly existence. According to this line of interpretation, an overman would be anyone who stands to us and our epoch as these exemplars of higher humanity stood to their respective peoples and epochs. While it is indisputable that Nietzsche encouraged his best readers to admire even the most terrifying exemplars of higher humanity, it is not entirely clear that this is what Zarathustra meant, at least initially, for his teaching of the overman to convey. If humanity must be “overcome,” as

29. Upon descending from his mountaintop retreat, Zarathustra concludes his first exchange, with a God-fearing hermit whom he encounters in the forest, by remarking, “Could this be possible! This old holy man in his forest has heard nothing of this yet, that God is dead!” (Z: P2). This means, I take it, that the death of God is a presupposition or condition of Zarathustra’s pedagogy. See Loeb, The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, 228–30.
Zarathustra apparently believes, then the teaching of the overman may very well point to the emergence of beings who are discontinuous with, and perhaps radically so, the collective perfections of higher humanity. Indeed, scholars remain divided on the interpretive question of whether or not the teaching of the overman should be understood to locate the most promising future for the human species in the achievement of a transhuman mode of existence.\(^{30}\)

While undeniably influential – even notoriously so – in the century following its initial presentation, the teaching of the overman remains somewhat elusive. In evaluating this teaching, we would do well to bear in mind that Zarathustra himself was largely unsuccessful in promulgating it, despite his various attempts to tailor this teaching to the needs and interests of his auditors. Although both Zarathustra and Nietzsche were quick to blame this failing on others (e.g. Zarathustra’s obtuse auditors, Nietzsche’s inept readers), they may bear some responsibility as well. In any event, the failure of Zarathustra and Nietzsche to disseminate their redemptive teaching(s) of the overman is entirely consistent with Nietzsche’s diagnosis of late modernity as an epoch hospitable only to teachings of decadence and despair. If the teaching of the overman is meant to re-acquaint human beings with their estranged passions, bodies, and natural surroundings, then perhaps we should not be surprised that this teaching has fallen thus far on deaf ears.

IV. REVISITING THE DEATH OF GOD

When Nietzsche decided in 1886 to add a Fifth Book to The Gay Science, along with a new preface and some other materials, he also decided to begin this Fifth Book, entitled “We Fearless Ones,” by revisiting the theme of the death of God. Although not advertised as such, this treatment of the death of God is apparently meant to update, and perhaps supplant, the treatment found in the original 1882 edition of The Gay Science. There, as we recall, the death of God was announced by a Madman who proceeded to identify himself and his auditors – and, by extension, all of contemporary humankind – as the murderers of God.\(^{31}\) That his auditors were ignorant of their alleged crime was not indicative of their innocence, the Madman insisted, for a crime of this magnitude takes time to penetrate and inform the awareness of its perpetrators. He thus concluded that

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30. An exemplary statement of a transhuman articulation of Nietzsche’s philosophy is provided by Ansell-Pearson in Viroid Life.
31. David Owen provides a helpful diagram and supporting analysis of this scene in Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality, 51–2. I am also indebted here to the analysis provided by Robert Pippin in Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 47–51.
he had arrived on the scene “too early” to perform his appointed task – namely, that of apprising the murderers of God of their responsibility for the aftermath of this heinous crime (GS 125).

In revisiting this important teaching, Nietzsche apparently hoped to disabuse his best readers of their confusions surrounding his earlier treatment of the death of God. In particular, he apparently meant to clarify that no one is responsible for causing the death of God, even if everyone is responsible for addressing the death of God as the defining event of our time. In short, that is, Nietzsche wanted his readers to know that he does not share the Madman’s preoccupation with identifying, and belonging among, the murderers of God. His preoccupation lies instead with the determination of an adequate practical response to the death of God, a task for which the Madman was, by design, ill suited.

To be sure, much of what the Madman says is recognizably and authentically Nietzschean. That God is dead, that contemporary humankind is largely ignorant of the meaning of the death of God, that the event of the death of God remains “distant” from most human beings, that the future is likely to host upheavals and calamities unknown to human history thus far – all of these insights are corroborated by and throughout Nietzsche’s other writings. To this limited extent, then, the Madman may be said to play the role that is typically assigned to him – namely, that of Nietzsche’s reliable spokesperson. Indeed, the Madman’s teaching overlaps sufficiently with Nietzsche’s own teaching that we generally do not object if scholars attribute the Madman’s words directly to Nietzsche, as if the two were indistinguishable with respect to the teaching of the death of God.

On at least one important point, however, the Madman most certainly does not speak for Nietzsche. On this point, the Madman speaks for himself, revealing in the process the particular illness that afflicts him. Unlike the Madman, Nietzsche does not believe that “we have killed [God] – you and I” (GS 125). He does not believe that God was murdered by anyone, much less by “all of us” together. In fact, Nietzsche regards the death of God not as a deed at all – which might imply a doer or agent – but as an event. God died, as it were, of natural causes. That the dead God was murdered, by the likes of us no less, is the Madman’s own unique contribution to the otherwise Nietzschean story he relates to the crowd assembled in the marketplace. Although the Madman is keen to advertise his self-incrimination as the ultimate expression of responsibility, his admission of guilt is more accurately understood as the ultimate refusal of responsibility. By convicting himself of an irremediable offense, he effectively pronounces his nature to be both fixed and fallen. As he patiently awaits the

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maturation of auditors who are not likely to gain awareness of their complicity in a crime they did not commit, he may feel free to postpone indefinitely any obligation to determine the true meaning of the death of God. Pronouncing himself guilty—but-not-yet-responsible, he refuses to contribute to the formulation of a practical response to the death of God.33

As this brief sketch of the Madman indicates, Nietzsche's allegory was actually meant to alert us to the enormous difficulties involved in arriving at a sensible, sober reckoning of what the death of God is likely to mean for us.34 So long as we remain susceptible to the Madman's peculiar brand of flattery, for example, we are unlikely to conduct an unflinching inventory of the physiological, psychological, and cultural resources at our disposal. The smug, know-it-all atheists among us are woefully unprepared to assess the meaning of the death of God, but so are the (equally smug) self-appointed preachers of atheism. In either case one is waylaid by the unshakable conviction that one already knows what the death of God will and must mean for us: on the one hand, unqualified liberation; and on the other, irremediable guilt. When these two types of atheist meet, moreover, the difficulties involved in confronting the death of God are only amplified and exacerbated.

We are now in a position to see why Nietzsche may have wished in 1886 to distance himself from the Madman's particular interpretation of the death of God.35 There is simply no good reason to assume, as the Madman does, that humankind is not equal to the task of surviving in a godless cosmos.36 This is something that we simply do not, and cannot, yet know. Nor is there any good reason to believe, as the Madman does, that contemporary human beings played an active, causal role in the death of God. It might be flattering, and even therapeutic, to think of oneself in such grandiose terms, but this belief is in no way warranted. Indeed, virtually everything that Nietzsche says about his contemporary and late modern readers militates against this possibility. We have witnessed the death of God, and we are uniquely responsible for navigating the aftermath.

33. I agree with David Owen that “GS 125 presents a parable of (a failure of) enlightenment,” and I also agree that Nietzsche “calls for an enlightening of the Enlightenment” (Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality [Stocksfield: Acumen, 2007], 54). The failure here is further attributable, I would add, to the failure of the self-appointed enlightener – namely, the Madman himself.

34. Here I take up the line of interpretation advanced by Pippin, Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy, ch. 3.

35. I am persuaded by Pippin's claim that Nietzsche wishes “to draw critical attention to, rather than express or identify with, the ‘melancholic’ tone” of the Madman's speech (ibid., 50).

36. As Pippin points out, for example, the Madman's “melancholic” tone is as yet unearned and undermotivated (ibid., 49–51). While the Madman may turn out to be right, taking this as a founding assumption of his pedagogy virtually ensures that he will not muster a creative, viable response to the death of God.
of this event, but we deserve neither the guilt nor the credit that would accrue, supposedly, to the actual murderers of God.

V. AN UNBELIEVABLE BELIEF

Bearing in mind Nietzsche’s likely desire to distance himself from the Madman’s presentation of the death of God, let us turn now to consider an extended extract from Section 343 of *The Gay Science*:

*The meaning of our cheerfulness. –* The greatest recent event – that “God is dead,” that the belief [*der Glaube*] in the Christian God has become unbelievable [*unglaubwürdig*] – is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe. For the few at least, whose eyes – the suspicion [*Argwohn*] in whose eyes is strong and subtle enough for this spectacle [*Schauspiel*], some sun seems to have set and some ancient and profound trust has been turned into doubt; to them our old world must appear daily more like evening, more mistrustful, stranger, “older.” But in the main one might say: The event itself is too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude’s capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having arrived as yet. Much less may one suppose that many people know as yet what this event really means – and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined because it was built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown into it; for example, the whole of our European morality. This long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending – who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of a gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth?

Here we immediately note the familiarity of address and reliance on the first-person plural that increasingly characterized Nietzsche’s post-Zarathustran writings.37 The dramatic–rhetorical distance that separated him in earlier writings from the Madman and Zarathustra, respectively, is missing from this discussion.

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37. He addresses them, inclusively, as “philosophers and ‘free spirits’” (GS 343). His qualification of this designation – they are not free spirits, but “free spirits” – recalls a similar distinction drawn in GM III: 24, where he apparently reserved the designation of free spirit for the Assassins, for whom “everything is permitted.” Not everything is permitted for Nietzsche and his “we.” In particular, they are not permitted to renounce their bedrock faith in truth.
No figure or character speaks for Nietzsche, and the bustling “marketplace” is nowhere in sight. Treating the event of the death of God as a palpably evident condition of the lives of his intended readers, Nietzsche moves expeditiously to explore the meaning of this event. Indeed, the fact of God’s death is simply noted in passing, as if it were scarcely worth mentioning to this particular audience.

As a result, Nietzsche does not labor in this section under the (self-imposed) constraints that ensured the failure of the pedagogy conducted by the Madman. Unlike him, Nietzsche is not alone in his appreciation for the death of God, which means that he is in a position to share the burden of this insight and its attendant responsibilities. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Nietzsche evinces no desire to convince anyone else—much less the “multitude”—that God is in fact dead. The “multitude” will find out soon enough, and its likely response is of little interest to him. Whereas the Madman chose to speak in the proverbial marketplace, moreover, Nietzsche seeks the relative seclusion afforded him by the nearly deserted shore of a newly open sea. Although he does not say so explicitly, Nietzsche addresses his readers as if he were preparing to “go under,” that is, to bequeath his wisdom to those who are worthy to receive it. The seriousness of his enterprise is evidenced, in fact, by his disdain for the idle gossip, incessant commotion, and cheap distractions that are staples of the marketplace. Unwilling to waste his time with the kind of companions collected by the Madman, Nietzsche immediately zeroes in on his target audience, speaking in this passage only to those kindred spirits for whom the death of God already matters.

As this passage confirms, moreover, the point of Nietzsche’s teaching is far more deeply philosophical than his provocative rhetoric would tend to suggest. Speaking here in his own voice, he calmly reports a crisis of confidence in the basic belief structure that informs and supports the prevailing morality of late modern European culture. Here it may be helpful to note that he does not say that belief in the Christian God has become impossible or inconceivable. He is perfectly well aware that belief in the Christian God persists, albeit in diminished intensity, and he fully expects that Europeans will continue, perhaps for centuries to come, to rehearse the familiar motions of Christian practice. If only it were the case, he might have mused, that belief in the Christian God were now as unthinkable as, for example, belief in astrology or the geocentric model of the cosmos.

38. On the relationship of “going under” to death and the consolidation of one’s final audience, see Loeb, The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, 98–101.
39. Zarathustra urged his auditors to flee the marketplace (Z I: 12), which is precisely what Nietzsche has done here.
In an important sense, in fact, this is precisely the problem Nietzsche wishes to address: belief in the God of Christianity remains both possible and widespread, even though it is no longer credible as such. This means, among other things, that the belief in God cannot be banished, or its clients disabused, by a simple recitation of the facts or the proposal of an alternative belief. Those who believe in the Christian God are not confused or ignorant in any way that is readily or obviously corrigible. Their confusion, if that is the right word, is fully consistent with the regnant system of core beliefs that has authorized the most recent development and advance of Western civilization. In short, readers hoping to parlay the teaching of the death of God into a declaration of the unconditional victory of atheism are likely to be disappointed.

Although Nietzsche is popularly known as an atheist, this particular designation actually tends to obscure the point of his teaching of the death of God.40 What he means for this teaching to disclose is that belief in the Christian God can no longer be counted on to play a central role in sustaining the ongoing development of European culture. This is not to suggest that belief in the Christian God is now worthless or absurd, for it is not. Belief in the Christian God has become “unbelievable” inasmuch as it is now one belief among many that we are likely to hold. As such, this belief is important, significant, and useful (in the sense preferred by the American pragmatists), but its possession no longer serves as a guarantee of our blessedness, redemption, and salvation. Belief in the Christian God remains possible, but it no longer enjoys a privileged, superlative status, no longer commands our full attention, no longer trumps all other beliefs, and no longer authorizes a quest that might consume and hallow a lifetime. The irony, then, is that Nietzsche actually accounts for the conditions under which belief in the God of Christianity could be, and has been, warranted. Of course, with this account comes his assertion that these conditions no longer obtain.

One now believes in the Christian God as one believes in the stock market, in the value of sensible shoes and a favorable first impression, or in the efficacy of regular brushing to avoid tooth decay. Accordingly, the possession of this belief is now understood to require very little effort or preparation, and there is no longer a general sense that it must be earned and cherished, whether by committing oneself to a life of monkish devotion or by risking oneself in the performance of good works. As noted by Johannes de silentio, the pseudonymous narrator of Søren Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling, faith in God is now generally believed to be available throughout European Christendom simply for the asking (or the saying), as if it were offered on deep discount at the clearance sale of ideas.41

40. See Loeb, The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, 226–34; Pippin, Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy, 47–62.

*41. Kierkegaard is discussed in an essay by Alastair Hannay in this volume.
Indeed, the ease with which faith is now obtained is accurately reflected in the (distinctly limited) meaning it provides to those who believe in God.

Still, we might ask, so what? Is it not possible that a devalued belief in God will be sufficient to support the advance of an increasingly secular culture? The problem, as Nietzsche sees it, is that our regnant system of core beliefs simply cannot survive the demotion in status and intensity suffered by its centerpiece belief. The very project of European culture is dependent for its viability on the superlative status formerly accorded to the belief in God. The oft-remarked stability of this belief in its current, diminished condition, especially by those who only now find it tolerable, is therefore illusory, and dangerously so. As this system of core beliefs buckles, he warns, the culture it has nourished must wither and perish.

In this respect, Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s teaching has been particularly influential. According to Heidegger, the teaching of the death of God is best understood as a shorthand designation for the end of the tradition of Western metaphysics that began, supposedly, with Plato: “The pronouncement ‘God is dead’ means: The suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life. Metaphysics, i.e., for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end.” According to Heidegger, that is, this teaching is meant to announce the collapse of the suprasensory canopy of transcendent ideas in which Western philosophy and religion have consistently endeavored to locate the truth. Now that the belief in God is “unbelievable,” the world of transcendent ideas, long believed to redeem the imperfect world of immanence, must fall to earth.

Nietzsche’s teaching of the death of God thus signals the loss of the security of the future. Today and tomorrow remain secure, which is why so few lives have been changed thus far by the event of the death of God. But “the day after tomorrow” – a figure favored by Nietzsche to capture the unique situation and role in which he and his kindred “free spirits” find themselves (cf. A P) – is no longer secure. What the “death of God” means, then, is that the entire system of morality that has guided the advance of European civilization now wobbles on the verge of collapse. Faithful Christians will be disinherited, to be sure, but so will everyone else, including the smug, know-it-all atheists who believe themselves to be impervious to the reach of this calamity. In other words, the bleak future foretold by the Madman in his marketplace jeremiad remains a distinct possibility.

As we have seen, Nietzsche’s primary concern in GS 343 is not to announce the death of God, which, he presumes, is already well known to his intended audience, but to explore the meaning of this event. Toward this end, he forwards his interpretation of the cheerfulness with which he and his unknown companions have received the initial consequences of this event. Thus far, he observes, they have embraced the death of God as if it were a positive event, opening up for them a new menu of possibilities.

Nietzsche endorses the Madman’s claim that the death of God is so pivotal, so thoroughly world-historical, that its full meaning is not yet available to most human beings. Only now is this event “beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe.” Not belonging to the multitude, Nietzsche and his unnamed companions are not similarly removed from the arrival of this event. Even as they steel themselves for the “long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending” (ibid.), they face the future with a “cheerfulness” that surprises even Nietzsche. This may change, he concedes, especially when the full meaning of the death of God finally arrives. The ultimate consequences of this event, he realizes, may be very different from its initial consequences.

Still, their cheerfulness is a genuinely hopeful sign. Rather than experience the death of God as an occasion for despair, regret, disappointment, resignation, and the gnashing of teeth, Nietzsche and his unnamed companions instead “look forward to the approaching gloom.” As he now makes clear, he and his unknown companions are advantageously positioned to “guess at” what the Madman claims to know, but they are not tempted to take on the role of the “prophet” or “advance proclaimer” of gloom (ibid.). Unlike the Madman, they have no interest in holding forth in the marketplace or in teaching the intractable multitude. Ingredient to their appreciation of this event, we apparently are meant to understand, is the realization that their own needs for recognition, attention, flattery, and so on must be subordinated to the more general task of preparing humankind to survive the death of God. Unlike the Madman, moreover, they cannot pretend to tremble before the “approaching gloom,” for they find themselves “without any worry and fear for [themselves]” (ibid.). Their cheerfulness may bode well for the future of humankind as a whole, especially if they assume the leading role that Nietzsche envisions for them in the endgame of late modern European culture. If he and his unnamed companions continue to receive the death of God with good cheer – a big if – they (or, more likely, their heirs) may survive the impending collapse of Christian morality.

The significance of their cheerfulness thus lies in their decisive victory over the presumptive pessimism of the Madman and all kindred doomsayers. As we
have seen, the “initial consequences” of the death of God indicate the opposite of what the Madman and his ilk have led us to expect. Rather than descend, as predicted, into chaos, disorientation, self-recrimination, and general disenchantment, Nietzsche and his unknown companions bask in the refulgence of a “new dawn.” While the events described in the Madman’s jeremiad may yet come to pass,43 we have no reason at this point to conclude that humankind is ill prepared to negotiate the aftermath of the death of God.

This victory in turn secures a foothold for the scientific project that Nietzsche endorses, wherein he and like-minded truth-seekers will conduct an unflinching inventory of the cultural, physiological, and psychological resources available to late modern human beings. This is the point of Nietzsche’s recourse in this passage to the familiar trope of the “voyage of discovery,” on which he now bids his unknown companions to join him. Crafting one of the most haunting images to be found in the writings from his post-Zarathustran period, he observes, “At long last the horizon appears free to us again even if it should not be bright…the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an ‘open sea’” (GS 343). As the seafaring imagery is meant to confirm, Nietzsche and his unnamed shipmates are focused on the task that lies before them. Although they refuse credit (or blame) for the death of God, they accept full responsibility for the aftermath of this event, wherein, they believe, the future of humankind can and will be determined. United in their desire to respond to the death of God – thereby ignoring the petty distractions that waylaid the Madman – they prepare to embark on a perilous voyage of discovery. The horizon may not be bright, as he observes, but an “open sea” now beckons them. Indeed, the simple fact that “the sea, our sea, lies open again” is meant to confirm the meaningfulness – indeed, the urgency – of the scientific project endorsed by Nietzsche.44 They are, as he suggests, “Argonauts of the ideal” (GS 382), intrepid voyagers in search of the undiscovered country that lies somewhere beyond good and evil.

As we have seen, Nietzsche does not hold us responsible for the death of God. He holds us responsible, however, for navigating the aftermath of this event. On this point, in fact, he departs most decisively from the Madman, who convicted himself and his contemporaries of this heinous crime precisely so that they would not be held responsible for its aftermath.45 According to Nietzsche, in fact, we now owe it to ourselves to disown all such irresponsible imputations of responsibility, especially inasmuch as they impede our prepara-

44. See Hatab, Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morality, 160–63.
45. I am indebted here to Berkowitz, Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist, 16–17.
tions for an honest, truthful appraisal of our capacity for mounting an effective response to the death of God. Nietzsche’s emphasis on the meaning of the death of God thus reflects his wish to shift the focus of the question of responsibility. What matters now is that we address the death of God in a manner that allows us to pursue a meaningful post-theistic existence.46 Far from an unhinged champion of irrationality, Nietzsche places his hopes for the future of humankind in the practice of science, a practice that he envisions as duly expunged of the “democratic prejudices” and sentimental pieties that continue to lead modern scholars astray.

One science in particular claims Nietzsche’s attention: psychology.47 While an inventory of the cultural and political resources available to us is crucial to our survival, Nietzsche attaches a higher priority to the task of conducting an inventory of the resources available within us. If we are to mount an effective response to the death of God, we first need to know who (or what) we are. What sorts of creatures have we become over the course of several thousand years of breeding, training, habituation, and acculturation? How closely do we approximate the kind of memorial animal that nature would deem worthy of continued selection for survival? What powers, passions, potentialities, and plasticities do we now possess, including those that remain as yet untested and unpracticed by us? How likely are we to participate in the creation of new values or the creative recycling of old values? In short, Nietzsche’s goal is to foster in his best readers an attunement to the death of God that will enable them to respond creatively to the demands and challenges of the new, post-theistic cosmos.

A serious attempt at this inventory will require us, finally, to set aside the pieties and prejudices of folk psychology, even at the risk of sacrificing our fragile sense of self-understanding and our bogus sense of self-esteem. We late moderns can no longer afford the luxury of remaining so thoroughly unknown to, and estranged from, ourselves. While much of what we will discover about ourselves is bound to be unflattering and distasteful, we also may be pleasantly surprised – perhaps even empowered – by what we learn about ourselves.

46. I am indebted here to Pippin’s observation (Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy, 52–9) that our protracted failure to address “the problem of nihilism” is exacerbated, in Nietzsche’s eyes, by our refusal thus far – as exemplified in the Madman’s intricate dance of deferral – to pose the problem to ourselves in such a way that would invite, or at any rate make possible, a cogent, affirmation-worthy response to the death of God.

47. Here too I follow Pippin, who persuasively identifies psychology – in particular, an approach to psychology indebted to Montaigne and the French moralists – as central to Nietzsche’s philosophical project in general and his critique of modernity in particular. Pippin is especially effective in explaining how and why Nietzsche claims to regard psychology as “the queen of sciences” (ibid., 1–21).
Here, too, the cheerfulness displayed by Nietzsche and his unknown companions is significant, for it emerged unexpectedly from their experience of the initial consequences of the death of God. Nietzsche elsewhere refers to cheerfulness as the “reward” that awaits those who, like him, have taken very seriously the vexing problems of morality (GM P7). Far from the opposite of seriousness, that is, cheerfulness arises naturally from a serious investigation of those serious matters that other philosophers take too lightly. Who knows what other surprises may await us, what additional “rewards” we unwittingly may have earned?

Nietzsche thus hopes that his best readers will receive the death of God as befits their legacy as “good Europeans” – namely, as scientists and scholars inspired by the will to truth (GS 357; cf. GM III: 27). He hopes, that is, that they will employ their own will to truth to determine what opportunities and challenges a post-theistic cosmos is likely to present to us. This is why he is so keen in his post-Zarathustran writings to perfect and display what he calls his gay science, which blends scholarly seriousness (Ernst) with buoyant good cheer (Heiterkeit) to ward off fits of premature optimism and unwarranted pessimism. Indeed, he offers his own contribution to the development of a gay science as an example of how he and his unknown companions might avoid the equally nihilistic extremes of pessimism and optimism.

VII. NIETZSCHE’S ENDURING INFLUENCES

Nietzsche believed that it was his fate to be “born posthumously” (A P), and he proved to be prophetic in this belief. Writing in 1899, the Danish critic Georg Brandes observed that Nietzsche’s name had “flown round the world” in the decade following his public lectures on Nietzsche in Copenhagen and his publication of the first scholarly treatment of Nietzsche’s philosophy.48 Read widely and claimed by diverse, feuding constituencies scattered across the political spectrum, Nietzsche became a central figure in the stormy culture of fin de siècle Europe. His influence today is both extensive and multifarious. Six such influences are especially noteworthy:

(i) Nietzsche’s first book, The Birth of Tragedy, is now widely read and cited by philosophers, historians, and classicists. It is especially influential for its ingenious pairing of Dionysus and Apollo as the patron deities of Attic tragedy and as the twin impulses responsible for the overflowing health of the tragic culture

of the Greeks. The Birth of Tragedy is also influential for its heterodox exposé of Socrates as a hyper-rational enemy of tragedy. In general, Nietzsche is acclaimed not only for his unique appreciation of Attic tragedy, but also for his renewed attention to the relevance of ancient Greek culture for modern scholars, artists, and political leaders.

(ii) The psychological insights that informed The Birth of Tragedy were later developed and expanded in support of Nietzsche’s groundbreaking research in the field of depth psychology. In sharp contrast to the models of subjectivity delivered, respectively, by the Enlightenment and German idealism, Nietzsche located the core of human agency in the prereflective operation of the unconscious drives and impulses. He thus treated human psychology as a complicated instance of animal psychology, which, as he understood it, is predicated on the instinctive pursuit of optimal conditions under which an organism may amass, expend, and replenish its native stores of strength. Every animal aims above all else to attain a maximal feeling of power, and all of human psychology can be derived from this simple, naturalistic principle of explanation.

Nietzsche’s investigation of the unconscious, amoral drives that motivate human behavior exerted a profound influence on the development of both depth psychology and psychoanalysis. Particularly noteworthy in this respect is his influence on the pioneering figures in these fields of research, including Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Alfred Adler (1870–1937), and Carl Jung (1875–1961). These figures in turn propagated Nietzsche’s influence to a host of scholars who were similarly concerned to explore the broader sociological implications of Nietzsche’s psychological insights. Nietzsche’s influence, and especially his controversial diagnosis of the sickliness of late modern European culture, is discernible in the work of Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), Eric Fromm (1900–1980), Rollo May (1904–1994), and Norman O. Brown (1913–2002).

(iii) Nietzsche is also influential for his attention to the personal, rhetorical, and performative dimensions of philosophy. Well known for his experiments with multiple styles, tropes, voices, personae, and forms of address, he possessed a keen critical eye for the subjective inflections of philosophical discourse. Believing every great philosophy to essay the “personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir” (BGE 6), he sought to

49. The definitive study of this topic is Graham Parkes, Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche’s Psychology (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), esp. chs VII–IX.
*50. For a discussion of Freud, and his relationship to the continental philosophical tradition, see the essay by Adrian Johnston in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
*51. Marcuse, Fromm, and others associated with the first generation of the Frankfurt School are discussed in an essay by John Abromeit in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
isolate the personal “prejudices” lurking behind seemingly impersonal and ostensibly objective philosophical pronouncements.

Nietzsche is widely recognized for his seminal contributions to the “hermeneutics of suspicion” that spurred the development of literary, aesthetic, political, and cultural criticism in the twentieth century. Generally acknowledged, along with Marx and Freud, as a “master of suspicion,”52 Nietzsche has inspired twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers to challenge orthodoxies across a broad range of human endeavors, including philosophy, science, history, literature, religion, art, psychoanalysis, and politics. His influence in this respect is evident in the writings of postmodern philosophers and critics such as Maurice Blanchot (1907–2003), Paul de Man (1919–83), Gilles Deleuze (1925–95), Michel Foucault (1926–84), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), and Sarah Kofman (1934–94).53

Nietzsche’s attention to the personal and rhetorical dimensions of philosophy is furthermore consistent with the larger, expressivist sympathies that inform his own philosophizing. Praising as exemplary those rare individuals who assert themselves in defiance of prevailing norms and conventions, he regularly urged his readers toward lives of greater risk, urgency, passion, and authenticity. His influence on the philosophical and literary movements associated with existentialism is well known,54 and this influence largely derives from his general affirmation of unfettered acts of self-assertion – even, it should be added, at the expense of established customs and morality. His influence on the development of existentialism is evident in the writings of Martin Buber (1878–1965), Paul Tillich (1886–1965),55 Heidegger (1889–1976), André Malraux (1901–1976), John-Paul Sartre (1905–80),56 and Albert Camus (1913–60).

(iv) Nietzsche remains influential for his sweeping critique of European modernity. Flatly rejecting the familiar modernist narratives of growth, progress,
amelioration, and maturation, he diagnosed European modernity as irreversibly decadent. He exposed its defining institutions and projects as unmitigated failures, and he disclosed with considerable prescience its growing thirst for blood. He also lamented the disintegration of what he regarded as a distinctly European culture and the concomitant rise of squabbling nation-states bent on imperial expansion. Even a full century after his death, Nietzsche remains one of the most formidable critics of the signature projects of modernity itself. His criticisms were so penetrating, and his diagnoses so astute, that no serious champion of modern ideals can afford to ignore them. The influence of his diagnosis of European modernity is most evident in the work of critics such as Georg Brandes (1842–1927), Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), Sigmund Freud, Leo Strauss (1899–1973), Allan Bloom (1930–92), and Francis Fukuyama (1952–).

The larger sociological implications of Nietzsche's diagnosis of late modern European culture influenced a number of prominent writers of the twentieth century. Authors as diverse as George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930), Hermann Hesse (1877–1962), Thomas Mann (1875–1955), André Gide (1869–1951), Franz Kafka (1883–1924), and Nikos Kazantzakis (1883–1957) were inspired by Nietzsche to analyze the discontents of the modern world – including repression, guilt, despair, alienation, and anxiety – and to explore the possibility that certain individuals – dare we call them Übermenschen? – might succeed in escaping (or deflecting) the stifling demands of civilization.

(v) Nietzsche’s proffered contribution to a “genealogy of morality” has been enormously influential on philosophers, anthropologists, historians, and other scholars who are keen to purge their studies of history – in particular, the history of morality – of unwanted assumptions, unwarranted presuppositions, and undetected sympathies. Scholars as diverse as Deleuze and Alasdair MacIntyre have acknowledged their debts to Nietzsche’s “genealogical” approach to the history of morality.

Most notably, Nietzsche’s contribution to a “genealogy of morality” was taken up and adapted by the French philosopher, historian, and social critic Michel Foucault. Early in his career, Foucault developed an *archaeological* approach to history that allowed him to identify periods of epistemic convergence across various related sciences and disciplines. Within any such period of epistemic convergence, he discovered, the discursive practices of science not only had a common structure but also expressed significant agreement on the general conditions and criteria of truth, knowledge, and certainty. Later in his career,

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*57. Foucault is discussed in an essay by Timothy O’Leary in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*
Foucault developed a *genealogical* approach to history that enabled him to investigate the intricate power relations that inform discursive practices. As a genealogist, he tracked the shifting relationships between power and knowledge within particular discursive practices, and he charted the resulting fluctuations in the exclusionary power of these practices. He was especially concerned to conduct genealogical investigations of those discursive practices that were responsible for enforcing the institutionalized definitions of *madness*, *criminality*, and *sexual deviancy*.

(vi) Finally, as we have seen, Nietzsche remains influential for his insight into, and announcement of, the *death of God*. The enduring influence of this insight is apparent throughout the history of twentieth-century literature, drama, music, philosophy, and religion. The influence of this teaching is perhaps most evident in the emergence of negative theology, religious existentialism, and other sustained efforts to rethink the nature and place of religion in the culture of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Europe. It is on the strength of this insight, moreover, that Nietzsche made his greatest contributions to the development and subsequent ramifications of European philosophy.58

**MAJOR WORKS**


58. My thanks to Alan D. Schrift for his valuable comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. This chapter occasionally draws on material that originally appeared elsewhere, including my *Reader’s Guide to Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals*, and several entries I contributed to *The Edinburgh Dictionary of Continental Philosophy*, John Protevi (ed.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).
I. David Strauss der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller (1873). Published in English as (i) David Strauss, the Confessor & the Writer, in Untimely Meditations, translated by Hollingdale; and (ii) David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer, in Unfashionable Observations, translated by Gray.

II. Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben (1874). Published in English as (i) On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, in Untimely Meditations, translated by Hollingdale; and (ii) On the Utility and Liability of History for Life, in Unfashionable Observations, translated by Gray.

III. Schopenhauer als Erzieher (1874). Published in English as Schopenhauer as Educator, in Untimely Meditations, translated by Hollingdale, and in Unfashionable Observations, translated by Gray.

IV. Richard Wagner in Bayreuth (1876). Published in English as Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, in Untimely Meditations, translated by Hollingdale, and in Unfashionable Observations, translated by Gray.


I. INTRODUCTION

The thought of the German philosophers Friedrich Schleiermacher1 and Wilhelm Dilthey2 is often assessed and criticized according to the interests and standards of twentieth-century philosophical hermeneutics. This common yet increasingly questioned account is misleading insofar as these two authors have divergent research agendas, approaches, and contexts, including the notion of hermeneutics itself, from each other as well as from later hermeneutical philosophy.3

1. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (November 21, 1768–February 12, 1834; born in Breslau, Silesia; died in Berlin) was educated at Moravian Brethren institutions in Niesky and Barby (1783–87), and the University of Halle (1787–90). His influences included Fichte, Herder, Kant, Plato, Schelling, Friedrich Schlegel, and Spinoza, and he held academic appointments at the University of Halle (1804–1807) and University of Berlin (1810–34).

2. Wilhelm Dilthey (November 19, 1833–October 1, 1911; born in Biebrich am Rhein, Hesse; died in Siusi allo Sciliar, Italy [Seis am Schlern, South Tyrol]) was educated at the Universities of Heidelberg and Berlin (DPhil., 1864). His influences included A. Boeckh, K. Fischer, Hegel, Kant, John Stuart Mill, L. v. Ranke, Schleiermacher, and F. Trendelenburg, and he held appointments at the Universities of Basel (1866–68), Kiel (1868–71), Breslau (1871–82), and Berlin (1882–1905).

Schleiermacher and Dilthey are frequently mentioned together as representatives of nineteenth-century hermeneutics and hermeneutical philosophy. This portrayal is problematic given the historical breaks and philosophical differences between their positions, and the more limited sense of the term “hermeneutics” in their writings. Despite Schleiermacher’s formative influence on Dilthey, and the centrality of Dilthey’s interpretation of Schleiermacher to his subsequent reception, there are crucial differences between them. Schleiermacher’s thought occurs within the context of the modern appropriation and transformation of traditional metaphysics and Protestant theology. His basic point of departure is the felt intuition of the infinite in his early Romantic works and the feeling of absolute dependence on God in his mature academic works. The latter claim is not only a religious and theological one. The prereflective feeling of God replaces the Cartesian cogito in grounding both knowledge and metaphysics in his Dialectic, and is the only locus of certainty in the face of skepticism.

In contrast with Schleiermacher, whose thought he helped to revive and reinterpret, philosophy took an epistemic, social-historical, and social-scientific turn in Dilthey. Instead of asserting the unity of the world and the sciences, of being and knowledge, Dilthey developed an epistemic pluralism or nonreductive empiricism in relation to knowledge, and moderate skepticism in response to metaphysics. Without the inherent unity of nature and spirit as an object of knowledge, Dilthey differentiated the natural and human sciences according to their contexts, methodologies, and objects. Even if all sciences involve previous processes of interpretation and meaning-formation, insofar as knowing is never free of presuppositions and a larger human context of significance, the human sciences are concerned with self-experiencing and self-interpreting individuals and groups for whom the first-person perspective of relations of meaning is—at least in part—performatively constitutive of practices or how they act and do not act.

The distance between these two authors can be further seen in their attitude toward metaphysics and ancient Greek philosophy. Schleiermacher belonged

to the generation of early German Romanticism that was more empirically and realistically oriented than German idealism. He remained committed to a revised form of Platonic metaphysics, influenced by his engagement with early modern and German idealist philosophy, and translated the works of Plato in an influential German edition still in use today.7 Dilthey, however, interpreted modernity – prefigured in thinkers such as Augustine, who opened up the first-person perspective of already meaningful individual lived-experience (Erlebnis) in contrast to impersonal objective structures of classical ontology – as an irrevocable break with premodern forms of thought, which included Schleiermacher’s dialectics.8 While dialectic was the central philosophical discipline for Schleiermacher, to which hermeneutics was subordinate, epistemic logic in the context of the fullness of social-historical life played the primary role for Dilthey.9 In conjunction with his organic and vitalist yet still causal conception of the universe, Schleiermacher was a post-Kantian thinker of religious transcendence and of the ethical ideal of the highest good that informs and orients ordinary life.10 Dilthey was a philosopher of experiential immanence, as he reformulated the Kantian project as a “critique of historical reason” in his early work Introduction to the Human Sciences. There Dilthey describes a critique of historical reason as “a critique of the capacity of man to know himself and the society and history which he has produced.”11 Schleiermacher’s faith and intuition of the divine lose their priority as they become one way of expressing lived-experience, mood, and worldview, and infinity is transformed into an immanent yet self-interrupting characteristic of life itself that does not necessarily entail a transcendent God.12

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10. God is transcendent and the world is an immanent organic whole for Schleiermacher, who transformed Spinoza’s metaphysics in an individualistic and vitalistic direction oriented by a transcendent God and the highest good as the realization of individual personality. Compare the discussion of these issues in Frederick C. Beiser, “Schleiermacher’s Ethics,” in Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher, Mariña (ed.), esp. 61, 65, 67, 69.
12. On the argument that Dilthey secularized the feeling of God into the feeling of life, moving from the feeling of faith to a more general “reflexive awareness” (Innewerden), see Scholtz, Ethik und Hermeneutik, 240, 250–51.
Friedrich Schleiermacher led an intellectually and publicly active life as a Romantic literary figure, reformed pastor, theologian, university teacher and administrator, public intellectual, and political reformer. The son of a reformed clergyman, he was educated by the Moravian Brethren, who advocated a strict devotional Pietism, and subsequently at the more liberal University of Halle where he continued his studies of early modern and Enlightenment era philosophy and the classics. He is well known for his youthful associations with German Romantic literary circles and the celebration of religion as an intuition and feeling of the universe and the infinite in early writings such as On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers, and he is also noted for being the primary proponent of liberal Protestant theology in his mature theological works such as The Christian Faith.

Schleiermacher’s writings concerning hermeneutics are all based on lecture courses and lectures, and consequently have a fragmentary character. They continue and transform the early modern Protestant and Enlightenment trends in hermeneutics from the eighteenth century, which are primarily concerned with the interpretation of biblical and classical texts as well as related to rhetoric and Aristotelian logic.

Hermeneutics is a doctrine of art (Kunstlehre) oriented according to the idea of understanding given the universality of misunderstanding, which is caused by hastiness or prejudice (HC 23). For Schleiermacher, non- or misunderstanding is the ordinary condition, and understanding needs to be pursued in order to be achieved. That is, where the laxer practice of hermeneutics assumes that understanding is automatic and misunderstanding to be avoided, “[t]he [stricter] practice assumes that misunderstanding results as a matter of course and that understanding must be desired and sought at every point” (HC 21–2). As in Kant, the practice of art is not the doctrine of science, nor does art deductively or mechanically apply rules and method. Art can never be solely based on

13. This section refines my interpretation in “Schleiermacher on Language,” 297–312.
14. For a discussion of German Romanticism, see the essay by Daniel Dahlstrom in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
16. Ibid., 59.
rules insofar as this involves the infinite regress of always needing another rule to apply a rule. Art requires judgment or a sense of appropriate application that is cultivated. Kant clarifies this distinction in the *Critique of Judgment*: whereas science demands determinate judgment, which subsumes a particular under a concept, art calls for reflective judgment, which articulates the general from the particular – that is, without a pregiven rule.\(^\text{18}\)

Art is not the imposition of science on tradition or system on the life-world for Schleiermacher. Art originates in ordinary experience itself. It is always already at work in ordinary understanding to the degree that even the child is engaged in the art of hermeneutics in language acquisition.\(^\text{19}\) Because there is no rule for how to apply a rule, art is a practice of a finite sensuous being. Method alone is inadequate for Schleiermacher and Dilthey, since it is the cultivation of a sense already at work in everyday communication and as such it requires lived-experience.\(^\text{20}\) Although the goal of truth or correctness is an important one in Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, as Dilthey noted, art and imagination characterize all knowing (HSH 695). Cognitive representation is indispensable to the work of the sciences. Yet it is not itself primary since it is always based on prior feeling. Schleiermacher is consequently already engaged in a critique of a purely representational model of knowledge. Schleiermacher insisted on the priority of feeling in understanding the human agent and, as we shall see, the receptivity and responsiveness of the imagination in interpreting others through their expressions, which is the medium of understanding and interpretation.\(^\text{21}\) To this extent, one strength of “Romantic” hermeneutics – in contrast with its impersonalist opponents – is its recognition of the role of feeling, desire, and affectivity as part of linguistic interaction, interpretation, and

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\(^{18}\) For an examination of this distinction and its implications see Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990).


\(^{21}\) Jung, *Hermeneutik zur Einführung*, 64.
individuation. Schleiermacher and Dilthey do not segregate the subjective, psychological, or emotional dimensions of interpretation from their linguistic and social-historical contexts.

Hermeneutics, according to Schleiermacher, is the art of understanding. Understanding is an art to the extent that it is neither fully reducible to nor independent of the application of rules (HC 6). Hermeneutics is an art, concerned with language, through which we interpret texts and indirectly understand others. This art has three levels operating between the minimum degree of reflection in ordinary common discourse and the maximum degree of interpretative and reflective effort in approaching classical or original texts (HC 13): that is, (i) the everyday prereflective use and interpretation of language; (ii) the skilled interpretation of language; and (iii) the reflective interpretation of language. Hermeneutics, which does not constitute the whole of philosophical, theological, and scientific inquiry for Schleiermacher, is concerned with understanding only as it occurs through language: “Language is the only presupposition in hermeneutics, and everything that is to be found, including the other objective and subjective presuppositions, must be discovered in language” (HHM 50).

Dilthey unfolded in his work Schleiermacher’s Hermeneutical System in Relation to Earlier Protestant Hermeneutics of 1860 how hermeneutics is essentially concerned with language. Further, language and language acquisition have, for Dilthey, an interpretive character from the beginning (HSH 745). Accordingly, hermeneutics shares the structure – both the limits and possibilities – of language. If language is always already related to what cannot be said, then the incommunicable does not occur only as a limit for hermeneutical understanding but as a condition that cannot be sublimated and thus positively defines the tasks of interpretation. The object of understanding demands that it be understood immanently from out of itself and accordingly that the one addressed be receptive to the claim being made.

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22. In Hermeneutics and Criticism (HC 93), Schleiermacher associated divination – as receptivity to others and their individuality – with the feminine, and the comparative approach – emphasizing universality – with the masculine. Philosophers and men tend to one-sidedly stress their own thoughts in approaching others (HC 6, 93, 135). Julie Ellson analyzed the “hermeneutics of desire” and its gendered character in Schleiermacher, who often ethically and aesthetically privileges the feminine, and in Romanticism in Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender, and the Ethics of Understanding (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

23. Bowie demonstrates how divination in Schleiermacher is not the emotional-psychological felt projection of Einfühlung, yet misses the expressive-linguistic and social-historical character of interpretation in Dilthey in Aesthetics and Subjectivity, 207.

24. Friedrich Schleiermacher, Über die Religion (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1969), 28; published in English as On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers, Richard Crouter (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). This connection between responsiveness and immanence is further developed by Dilthey – for example, in the thesis that life needs to be
The further claim that hermeneutics is the art of understanding “the utterance first just as well and then better than its author” seeks to bring to consciousness what remained unconscious in the author (HC 23). This task is driven by the absence of any immediate knowledge of what is within an author \textit{(ibid.)}, and indicates, as Dilthey noted, the need in interpretation to consider the unthought of an author (HSH 707). Articulating the unconscious in consciousness follows the hermeneutical model of receptively determining the indeterminate through interpretation (HC 33, 49), and of bringing to concepts the sensual and preconceptual sources of language (HC 34–8). For Schleiermacher, and to the chagrin of Karl Barth and neo-orthodoxy, even the divine word of the Bible is available only through interpretation (HC 41). Inspiration and enthusiasm cannot eliminate the need for contextualization and mediation in order to articulate God’s word (HC 82). Owing to the potential infinity of interpretation, as both past origins and future possibilities and transformations are not directly given, and “because it is an infinity of past and future that we wish to see in the moment of the utterance,” hermeneutics is an infinite or “endless task” that no synthesis or fusion can overcome (HC 23, 31).

In addition to the interpretation of language that Schleiermacher called “grammatical,” there is also “psychological interpretation” involving receptiveness to the traces of the singularity of the other as they are indicated in communication. As Dilthey argued in his reading of Schleiermacher, the individual and the singular would be lost in a discourse that denies the possibility of psychological interpretation (HSH 717–18). Individuals do not only instantiate a pregiven language, and even as the individual is placed within a general location and context, it is irreducible to it (HC 279). Language is used and created through the language-forming power and style of individuals, such that it is inadequate to consider language purely in propositional or structuralist terms. The emphasis on psychological understanding is subsequently not so much the correct representational reproduction by the interpreter of some “mental content” of the author. The “psychological” concerns the individual side of interpretation just as “grammatical” concerns the structural and more universal side of linguistic mediation as a relational system (HC 8–9, 67). Although psychological interpretation has priority from the perspective of the individual and grammatical from the perspective of language as a systematic impersonal whole, both sides are equal and necessary for interpretation (HC 10). Both varieties of interpretation, which are ends of a continuum rather than contraries, are needed, as propositions can be interpreted in relation to individual life-acts, linguistic systems, and the provisionally and indeterminately given whole of a life that is

\textit{articulated from out of itself – and by Heidegger (\textit{circa} 1920) in describing the hermeneutics of facticity as the self-articulation of life in its enactment.}
the intersection of both moments.25 They are a spectrum and yet each side has
to be grasped in its own terms as one transitions between the grammatical and
the psychological without either one being complete or sufficient in itself and
without there being determinate rules for how these transitions can be accom-
plished (HC 10–11).

Schleiermacher’s approach is no mere “external reconstruction” aiming at
correctness, as Gadamer contended.26 It is oriented toward the question of
truth through receptivity to what addresses and claims us, as hermeneutics is
constructive in order to envision an organic whole (HC 65). Schleiermacher
also noted the integrating and mediating character of language. Although he
emphasized the unifying and conforming power of language and tradition,
Schleiermacher showed the importance of linguistic transformation such as in
the artist of language who each time individualizes language anew (HHM 49),
and in the language-forming power of the new and the individual (HC 12, 86).

Schleiermacher’s approach to language emphasized the differences that occur
in relation to the identity of language; that is, with that which differentiates
languages and, further, with that which resists and withdraws from linguistic
mediation. Hermeneutics concerns language, which is the only presupposition
and defines the scope of hermeneutics (HHM 50). Yet language is not a system
that can close itself to what is other than language in a pure immanence of
linguistic integration or mediation. Despite the limits that language and its inter-
pretation impose, such limits cannot eliminate the infinity of sense, such as the
infinite significance of a book such as the Bible, or the relation of the finite to
the infinite (HHM 53, 55). The incommunicable confronts language on the side
of both the whole and the individual.

Jean Grondin has emphasized the quest for the whole understood as
completeness in Romantic hermeneutics.27 Yet the whole is not so much a
complete system as it is an infinity of intercrossing relations that are ultimately
referred to the nonrelational. In this way, Dilthey characterized three senses of
“whole” in Schleiermacher’s thought: (i) organizing inner form, (ii) system, and
(iii) relational context or Zusammenhang (HSH 679). Whereas organizing inner
form refers to an organic immanent teleology and the idea of a system points to
the completeness of a totality, Zusammenhang indicates the nexus or contextu-
ality that allows singularity to be interpreted in relation to the infinite. If there
is a common quest in “Romantic hermeneutics,” it is characterized more by the
question of the singular and the ineffable than it is by the systematic complete-

25. This is an implication, for instance, of HC 18–19, 92.
27. Jean Grondin, Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics (New Haven, CT: Yale University
Press, 1994), 64.
ness of representational knowledge. Dilthey could therefore suggest that individuality is the form of the whole (HSH 709). If we could know the whole, then we would know the whole in its concrete singularity rather than as a universal or concept.

If Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics emphasized the correctness of an understanding to be guided by the theoretical articulation of an art and practice, this is far from meaning that he presupposed correctness as the sole model of truth, since interpretation calls for responsive feeling and imagination. Nor does this imply that the world is inherently and fully comprehensible and intelligible, since as finite beings we relate to the infinite through what Schleiermacher called in various places traces and seeds (*Spuren und Keime*). The notion of trace or seed is helpful for interpreting its use in Schleiermacher and the paradox of speaking about that which cannot be spoken. The trace is that which is given as not being able to be given, the presence of that which cannot be thought as presence, the disclosure of nondisclosedness, the revelation of that which is concealed as concealed.28 This trace does not stand alone as a brute singularity or fact, since it bears a fundamental relationship to the word for Schleiermacher.

**III. DILTHEY: INTERPRETATION AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES**

Wilhelm Dilthey was a philosopher, intellectual and cultural historian, and social thinker, who is most recognized for his contributions to hermeneutics, the human sciences, aesthetics and literary criticism, interpretive psychology, and what later became known as “life-philosophy” (*Lebensphilosophie*). As with Schleiermacher, the hermeneutical tendencies of Dilthey’s thought, which concerned understanding and interpretation as epistemic and social-historical phenomena, should be placed in the larger context of Dilthey’s project.

Dilthey’s primary early work *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1883) is an attempt to develop a postmetaphysical epistemology of the human sciences, without positivistically truncating human experience, by systematically and historically investigating “the whole of human nature as it is revealed in experience, in the study of language, and in the study of history, and thus seek the connection of these components” (IHS 51). Dilthey developed his analysis of the human investigation of the human world in the context of his early epistemological project of explicating “the empirical without empiricism” in order to

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unfold a “critique of historical reason” that would clarify, validate, and extend the distinctive forms of inquiry of the human sciences in the context of social-historical life (IHS 165).

The human sciences can be grounded only through immanent self-reflection on experience, based in and interpreting the “feeling of life” or precognitive reflexive awareness, which includes epistemological and psychological inquiry (IHS 174, 227–8). Dilthey argued for a nonreductive experientialism in epistemology, which expanded it beyond cognitive or theoretical knowledge and hence transformed it. According to Dilthey:

All science is experiential; but all experience must be related back to and derives its validity from the conditions and context of consciousness in which it arises, i.e., the totality of our nature. We designate as “epistemological” this standpoint which consistently recognizes the impossibility of going behind these conditions. (IHS 50)

In his critique of reductive forms of empiricism and positivism, Dilthey argued for the irreducible richness and variety of experience understood and articulated from out of itself. Experience is bound to meaning-relating activities and structures that are only understandable in their life-context (Lebenszusammenhang). Dilthey utilized this account of lived-experience to reject traditional and speculative metaphysics. Metaphysics conceives the world through a unified point outside the world, assumed to be inherently intelligible, in order to represent the world as a systematic totality. Metaphysics separates knowledge from its historical context and the “totality of human nature,” whereas what is called for is “historical reflection together with epistemological self-reflection [Selbstbesinnung]” (IHS 52).29

In his Life of Schleiermacher (1870) and Introduction to the Human Sciences, Dilthey interpreted the processes of life immanently and in relation to a dynamic context that is never fully visible. This “inner” perspective of life implies the original givenness from the first-person perspective of co-agents or participants of meaningful social-cultural structures and processes. “Inner” thus refers to the first-person life-context, which is inherently bodily, perceptual, and worldly as well as social-historical, and in which objects are preconceptually “understood.” In contrast, “outer” or “external” refers to the abstraction of objects from their life-nexus in the third-person perspective of observation and explanation characteristic of modern natural sciences (IHS 61–2, 67). Without the metaphysical unity of the world, which has collapsed into paradox and aporia, we are faced

with incommensurable data derived from myriad sources that cannot be conclusively combined insofar as they are explained and interpreted phenomenally and immanently from out of themselves rather than related to an external standard (IHS 61–4). Although Dilthey is repeatedly misinterpreted as an idealist philosopher of spirit or an epistemological dualist, radically opposing causal explanation of nature from the interpretive understanding of human life, the incommensurability of the natural and human sciences does not exclude their overlapping or pluralistic employment in inquiry: “Knowledge of the natural sciences overlaps with that of the human sciences” (IHS 70). Accordingly, for instance, the human sciences are irreducible to causal explanation even as they continue to use it. Third-person causal and structuralist-functionalist approaches in the human sciences, which analyze persons as the results of previous natural causes or as the tools and mechanisms of greater social forces and structures, are legitimate for Dilthey to the extent that they can be related to the perspective of persons as conscious co-agents involved in the formation of social life (IHS 55). Social forces, structures, and processes are in turn necessary for interpreting and explaining the phenomena associated with “spirit” in German idealism, including the individual person, groups, eras, and nations (IHS 56, 58). Nature as a causal order conditions individual and social life, just as that life in turn impacts and reshapes nature (IHS 69). History cannot be understood except through its natural conditions and as the “domination of nature” that is a primary purpose of human social activity from agriculture to technology (IHS 71).

Pluralism is necessary for the human sciences given their distinctive kinds of objects: “the external [or structural] organization of society, the cultural systems [of the reproduction of meaning] within it, and individual peoples” (IHS 93). The latter is the most complex object, since it does not correspond to an entity insofar as there is no such thing as a soul, organism, or essence to a nation or people (IHS 55, 121). Dilthey rejected what is now called “strong holism” in the philosophy of the social sciences, that is, the assertion of the existence of collective entities, while retaining a role for a “weak holism” that allows statements about collective or group phenomena such as an era, generation, or nation. Dilthey’s focus on the context of individual life thus differs from the methodological individualism that reduces individuals to the ahistorical self-interested monadic agents of rational choice.

The primary intention of the human sciences is the empirical description of individuality in its life-context. Consequently, in an argument that would arouse neo-Kantian criticism insofar as they excluded psychology from the cultural sciences in classifying it as a natural science, the human sciences require descriptive and empirical psychology (IHS 109). Psychology is not then purely a natural science, as it involves purposes, norms, and values, as seen, for instance, in
ethical, legal, and other practically oriented claims. The individual presents itself as both the goal and limit of understanding, which is explicative through the expressions and practices of the individual rather than directly intuited or introspected, as individuality evades full disclosure and articulation. For Dilthey, we often know expressions that have a kind of objectivity for understanding while being uncertain of the life being expressed.

During his middle period from 1883 to 1896, Dilthey focused on developing his aesthetics and a descriptive and interpretive psychology, including his argument for the “acquired psychic structural nexus” from the tension and differentiation of self and world in the experience of resistance via reflexive awareness to the fullness and specificity of an individual life. In this context, Dilthey articulated the lived—or performatively enacted rather than purely transcendentally constitutive—“categories of life” or life’s immanent articulation—character that proved so significant for the early Heidegger. The acquired psychic nexus indicates the complexity of overlapping functions of the individual as it develops in a historical situation. Dilthey’s “proof” of the external world through the experience of resistance indicates the thereness and co-givenness of self and world.

Dilthey’s writings from the early 1890s should be interpreted in the context of his articulation of an interpretive psychology occurring in the space and intersection of epistemology and life. In his *Beiträge zur Lösung der Frage vom Ursprung unseres Glaubens an die Realität der Außenwelt und seinem Recht* (1890), Dilthey formulated the basis for such a project by arguing for a phenomenality or immanence prior to the intellectualism of phenomenalism and for the independence of reality from the subject through the resistance and tension of the co-givenness of self and world. Under the traditional guise of an argument for the “external” existence of the world, Dilthey would radicalize this canonical epistemological problem by anticanonically showing the bodily-worldly character of human life. This work suggests a hermeneutics of bodily being in the world that provides the basis for interpretive psychology. Epistemological categories have their basis in the bodily-perceptual and social-historical character of life. Categories such as substance and cause are derived from the pre-intentional and prereflective categories of life through which the world is experienced and expressed.

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30. On the explicative character of understanding, see Jung, *Hermeneutik zur Einführung*, 84.
Schleiermacher’s “hermeneutical circle” is a model of education or cultivation. As one moves between the particular and general, each movement enriches one’s previous understanding (HC 24). For Dilthey, it is the unending and irreducible intersection of and movement of prereflective elementary understanding and reflective interpretation between self and other, individual and context, and singular and whole. This dynamic of the determinate and the indeterminate is productive of understanding, which is practical rather than theoretical, selective rather than universal, and productive rather than merely reconstructive. Understanding attempts to move from the exteriority of the utterance to the internal first-person perspective of the speaker or writer.

In the final phase of his work, from 1896 until his death in 1911, Dilthey focused on the hermeneutical and social character of sense and meaning in the context of Hegel’s objective spirit, which signifies the constitution of intersubjectivity in and through human practices and products. Dilthey analyzed historical life in The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences (1910) through the relation of lived-experience (Erlebnis), expression (Ausdruck), and understanding (verstehen). He further articulated a “philosophy of worldviews” in order to account for the genesis and conflict of systems of interpretation of meaning in relation to the feeling and nexus of life. Worldviews express the tendency to unify experience even as the conflicts (Widerstreit) inherent in life prevent the closure of life in conceptual systems, since they inevitably face their limits in the antinomies and aporias generated by life itself.

It is in this late period that Dilthey explicated the experiential structures of consciousness in his three preliminary “Studies toward the Foundation of the Human Sciences,” his exploration of the import of the productive systems of historical life for knowledge in The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences, and his final and perhaps best formulation of hermeneutics in “The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Manifestations of Life.” While Rudolf Carnap and others utilized the word Aufbau in the sense of epistemic “construction,” Dilthey stressed the formation-character of both the human sciences and the historical reality that they investigate. That is, the formation

34. Jung, Hermeneutik zur Einführung, 83.
of the historical world refers to its articulation in the human sciences, which themselves theoretically reflect this historical world (FHW 1). Dilthey’s theory of the human sciences is not merely an epistemology (Erkenntnistheorie) in the conventional sense, but a theory of knowledge (Theorie des Wissens) that relates knowing to its context. Whereas epistemology seeks to establish the foundations of conceptual cognition (Erkenntnis), Dilthey places the epistemology of the human sciences within a larger context of the knowledge (Wissen) embodied in social practices and historical forms of life.

Thought can and does generalize, intensify, and transform life, even as it remains bound to the factual and empirical context of that life (FHW 27). Knowledge encompasses not only the conceptual cognition of reality, but also the values and purposes established concerning it. It is inevitably selective and bound to a perspective. Dilthey accordingly situated the human sciences, which are determined by their respective object and how the object is given, in relation to a pretheoretical life-nexus and its forms of elementary or ordinary understanding (FHW 38). These are tied up with the temporality, historicity, and structures of social life; with an epochal “objective spirit.” Objective spirit indicates the ways in which the past has been objectified and continues to shape contemporary practices, and it is analyzed in the human sciences as cultural systems and the external organization of society.

A significant characteristic of the Formation of the Historical World is the development of the notion of “productive system or nexus.” Wirkungszusammenhang suggests a historical efficacy or productivity prior to any analysis of it as either causal or teleological (FHW 4). The human sciences involve the study of dynamic interconnected systems that articulate the intersection of meaning, value, purpose, and force. Dilthey interpreted these temporally, such that meaning primarily concerns how humans are determined by their past, value is based on their present feeling of life, and purpose is projective striving into the future in the face of productive forces (Kräftê) that cannot always be predicted or controlled.37

Understanding, which should be construed verbally as “to understand” (verstehen), is intrinsically interpretive for Dilthey. Since human agents are conscious and reflective beings who are bound to the facticity of their bodies and world, they can cognize themselves and others only indirectly through expressive and interpretive means (FHW 108). Given that we know ourselves and others primarily through actions, life-expressions, and their effects – rather than through introspection or intuition – and that everyday understanding can

face breakdowns and what seems distant or strange, elementary understanding leads to higher forms of understanding and interpretation; that is, hermeneutics. Dilthey’s project of a critique of historical reason proceeds from the context of life in all of its complexity and concreteness to the conceptual cognition of the sciences and, finally, to reflective awareness (Besinnung). This reflection is made possible by the prereflective reflexivity (Innsein or Innwerden) of the human subject and, with its double meaning of “sense” (Sinn) as meaning and bodily awareness, constitutes the basic movement of Dilthey’s thought. Understanding is not merely subjective but mediated through the expressions and practices of human life. It also provides more than a scientific access to objects; it is fundamentally world-opening (FHW 226).

Understanding aims at truth or validity, and such understanding is described as being the most complete (FHW 227). Yet understanding is also concerned with the contextuality and facticity of human expressions. The objectifications of human life in practices and institutions, in behaviors and expressions, are the medium through which we understand and interpret others and ourselves. Dilthey’s phenomenological descriptions of kinds of attitude (Verhaltungsweise), taking a stance (Stellungsnahme), and life-concern (Lebensbezug) show how historical life is both about and matters to the individual in its relational context (FHW 2). The human sciences justifiably strive to this extent for objectivity, universality, and truth.

Objectivity in the human sciences links lived-experiences with the social-historical structures that inform them. Yet this objectivity cannot consist of a mimetic copying of reality “as it is” (FHW 23). The human sciences relate the unique, the accidental, and the momentary to the nexus of norms, values, and meanings operative in social-historical reality. They explicate the intersection of the unique and the general in the “historical presentation of the singular occurrence [die historische Darstellung des einmal Geschehenen].”³⁸ The significance of the singular in relation to its context indicates that Dilthey’s concern is not exclusively epistemological or scientific. It is practical, and the human sciences cannot extricate themselves from this non-“value-free” context. Possibilities for historical vision need self-reflection (Selbstbesinnung) if we are to be truly responsive to our own hermeneutical situation.

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The word “hermeneutics” retained its early modern meaning and function in the writings of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Although they intermittently gave the word more extensive meanings, hermeneutics is principally the art of understanding another’s utterance through interpretation (HC 3–5). Hermeneutics is one discipline among other disciplines, correlated in particular with its fellow philological discipline of criticism as the art of evaluating the authenticity of texts rather than a style of philosophizing as a whole (HC 3). It is further subordinate to ethics, which concerns any form of human activity, and dialectic – or the art of thinking – for Schleiermacher. Hermeneutics refers to the exegesis of texts or, more broadly, communicative utterances in terms of their sense and meaning. Whereas earlier Protestant and idealistic hermeneutics stressed the “spirit” of the text, Schleiermacher and Dilthey focus on the individuality, personality or style, and sensibility of the author in his or her historical context. Despite this more limited use of the word hermeneutics, their thought has been retrospectively designated as “hermeneutical” owing to their interest in associated issues of sense and meaning, context and historicity, understanding and interpretation, and in the communicative and explicative dimensions of human life and inquiry.

Even given this potential continuity through issues of interpretation, their responses to such issues are distinct. Schleiermacher and Dilthey emphasized the central role of language in hermeneutics and inquiry but they did not minimize or neglect the material-empirical, social-historical, and biographical-psychological dimensions of human life and knowledge. The art of interpretation is the art of understanding communication, involving the reflective and philosophical elaboration of understanding, within a larger context of intellectual and empirical inquiry. Twentieth-century hermeneutics – beginning with Heidegger’s critical reception of Dilthey in the 1920s – is largely hostile to these merely ontic empirical, historical, and psychological moments in Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Where later hermeneutically defined philosophy stressed the integrating power and truth of language, narrative, and communication to disclose, construct, and mediate the world through basic concepts such as linguisticality (Gadamer), narrativity (Ricoeur), and mutual consensus (Habermas), Schleiermacher and

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40. On the ethical and dialectical context of hermeneutics, note Schleiermacher, HC 8. One flaw of the twentieth-century hermeneutical reception of Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics is that it ignores its context in his dialectic, the art of thinking in conversation that is the basis of both ethics (to which hermeneutics belongs as a variety of human activity) and physics. On the dialectical context of hermeneutics, also see Bowie, “The Philosophical Significance,” 76.
Dilthey emphasized not only the linguistic character of thought and the disclosive power of language but also its reversals, limitations, and breakdowns. Since everything cannot be said in language given the conflict, facticity, and resistance constitutive of life, and language is as much evocative as representational, all the resources of indirect communication are needed in order to articulate the singularity and affective life of the individual, on the one hand, and the complexity of any given context or nexus (Zusammenhang) of relations, on the other.

Besides the inability to fully determine or signify the individual and the whole in language, which calls forth and demands the interpretive oscillation and circling between them, communication and interpretation were confounded and inspired by the transcendence and ineffability of God in Schleiermacher and the unfathomable and ungroundable immanence of life in Dilthey. This finitude and facticity in relation to the infinite beyond in Schleiermacher, or infinite empirical plurality in Dilthey, orients their intellectual endeavors. Instead of being directly or immediately disclosed to intuition or reason, phenomena require interpretation, which indirectly addresses, articulates, and indicates the singular and complexly mediated phenomena of human existence. Given this context, the work of interpretation is tied to empirical scientific research.

The need for reflectively informed interpretation emerges when elemental or ordinary everyday understanding is confounded by that which is not communicated or understood – whether it is a text (the domain of traditional hermeneutics), the author, other persons, the historical context, life itself, or God. As there is no absolute difference between the transcendental and the empirical, or the ontological and the ontic, interpretation cannot be purely philosophical. Whether in Schleiermacher’s dialectic or Dilthey’s epistemic logic, philosophy thinks through scientific inquiry and cannot be separated from it without dogmatism. It accordingly cannot avoid or bracket empirical and ontic inquiry into the anthropological, natural, psychological, and social-historical dimensions of human life. Whereas traditional hermeneutics is primarily concerned with the explication of biblical and classical texts, understanding and interpretation are increasingly associated – already in Schleiermacher to a lesser degree, and for Dilthey more centrally – with the first-person participant perspective of lived-


experience (*Erlebnis*), epistemic and social-historical reflection (*Besinnung*), and the empirically oriented inquiry of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*).

It is striking that Schleiermacher and Dilthey conceive of interpretation as aiming both at the individual and the singular *and* at the context and the whole in their relational interdependence. Understanding and interpretation occur to one degree or another as an oscillation between these two poles, as universality demands returning to particularity and particulars require universalization in order to begin to be recognized and understood. The oscillation between the conceptual and the nonconceptual, the universal and the particular, and the individual and the whole became characterized as the “hermeneutical circle,” which Schleiermacher adopted from Friedrich Ast. 44 Rather than being a closed system or hierarchy of meanings, where particulars are subsumed under universals never to be heard from again, interpretation occurs through both contextualization and individuation. It is a potentially infinite iteration of departure and return to its object. Similar to empirical research, interpretation is provisional and can always begin anew as more is learned about the individual and the context.

Interpretation is not only the analysis of language, narrative, or communicative action for Schleiermacher and Dilthey; it concerns “meaning” in all its potential guises and expressions. This includes the disruption and incompleteness of meaning in encountering “non-meaning” and the counter-purposive. This insight is related to the role of the nonconceptual and prereflective in experience, the affectivity and emotional character of lived-experience and understanding, and the priority of music and art as expressions of human life. Instead of highlighting reason or intuition alone, they emphasized the need to address human existence in its fullness and variety, which embraces rationality and affectivity, reflection and the basic “feeling of life” (*Lebensgefühl*). 45

Meaning is “holistic” in the sense of its being relational and interconnected. Yet, in contrast with visions of an impersonal systematic integration in a conceptual or social totality, or the “occult subordination” of every aspect of the text to an esoteric doctrine (HC 17), this is an open-ended, interpretive, and “first-person” holism that is constantly referred back to the experience and interpre-

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tation of individuals.\textsuperscript{46} Even as the individual is in a sense fundamental, the interpretation of the individual leads back to the context and the potentially universal through the comparative, the generalizable, and the typical. Both the individual and the whole are more or less indeterminate, as interpretations attempt to increasingly articulate their determinateness.\textsuperscript{47} In this process, both sides change, readjust in relation to one another, and are reinterpreted.

The provisional character of interpretation does not only hold for the interpretation of other humans. Self-understanding is more complex and questionable than is usually thought, as the self does not have direct or self-certain access and knowledge of itself. Self-knowledge consequently proceeds through self-interpretation, with all the risks that this involves. The individual does not have direct or unmediated self-knowledge, much less an intuitive self-transparency, as evident in biographical and autobiographical writing. The motto of Dilthey’s unfinished multivolume biography of Schleiermacher is “the individual is ineffable.”\textsuperscript{48} Rather than being statically given as an unalterable boundary, or posited as being outside interpretation, the unsayable occurs in the context of communication.\textsuperscript{49} It is owing to finitude and alterity that all words and expressions call for interpretation and assessment – whether they are our own or even those of God. Andrew Bowie notes that Schleiermacher’s self “is not an absolute point of beginning”; the self is infinitely reflective and interpretive, as it lacks presence to itself and at the same time needs to respond to this lack.\textsuperscript{50}

Meaning is inevitably of “diverse provenance,” or pluralistic.\textsuperscript{51} It involves a multiplicity of elements and sources that entail, for example, addressing and researching the text, the author, the context, and the truth claims of a work in order to interpret and evaluate it. These myriad elements and resources cannot be eliminated prior to the work of interpretation, even as some are highlighted and others remain in the background, depending on the interpretive task. Hermeneutics is methodologically pluralistic in drawing on both generalizing (linguistic) and individualizing (psychological) tendencies, which exemplify the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Jung discusses the “holism of the first-person perspective,” which also differentiates the human from the impersonal third-person perspective of the natural sciences, in \textit{Hermeneutik zur Einführung}, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{47} On the difference between an indeterminate and a determinate whole, and the necessity for contextualization in making an utterance more determinate, see HC 28–30.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Scholtz, \textit{Ethik und Hermeneutik}, 111, 125.
\item \textsuperscript{50} Bowie, \textit{Aesthetics and Subjectivity}, 249.
\item \textsuperscript{51} This is a key point of contention for Heidegger in \textit{Einleitung in die Philosophie} (Gesamtausgabe 27), 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2001), 347–9. On Heidegger’s critique and Misch’s defense of Dilthey’s meaning pluralism, see Frithjof Rodi, \textit{Erkenntnis des Erkannten}, 137–40.
\end{itemize}

two primary tasks of hermeneutics for Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Likewise, ordinary life is differentiated by a diversity of practical interests, and scientific inquiry by its objects and how they are approached.

V. CRITICISMS AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite the incorporation of many of their insights by philosophers as diverse as Heidegger and Habermas, a number of overlapping critiques of Schleiermacher and Dilthey emerged in reaction to their thought. Owing to their concern with the psychological and aesthetic dimensions of human existence, some critics accused them of “psychologism” and “aestheticism,” that is, the reduction of truth or validity claims to psychological dispositions and the overprioritizing of art as a model of human activity.

Likewise, on account of their attention to the historical nexus or context in which individuals and groups live, act, and produce, they were criticized to varying degrees for “historicizing” texts and experiences in a way that threatened their truth or cognitive validity; for example, the truth of the Bible (by Orthodox and neo-Orthodox theological critics of Schleiermacher such as Barth), the sciences (by positivism and logical positivism), philosophy (twentieth-century hermeneutics), or the very idea of validity itself (by Neo-Kantianism and Husserl).

Finally, because of their accentuation of the ineffable, individual, and affective aspects of human life and on the epistemology, methodology, and rationality of philosophical and human scientific inquiry, opponents of Schleiermacher and Dilthey – especially Gadamer – have criticized their works for being incoherently beholden to positivistic scientism and Romantic aestheticism, Enlightenment rationality and the irrational affirmation of God or life. Nonetheless, insofar as philosophy does not one-sidedly abandon reflection or feeling, reason or

*54. For a discussion of Barth’s theology, see the essay by Felix Ó Murchadha in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.
imagination, science or art, or universality or individuality, their work continues to be significant in elucidating a nonreductive interpretive experientialism in both knowledge and practical life.

MAJOR WORKS

**Friedrich Schleiermacher**

*Gesamtausgabe der Werke Schleiermachers in drei Abteilungen.* Berlin, 1834–.


**Wilhelm Dilthey**


*Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften: Versuch einer Grundlegung für das Studium der Gesellschaft und der Geschichte* (1883). In *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1. Published in English as *Selected


Félix Ravaissone and his protégé Jules Lachelier are the chief representatives of what is known as “French spiritualist philosophy,” sometimes called “neo-spiritualism” or “l’école réflexive” in the nineteenth century. Despite their differences, they had it in common to emphasize the primacy of free action, the priority of organic wholes over their parts, and an overarching role for the divine creator. They rejected materialistic and deterministic views of reality. They influenced Henri Bergson, who succeeded Ravaissone in the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

Indeed, it is possible to trace some affinities and influences between Ravaissone and Lachelier and some of their predecessors, contemporaries, or successors, thereby giving a broader reach to the label “spiritualist philosophy,” and providing a context for their work. A full list of authors who could be included among the spiritualists is not offered here, but some scholars would include Charles Renouvier, and may cite Maine de Biran and even Antoine-Augustin Cournot among the predecessors, and Bergson among the successors. But such a way of proceeding has to be treated with caution, because of the very considerable differences between these thinkers.

It is worth noting the contrast between them and Auguste Comte. His positivism rested on a systematic rejection of metaphysics and traditional religion, and advocacy of a form of scientism that could be applied not only to inert matter, but also to social life. Indeed, he is viewed as a founder of sociology. At first sight there could be no deeper divergence than that between spiritualism and the positivism of Comte. Yet curiously, late in his life Comte came to advocate a new religion of humanity, described in his “positivist catechism” based on love and altruism.¹

Positive religion, he claimed, was a natural and normal feature of human life, which needed to be cleansed of previous baggage. Thus, despite the deep divergence between positivism and spiritualism, we seem in the end to observe an affinity, even if it is vanishingly remote.²

Here, the authors named earlier as forming a group around neospiritualism are discussed, but little attempt has been made to provide evidence of actual influences, where they can be documented. Some common themes found in the work of all the writers treated are an emphasis on the will, and rejection of hard forms of determinism or materialism. Let us turn briefly to the background.

I. THE BACKGROUND

The background to the developments in which French spiritualist philosophy has its place is to be found in a rift that arose between thinkers interested in the sciences of life. Increasingly in the eighteenth century the received paradigm of the mechanical philosophy had begun to appear inadequate in this area. There was extensive empirical inquiry and elaborate speculation. The work of Swiss naturalist Charles Bonnet³ is emblematic. He received numerous high honors from European academies for his work on insects, in particular for his discovery of the parthenogenesis of aphids. But later in his life, having become nearly blind perhaps because of intensive use of the microscope, as he himself believed, he engaged in high speculation about the history of life in the world. He was a preformationist, holding that the development of individual organisms, and the general history of life, were determined by preexisting germs, and advocating an evolutionary theory on this basis.⁴ It was only toward the end of the century that the epigenetic approach began to prevail. However, speculation of the sort engaged in by Bonnet and contrary materialistic speculation, as illustrated in the work of Julien Offray de La Mettrie⁵ entitled *L’Homme-machine*

². Comte’s work is discussed in the essays by Alan Sica and Dale Jacquette in this volume.
³. Charles Bonnet (1720–93) was a Swiss naturalist and philosopher. He studied insects and the structure and functions of leaves, and developed what is known as the catastrophe theory of evolution.
⁴. Charles Bonnet, *Considérations sur les corps organizés* (Amsterdam: M. M. Rey, 1762) and *Palingénésie Philosophique* (Amsterdam: M. M. Rey, 1769). The latter work claims that the evolution of life proceeds by catastrophic natural disasters, after which newer and higher forms of life appear from the same germs.
⁵. Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–51) was a French physician and philosopher who advocated a materialist account of life. His atheism and materialistic views forced him to leave Paris in 1745 and Holland in 1748. He was welcomed in Berlin by Frederick the Great.
(1748), lacked scientific bases that might lead toward a resolution until, at the end of the century, Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier’s advocacy of oxygen (as opposed to phlogiston) and Alessandro Volta’s work on electricity. For his part, Lavoisier was responsible not only for the discovery of oxygen and hydrogen, which he named, but for a more general reform of chemistry that made it much more apt for the study of processes in living matter. Volta’s invention of the first batteries arose from his attempt to repeat and explain Luigi Galvani’s observation of frogs’ legs twitching under dissection, and he found that an electrical current arose from the two different metals holding the leg in place. Both of these advances, chemical and electric, were rightly seen as important in the study of life. Such developments ushered in a new sort of interest in the will, seen, for instance, in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer, as the rift between materialistic and antimaterialistic approaches to life took an entirely new shape. But we turn now to Maine de Biran, because his interest in the will provides some of the more immediate environment for the work of the spiritualists.

II. MAINE DE BIRAN

The young Maine de Biran had a strong mathematical bent, and it was suggested to him that he should apply for a Chair of Mathematics in 1803. But he did not follow this suggestion, and not much of his surviving work is marked by math-


7. Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier (1743–94) was a French scientist who transformed chemistry; he was executed by the French Revolutionary authorities for allegedly improper use of his privileges as a tax-collector. Alessandro Volta (1745–1827) was an Italian scientist who made important early steps in the understanding of electricity, building on the work of Luigi Galvani.

8. Luigi Galvani (1737–98) was an Italian physician and physicist, and a pioneer of bioelectricity. He studied medicine at the University of Bologna, and in 1762 was appointed a lecturer in anatomy. He later became a professor of obstetrics and, in 1772 was named president of the university.

9. Electricity also provided a link to the early Romantics, as evinced in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus (1818).

10. For a discussion of Schopenhauer, see the essay by Bart Vandenabeele in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.

11. Marie François Pierre Gontier de Biran (Maine de Biran) was born on November 29, 1766, in Bergerac, France. He studied law at the University of Poitiers before entering the guard of Louis XVI at Versailles. After the French Revolution, he returned to the countryside and, after the Reign of Terror, he held public office under successive regimes. He died on July 20, 1824, in Paris.
ematical concerns, apart from a continuing interest in logic, although he tended to have a psychological rather than mathematical conception of logic. Instead, Maine de Biran made it his life-work to establish foundations for psychology, and through this for the human sciences in general, although in practice his numerous and significant duties in public life under different political regimes in those turbulent times were a significant and almost continuous distraction. For about the last twelve years of his life he worked on a single book that would provide these foundations. But the projected book changed in form and content over this period and was never completed. As Henri Gouhier wrote: “He was a one-book man: but he never wrote the book.” But the work sometimes came quite close to completion, and a scholarly edition of his writings, mostly unpublished during his lifetime, is available today in thirteen parts (twenty volumes), replacing less scholarly and less complete editions produced since the 1840s.

Although initially avowing a robust empiricism, Maine de Biran placed central emphasis from an early date on the consciousness of willed activity, and later in his life a more metaphysical and then mystical and religious direction also came into his work. He was steeped in the work of various predecessors, including Locke and Condillac, as well as numerous scientific and medical writers, educationalists, and other philosophers. Despite the weight he gave to empirical investigation, he did not accept strong reductivist versions of materialism, as evinced, for instance, in the work of La Mettrie or Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis.

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12. I did find among Maine de Biran’s papers in the library of the family chateau near Bergerac a sketchy attempt to prove the trisection of a given angle with ruler and compass. This problem goes back to the ancient Greeks, and much ingenuity was expended on it from ancient times onward. It was only after the death of Maine de Biran that such a construction was proved to be impossible.

13. Henri Gouhier (1898–1994) was a distinguished scholar of philosophy at the Sorbonne, where he taught from 1941 to 1968. Gouhier published a number of books, mainly on the history of French philosophy, including several books on Descartes as well as books on Bergson, Comte, Maine de Biran, Malebranche, Pascal, and Rousseau. He was elected to the Académie Française in 1979.


16. Victor Cousin’s few editions, for instance, were very tardy, and crucially incomplete. He would just pick and choose bits and pieces that he thought represented the “best” aspects of the “isms” that he had crudely identified.

17. Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis (1757–1808) was a materialist philosopher and physiologist. He was the author of Sur les Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme (1802), and was acquainted with many of the most distinguished figures of his day, including d’Alembert, Condillac, Condorcet, d’Holbach, Diderot, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson.
His influence on later thought was varied. In 1821, Antoine-Athanase Royer-Collard, a specialist in mental disorders, requested Maine de Biran’s help in preparing a course of lectures, and Maine de Biran, reworking a previous prize-winning work, sent him the *Nouvelles Considérations sur les rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme*. Royer-Collard’s notes on this were published by his son in 1843 in the second issue of the *Annales Médico-psychologiques*. This journal represented a significant step in the development of empirical psychology in the nineteenth century. So Maine de Biran had a role in the early stages of this science.

It can be claimed also that he was a predecessor of phenomenology, given his insistence that “nothing is present to our consciousness except as a relation.” I have found no evidence that Franz Brentano knew his work, although later phenomenologists – including Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Henry – were acquainted with it.

Maine de Biran from an early stage distinguished between the “animal life” in humans, in which the organism followed its own ways, which were not always present to consciousness, and the “conscious life,” which had at its foundation the awareness of willed effort. This notion was not abstruse; Maine de Biran often illustrated it by the simple example of a person knowingly raising an arm. But such awareness constituted what Maine de Biran called a “primitive fact” presented by “the inner sense.” At the same time, the conscious life presupposed the “animal life,” and Maine de Biran thought that there might one day be a “new Columbus” who would explore the underlayer of our conscious life, so in a certain way anticipating Freud. To these “two lives,” Maine de Biran later added a third level, the “life of the spirit.” It is this last that gives some support to making Maine de Biran a predecessor of French spiritualist philosophy, although the various writings in which these ideas about the “third life” were developed by Maine de Biran were not in fact published until the twentieth century. Thus Maine de Biran cannot have been a predecessor of the spiritualists directly, through their knowledge of his published writings. Nevertheless, it is

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18. Antoine-Athanase Royer-Collard (1768–1825) was a French doctor who worked with the “insane.” In 1806 he was named chief physician at the Charenton mental asylum, where his patients included the Marquis de Sade. In 1819, he was appointed to the first Chair of *médecine mentale* in the Faculté de Médecine in Paris.


*20. For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*; Henry in discussed in the essay by Bruce Ellis Benson in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.*

arguable that influences may tread more subtle paths, such as those outlined in the notion of the “epidemiology of ideas” recently developed by Dan Sperber.22

III. COURNOT

Antoine-Augustin Cournot (1801–77), by contrast, was a mathematician of note, both in mathematical theory and in applied mathematics, including economic theory. One of his most important legacies is in probability theory. Pierre-Simon Laplace,23 perhaps the hardest of all determinists, had taken the view that the role of probabilistic mathematics was simply to make up for our insufficient knowledge as finite humans of the evolution of the universe. If we were all-knowing we could predict precisely the entire future of the universe from the current position and momentum of all elementary particles using the laws of physics. But Cournot, by contrast, considered that probabilistic techniques were founded in features of the real world, rather than being a substitute for our ignorance of it. He was greatly interested in chance, as an unavoidable aspect of our world. In this he may be considered to have anticipated from a great distance the later advent of quantum mechanics, although, of course, he was far from having any of the empirical findings or underlying theoretical work on which quantum theory would later depend.24

His major work in economics, Researches into the Mathematical Principles of Wealth,25 was to have an important influence in the later development of economic theory, although, to his disappointment, its importance was not

22. Dan Sperber (ed.), “The Epidemiology of Ideas,” special issue of The Monist 84 (2001). The analogy with epidemiology is that despite sound knowledge of the aetiology of various diseases, there is no general epidemiological law to explain their distribution since entirely different factors can affect their spread or failure to spread in different populations and areas. Analogically, and contrary to the claims of memeticists, there are no general principles to explain the spread of ideas. Cases vary considerably, and overt or provable influences through personal contacts or the written or printed word are just one of many different ways in which ideas spread.
23. Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749–1827) was a French mathematician and astronomer who advocated strong determinism. Author of the five-volume Mécanique Céleste (Celestial mechanics; 1799–1825), he contributed to the development of mathematical astronomy, made significant contributions to mathematics and probability theory, and aided in the development of the metric system.
recognized when he published it. Some of his work prefigured the much later development of game theory, including the Nash equilibrium.\(^{26}\)

In later life, he became increasingly interested in “vitalism,” according to which there are laws or principles or forces governing living beings that are distinct from those governing inert matter.\(^{27}\) This was a common enough preoccupation at the time, and indeed, earlier, Maine de Biran already had a considerable knowledge of and interest in eighteenth-century forms of vitalism. Later Bergson was to reject not only crude vitalism but also crude mechanism. Although current biological orthodoxy rejects vitalism in all its forms, some twentieth-century scientists, such as René Thom, D’Arcy Thompson, and C. H. Waddington, have maintained quasi-finalistic positions.\(^{28}\)

But, despite these interests, Cournot is now respected primarily for his important mathematical work. The significant thing he shares with the spiritualists is his rejection of strong determinism.

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\(^{26}\) Game theory is not about games as we normally understand them, but about any human interactions in which there can be different outcomes for the parties according to what they do. A Nash equilibrium occurs when “players” in a “game” know each other’s strategy, and therefore know what to do. However, the existence of a Nash equilibrium does not guarantee that the players will get the best possible payoffs (which could be achieved if their strategies were different). The most well-known example of this is the “Prisoner’s Dilemma,” in which each of two prisoners will get the best outcome (namely, minimal or no prison sentence) if they both keep quiet under questioning, yet it seems to each of them rational to confess, since if the other keeps quiet a small sentence will result.


\(^{28}\) See, for example, René Thom, *Structural Stability and Morphogenesis: An Outline of a General Theory of Models*, D. H. Fowler (trans.) (Reading, MA: W. A. Benjamin, 1975); D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (New York: Dover, [1942] 1992); and C. H. Waddington, *Principles of Embryology* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956). D’Arcy Thompson (1860–1948) demonstrated with beautiful diagrams the existence of common and related forms in living organisms that appeared not to be susceptible to ordinary evolutionary explanation. Thom (1923–2002) argued for a form of qualitative dynamics, based on his Fields Medal work in topology, also named by him “catastrophe theory,” which would explain the occurrence of seemingly unrelated forms in nature, such as the forms of the erect penis, the mushroom *Phallus Impudicus*, and certain similarly shaped geological formations. Waddington (1905–75) introduced the idea of “chreods” (necessary paths), that is, the idea that organisms were constrained in their possible paths of development. For instance, he considered that evolutionary processes as conventionally conceived will not produce animals with, say, three, five, or seven legs. These arguments made by distinguished if unconventional scientists are not “vitalist” in the strong sense of appealing to a natural force responsible for what happens in living organisms as opposed to inert matter, as earlier eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers had claimed. But they present quasi-finalist challenges to conventional biological and evolutionary wisdom.
Maine de Biran and Cournot can be shown to have had major and diverse influences on subsequent thought, directly and indirectly. The same can be said of Félix Ravaisson, whose own thought was influenced by, among others, Maine de Biran, Victor Cousin (with whose positions he often found himself in disagreement), and F. W. Schelling (whom he travelled to Munich to meet in 1839). In addition to his interest in the fine arts, drawing on Maine de Biran’s psychological insights and Schelling’s metaphysics, Ravaisson’s writings had a profound influence on both Catholic philosophy and the development of personalism in France. In 1835, Ravaisson won a prize for a study of Aristotle’s metaphysics, leading to later publication of a two-volume work. Ravaisson’s fresh approach to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* represented a new return to Aristotle’s original thinking, and in the second volume, published nine years after the first volume appeared in 1837, he discussed Aristotle’s philosophy in relation to Greek thought in general. However, Ravaisson’s spiritualism is not Aristotelian in character, except in the role it gives to teleology, a theme later taken further by Lachelier.

Ravaisson’s doctoral thesis about habit should be noted, since an early work of Maine de Biran (one of the very few works published in his lifetime) was about the influence of habit on our thinking, a work in which we see for the first time Maine de Biran’s distinction between “two lives” in us. Maine de Biran’s position depended on his advocacy of a reflective psychology. At this stage of his life, Maine de Biran entirely rejected metaphysical reasoning. Ravaisson describes habit as “the middle term between the will and nature.” This statement is not of itself alien to Maine de Biran’s views, but Ravaisson immediately glosses it in terms of Spinoza’s metaphysical distinction between *natura naturans* (namely what exists in itself and is thought through itself, or God the free cause, or

29. Jean-Gaspard Félix Lacher, dit Ravaisson-Mollien (October 23, 1813–May 18, 1900; born in Namur; died in Paris).
30. Victor Cousin (1792–1867) was a French eclectic philosopher who chose what he thought best of the four “-isms” – by some accounts rationalism, empiricism, spiritualism, and mysticism – among previous philosophers. Influenced by Hegel and Schelling, Cousin was a member of the Council of Public Instruction (1830), of the Académie Française (1831), and of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques (1832). His influence dominated the French educational system, and in particular philosophical education, for a considerable period.
31. Henri Bergson succeeded Ravaisson at the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, and he delivered in 1904 a *Notice sur la vie et les Œuvres de M. Félix Ravaisson-Mollien* in which he claimed that Ravaisson’s philosophical work had its roots in his reflections on beauty and on works of art.
attributes of substance that show an eternal and infinite essence), and *natura naturata* (namely all that follows from the necessary existence of God). Habit, says Ravaisson, is of the second kind, displaying the work of the first. For this reason, it allows us to escape from nature, and invites an idealist view of reality. This claim is remote from the early thought of Maine de Biran, and is a crucible for the development of Ravaisson’s “spiritualism.”

In 1839, he became Inspector of Libraries; in 1852 he was chairman of a commission on the teaching of drawing in schools (Delacroix and Ingres were members) and had a continuing interest in the nature of beauty. In 1852, Ravaisson became Inspector General of Higher Education (a position he would occupy until 1888), producing in 1867 at the request of Victor Duruy, the Minister of Public Instruction, a report on the state of philosophy in France: *La Philosophie en France au XIXème Siècle*. This report contrasted mechanical and organic modes of apprehension. It also compared the creation of works of art with God’s loving creation of the universe. It rejected outright materialism as a position impossible to sustain and concluded with a theory of beauty, according to which the order and harmony of the whole is prior to and gives sense to the parts.

What is particularly interesting is Ravaisson’s extended critique of the eclectic philosophy of Cousin, which continued to be dominant in the French educational system. This account displays Cousin as an unscholarly and superficial thinker, and Cousin’s aesthetics is picked out for especially strong criticism, since it depicts ideal beauty in an abstract and general way. Ravaisson’s own approach is illustrated in his discussion of the Venus de Milo, which concentrates in detail on the particularity of the work, to the point of arguing persuasively that a mistake had been made in its reconstruction, causing a blemish, namely a violation of Leonardo da Vinci’s rule about figures posed on one foot specifying the relative heights of the shoulders and the line from the knot of the throat to the supporting foot. This is a nice illustration of Ravaisson’s more general claim that philosophy must emphasize the particular (he cites Aristotle to this effect). Thus his statement that the pose of the Venus expresses love and peace, and that teleological understanding is fundamental in fine art, rests on the conviction that the beauty of an object resides in its concrete existence, contrary to the opinion of Cousin.

All this led Ravaisson to concentrate on the old distinction between analysis and synthesis. Analysis, as described and practiced by so many, from Descartes to Bertrand Russell, aimed at achieving understanding by breaking down a phenomenon or problem or object into its constituent parts. A clear

picture of the parts, their nature, workings, and interactions, should resolve any puzzles about the wholes. The alternative and preferred philosophical approach, according to Ravaisson, was synthesis: here we find a constructive approach, which strives toward the infinite. He wrote a “philosophical testament,” of which versions have subsequently been published, although it remained incomplete at his death. Here, he praises enthusiasm, emphasizes the role of feeling in the search for truth, claims that generosity and love are the foundation of education and of social morality, and argues that belief in immortality is natural to humans. What we retain is that this “spiritualist” rested his position, at least in part, on a concern for the concrete.

V. RENOUVIER

Charles Bernard Renouvier was a contemporary of Ravaisson. He is often described as a neo-Kantian, taking up in his own way Kant’s concern with the a priori conditions of knowledge. However, he differed from Kant in many respects, claiming that relations, rather than things, are fundamental. Maine de Biran had already made a similar claim. Renouvier also gave an important role to liberty, in a way quite different from Kant’s treatment of free will. Although he was a founding figure of French neo-Kantianism, these were not Renouvier’s only departures from Kant: he repudiated the notion of things that are not represented (“things in themselves”), and departed from Kant in his treatment of time and space: unlike Kant, Renouvier thought that these could not be posited, by whatever reasoning, without generating the paradoxes of actual infinity.

He rejected the notion of substance. Relation was the basis of representations. He also rejected the notion of actual infinity: reality is finite. Furthermore, certainty rested on liberty. In ethics, it was necessary to take into account the existence of desires and interests to which history testifies. Here, too, he diverged from Kant’s notion of duty.

After his time at the École Polytechnique (1834–36), he published a work on Cartesianism, in which he contended that belief in the reality of the infinite

37. Charles Bernard Renouvier (January 1, 1815–September 1, 1903; born in Montpellier; died in Prades).
*38. For a detailed discussion of Renouvier and Lachelier in the context of neo-Kantianism, see the essay by Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
gave rise to contradictions, and argued for “neo-criticism,” which would combine phenomenalism, finitism, and apriorism. Renouvier continued to explore this position throughout his life, the fruits of which can be found in his most influential work, the four-volume *Essais de critique générale* (1854–64). In his later years, Renouvier was drawn to a Leibnizian metaphysical position that, conjoined with his emphasis on liberty and reflective consciousness as defining characteristics of human persons, led him to put forward an early version of personalism.40

### VI. LACHELIER

Jules Lachelier, through his teaching at the École Normale Supérieure from 1864–75 as well as his administrative posts as Inspecteur Général (1879–1900) and president of the *jury d’agrégation de philosophie* (1900–10), was perhaps the most influential philosopher in France for almost forty years.41 Like his teacher Ravaisson, Lachelier considered that naive acceptance of the supposed findings of “science” was dangerous. After all, science did not always deliver hard results, or more precisely, the results it did yield could lead to divergent views of the world and of our place in it. Consider the radical difference about chance between Laplace and Cournot, discussed above. It might be thought, however, that such divergences do not impugn the main merit of the scientific method, namely its objectivity. But Lachelier denied this claim to objectivity, developing a form of idealism in which there was indeed objectivity, but an objectivity that resides in thought. Mind, in this conception, is the underlying reality, and the panoply of the natural world and its order derives from thought. Thought here is not to be construed subjectively. Thus Lachelier developed a position that can be described as a form of Neoplatonism.

We can follow this line of thought by considering the arguments of his doctoral thesis on induction.42 Induction, considered as generalization from specific facts or findings, needed a proper basis. But how is this to be provided? Lachelier devoted ten pages at the beginning of his thesis to John Stuart Mill’s

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41. Among those who studied with Jules Lachelier (May 27, 1832–January 26, 1918; born in Fountainbleu; died in Paris) at the École Normale were Jules Lagneau (1851–94) and Émile Boutroux (1845–1921), and his influence can be seen in the work of Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944), Maurice Blondel (1861–1949), and Henri Bergson.

42. Jules Lachelier, *Du fondement de l’induction* (Paris: Librairie philosophique de Ladranga, 1871). This work was dedicated to Ravaisson.
account of this procedure. He claimed that although Mill’s methods might “work,” say for very large numbers of stellar motions over very many years, they failed to account for the very possibility of passing from the particular to the general. We need to start with the One, not the many. “Pure mechanism,” he wrote, “has no real existence, even phenomenally. It is just the limit of resolution of organic living entities in their material conditions.”

Now we must accept the existence of a law of efficient causes established in Kantian style, but this will not by itself justify or explain inductive procedures. A further and more fundamental underpinning is needed. We shall give first place to the concrete existence of teleologically organized individuals. A whole is an end when containing within itself the reason for the organization of its parts (e.g. a stable chemical compound, or a living organism). A number of consequences followed from the existence and recurrence of such wholes. First, such objects presuppose the existence of a law of final causes. Their teleological structure has the form of being willed. In this sense freedom is fundamental in the universe. Second, given that organisms vary in their degree of organization, we are led to discern a hierarchy of beings of increasing order and harmony. Third, we come once more to the underlying reality of thought.

As with other forms of idealism, the question arises: what of material existence? Given that Lachelier takes the existence of self-organizing wholes as a starting-point, are these wholes not material? A pure idealist might say that the material is an illusion: it does not really exist. Yet Lachelier oscillates between his Neoplatonizing arguments and a belief in the reality of matter. As Millet wrote: “Lachelier recognizes that his philosophical system cannot give an account of that principle which is matter, yet he holds on to the system; he is aware that such a problem is fundamental, that matter is irreducible, yet his system leads him to reduce it to non-existence.”

VII. BERGSON

Henri Bergson is discussed elsewhere in this collection. But a brief treatment here will serve to provide a perspective on some of the various authors whose work is outlined above.

We find very varied positions among all these thinkers with regard to science. Maine de Biran, while not trained as a scientist, was well read in numerous

*43. For a discussion of Mill’s views on induction, see the essay by Dale Jacquette in this volume.
45. Louis Millet, Le Symbolisme dans la philosophie de Lachelier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 213, my translation. See also the conclusion to this work, 255–64.
*46. See the essay by John Mullarkey in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
aspects of the physical and medical science of his day, and took it very seriously. Ravaisson, by contrast, was not similarly inclined. For instance, he used his treatment of habit mentioned above as a handle to escape from mechanism, while for Maine de Biran the topic was a first step in the development of a systematic psychology that was to give a strong place to the underground workings of the organism, and give a strong role to empirical investigation. Various scientific disciplines and social-scientific disciplines, according to Maine de Biran, would play a significant part in developing “the science of man.”

Looking ahead to Bergson, we find once more a detailed treatment of topics in the biological and psychological sciences in *Time and Free Will* (1889; dedicated to Lachelier), *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907), and of physical science in *Duration and Simultaneity* (1922), which is a treatment of relativity theory. Although we can see some real continuities with the thought of the spiritualists in Bergson’s later work and his growing interest in religion, his respect for and detailed interest in scientific investigation also marks him off from spiritualism. One cannot imagine a spiritualist saying what Bergson said in a lecture on “Philosophical Intuition” in 1911:

> Here, if you like, is a man who, over a long period of time, has followed a certain scientific method and laboriously gained his results, who says to us: “Experience, with the help of reasoning, leads to this point; scientific knowledge begins here; it ends there; such are my conclusions”; and the philosopher would have the right to answer: “Very well, leave it to me, and I’ll show you what I can do with it! The knowledge you bring me unfinished, I shall complete. What you put before me in bits I shall put together. ….” Truly a very strange pretension! How could the profession of philosopher confer upon him who exercises it the power of advancing farther than science in the same direction as science? … Such a conception of the role of the philosopher would be unfair to science. But how much more unfair to philosophy!

Nineteenth-century debates had seen a rift develop between the many advocates of a positivistic and mechanistic view of reality such as Comte, and others, such as the spiritualists, who rejected this view. With Bergson, we return to a less simple position. *Creative Evolution*, perhaps his most well-known work, was not an attack from a “spiritualist” perspective on the biological science of the time,

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but an informed attempt to put that science in a rather different perspective.\textsuperscript{48} And his book about relativity theory was another major and informed attempt to reconcile his own arguments about duration with the relativistic treatment of simultaneity.\textsuperscript{49}

Thus any attempt to categorize each of these thinkers as scientistic or spiritualistic would be inadequate. Despite their spiritualist aspects, many of them were interested in or contributed to the scientific enterprise. Consider, for example, Maine de Biran’s attempt to provide foundations for psychology, Cournot’s treatment of chance, Renouvier’s emphasis on data as essentially relational and his adoption of finitism, Lachelier’s investigation of regulative principles, and Bergson’s treatment of human reason as an evolutionary acquisition destined for our pragmatic needs.

Few thinkers are static. This is why the doxographic approach to the history of thought, which proceeds by “isms,” is usually unsatisfactory. And it is why we have here indicated connections as well as divergences between the itineraries of the thinkers discussed in order to place the main representatives of “French spiritualist philosophy” – Ravaissone and Lachelier – in a certain intellectual landscape.

\textbf{MAJOR WORKS}

\textit{Antoine-Augustin Cournot}


\textsuperscript{48} For a discussion of Bergson’s \textit{Creative Evolution}, see the essay by Keith Ansell-Pearson, Paul-Antoine Miquel, and Michael Vaughan in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}.

\textsuperscript{49} It is worth noting that Bergson did not wish this book to be republished in his lifetime, since he thought that he might not be able to sustain his position with sufficient mathematical expertise.
Jules Lachelier


Félix Ravaisson


Charles Renouvier


Where and when philosophy ends and so-called “classical social theory” begins is not a question readily or credibly answered in simple terms. It is easy enough to ask, for instance: which philosophical streams most forcefully stimulated the thinking of Comte, Marx, Spencer, Durkheim, Tönnies, Simmel, or Weber? Yet for many reasons a precise set of answers that pertains to each is elusive, not least because all were Victorian polymaths who read widely and thought deeply to an extent remote from today’s scholarly world, besieged as it is by electronic diversions. Their minds operated within different spheres of application and comprehension than do ours. They were also egocentric enough (Comte, Marx, and Spencer in particular) to refuse to acknowledge thinkers from whom they borrowed heavily, but whose disciples they did not want to appear to be.

I. HERBERT SPENCER

Consider, for example, the remarkable case of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), identified in the nonpareil eleventh edition of the *Britannica* (1910) as simply an “English philosopher,” yet now remembered principally as a sociologist or political theorist, and for his indispensable role in the proliferation of “social Darwinism.” Both his *Autobiography* and *The Life and Letters* remain indispensable in connecting the philosophical with the sociological, in showing how they were linked in this quintessential Victorian mind. The former work occupies two thick volumes published in April 1904, the year following his death at eighty-three, totaling 1258 close-set pages. He likely regarded this work, left to languish in a drawer for fifteen years, as relatively trivial when placed beside his genuinely
scientific works. Yet even though it is indeed free of deep psychological insight – his one-sided relationship with Marian Evans (“George Eliot”) merits little attention\(^1\) – the magnitude of detail is in its own way uniquely informative.

We learn, for instance, that Spencer’s relation with philosophical thought was antinomically creative. He dismisses Kant easily:

I found in Mr. Wilson’s house … a copy of a translation of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* … This I commenced reading, but did not go far. The doctrine that Time and Space are “nothing but” subjective forms – pertain exclusively to consciousness and have nothing beyond consciousness answering to them – I rejected at once and absolutely; and, having done so, went no further. Being then, as always, an impatient reader, even of things which in large measure interest me and meet with a general acceptance, it has always been out of the question for me to go on reading a book the fundamental principles of which I entirely dissent from.\(^2\)

He also notes that “belief in the unqualified supremacy of reason is the superstition of philosophers,”\(^3\) and criticizes Comte and the numerous “Comtists” who labeled Spencer a follower of the former in his ideas about sociology. Spencer vigorously denies this in detail and repeatedly,\(^4\) while also dismissing “the schemes of Oken and Hegel, each of whom preceded Comte in the attempt to organize a system of philosophy out of the sciences arranged in serial order.”\(^5\)

Despite all this, philosophy for Spencer remained indispensable in that its arguments – those few that he seemed to have studied – forced him to clarify his own in, for instance, his *Principles of Psychology*, which he realized would have “lacked its organizing principle”\(^6\) without philosophy as its foil.

Like Darwin, his confederate in evolutionary theory, Spencer began life in the midst of an intensely religious family, and carried with him into the study of the natural and social worlds a heavy load of religio-philosophical baggage. It is no accident that “the Unknowable” figures prominently in his early work, *First Principles* (1862), since Spencer believed there were metaphysical questions neither he nor other humans could possibly answer, and should best be left to some external power beyond their ken.

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4. See e.g. *Ibid.*, 292 n., 518.
If Spencer had died at thirty-two, he would have established himself as a minor speculative thinker, but he persisted through fifty more years of rigorous study as an autodidact, probing and amalgamating biology, education, sociology, political theory, psychology, ethics, and comparative anthropology. By inventing the phrase “survival of the fittest,” he forever connected himself with the Darwinian camp of his walking partner, Thomas H. Huxley (1825–95), and others. Yet one cannot view Spencer’s gigantic *Synthetic Philosophy* (sixteen volumes) without realizing that the merely empirical, measurable, and palpable operated in his system under the sign of a philosophical commitment tending toward the teleological, which surely inspired him in his tireless pursuit of data. That he was attacked late in life by “Spencer smashers” for being insufficiently ardent in his religiosity did not undermine his fundamental claim on philosophical speculation. Lester Frank Ward, first president of the American Sociological Association, defended Spencer in 1894 against a phalanx of theologians on precisely these grounds.7

If Spencer is now known as a champion of *laissez-faire* governmental forms (*Man Versus the State*; 1884), a believer in evolutionary progress, and a proponent of industrial versus militaristic social order, he was first of all a self-taught ontologist and epistemologist. His materialist view of the physical world, alternating between decomposition and reconstitution toward some desirable evolutionary end, all orchestrated around a unique lexicon (persistence of force, necessary rhythm, evolution versus dissolution, instability of the homogeneous, etc.), clearly revealed his hope of being accepted as a major philosopher – and as such triumphant over the German idealists he did not read carefully. His regimen of mental hygiene (not unlike Auguste Comte’s some years earlier) included careful avoidance of other philosophers’ ideas, so as to protect his creativity from the possible pollutants that might be loosed by conscientious reading of his competitors’ works. Yet the shadow of philosophy stayed with him throughout, as revealed in his *Autobiography*, where an essential chapter in the second volume is entitled “A System of Philosophy Projected.”

One wishes we had similarly detailed accounts for the other classical theorists of the kind that Spencer provided. His *Life and Letters*, assembled by an acolyte in 1908, is another 600-page “tome” (for once, the correct term), and again illustrates the astonishing dimensions of nineteenth-century thought at its highest levels. The classical theorists did not suffer imprisonment within the narrow, shallow disciplinary identities that trap most scholars today, and gloried in their ability to move freely among whatever fields of learning they found pertinent to their self-defined tasks. It is therefore unsurprising that Spencer in his prime

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was often named “the nineteenth century’s Aristotle,” which seemed as plausible to his contemporaries as it appears preposterous now.\(^8\)

As a further indicator of the many puzzles that arise when trying to filiate social thought with philosophy, one might posit as nascent “social theorists” or even “sociologists,” the following: Mary Astell, Montesquieu, Turgot, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Kant (his *Anthropology* or *Ethics*), Condillac, Bentham, Wollstonecraft, Condorcet, Hegel (*Phenomenology of Spirit* or *Philosophy of Right*), Malthus, Sismondi, de Maistre, Saint-Simon, Carlyle, or Fourier – for a persuasive case could be made for each.\(^9\) But if one follows convention and categorizes them instead as philosophers, economists, or historians, no one could reasonably object given current constraints on disciplinary identities. Thus the difficulty of drawing a plausible line between, on the one hand, what since the Presocratics had been “philosophy” proper, and on the other, the neologistic “social sciences” – springing up like wildflowers in the nineteenth century – has been recognized for a long time.

The learned, forgotten American sociologist Charles Ellwood had this to say about this very topic in 1902 in the opening paragraph of “Aristotle as a Sociologist,” an article of continuing utility:

Sociology is ordinarily spoken of as a “new science.” In a certain sense this is true; yet social thought is as old as history, and social philosophy as an organized discipline has existed, at least, since Aristotle. Only in a very special sense, therefore, is it right to speak of sociology as a new science. If we understand by sociology merely the effort to apply to social phenomena the method of quantitative measurement, and to interpret these phenomena as merely the most complex manifestation of the forces of the physical universe, then we are justified in regarding it as a new science; for sociology in this sense is the product of modern positivism. But those who reject the mechanical theory of society, together with the idea that the scientific interpretation of society must be limited thereto, have no right to speak of sociology as a new science. When we regard modern sociology as “the more critical, more systematized study of the social reality,” we do not make it a “new” science, but rather a renovated and

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reorganized science. The beginnings of sociology as a science in this sense certainly lie far back of the modern scientific era.10

Thus the question of when sociology’s classical theories began to evolve as such is impossible to answer definitively, even if we do know precisely when “sociology” got its name – a more modest discovery to be sure.

II. AUGUSTE COMTE

Standard accounts of sociology’s history always begin with Auguste Comte (1798–1857), not because he single-handedly invented the field, but because he named it. He was a mathematics prodigy, admitted to France’s premier engineering school aged sixteen, and tutored mathematics thereafter. But unlike most engineers being trained at the École Polytechnique, Comte was a fierce republican, rebellious at every turn, and even tried to arrange emigration to the United States in order to teach in a nation free of monarchy. His life was filled with professional and personal frustrations, especially after he began lecturing and publishing his Course of Positive Philosophy in 1826, which at first met with success, but later, owing partly to his repeated psychological crises, failed to win the kind of adoration that he thought was his due. Yet he could hardly be viewed as an intellectual failure. No less a figure than John Stuart Mill (1806–73) supported him financially, popularized his work in England by means of a small book (August Comte and Positivism; 1865), and patiently tolerated his egocentrism throughout their long friendship. And the noted British feminist, Harriet Martineau (1802–76), invested tremendous effort in freely translating his work into digestible English. There was a time when Comteanism (or “Comtism”) was a respectable label recognized worldwide among those interested in political and cultural change, and his works were widely discussed by a large anglophone audience as well as in Brazil,11 Mexico, Turkey, India, and elsewhere.

On the afternoon of Saturday, April 27, 1839, Comte in Paris “wrote and underlined the word” sociology in his manuscript, “embarrassed by coining


11. Several of the individuals involved in the coup that overthrew the Brazilian emperor and established the Brazilian republic in 1889 were followers of Comte’s ideas. To this day, the flag of Brazil bears the motto Ordem e Progresso (Order and progress), which was inspired by Comte’s positivist motto: “l’Amour pour principe; l’Ordre pour base; et le Progrès pour but” (Love as a principle; Order as the basis; and Progress as the goal), which appears on the title page of each of the four volumes of Comte’s Système de politique positive.
another neologism.”12 His own development as an intellectual historian and theorist, and by self-proclamation as “the first sociologist,” cannot be understood without examining a few of his many predecessors and peers, most of whom were deeply philosophical. Like most French intellectuals, ever since Pascal and Descartes, Comte learned to venerate the Gallic tradition as a schoolboy, but he managed to go far beyond it in his search for “universal” knowledge. Mary Pickering’s heroically detailed spadework13 has revealed, for example, that Hume was not only Comte’s favorite historian, but also, by his own admission, his “principal philosophical predecessor” – not the usual French standard-bearers, Montesquieu, Condorcet, or Turgot, as textbooks sometimes claim.14 Comte’s strident, encompassing version of religio-positivism made it impossible for him properly to “grasp the depth of Hume’s skepticism and relativism”15 – which was typical of his peculiar mode of incorporating others’ ideas into his own lumbering architectonic. More surprising yet, he claimed Condorcet, the German phrenologist and biologist Franz Joseph Gall (1758–1828), and the arch-conservative Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821), as his major influences overall.16 By working at fevered pitch for decades, he vigorously practiced a piratical version of what Robert K. Merton dubbed “OBI”: obliteration by incorporation.17 Yet he read so broadly, even manically, that virtually any thinker of the Enlightenment figured positively or negatively in his Cours de philosophie positive (six volumes; 1830–42) and his Système de politique positive (four volumes; 1851–54), even if often only in caricature. As Pickering put it, “It is evident that Comte had absorbed the ideas of Montesquieu and Condorcet and was influenced by Constant, Staël, Say, Cabanis, and Destutt de Tracy”18 – among many others. Comte represents that rare social theorist who combines top-level mathematical and scientific capacities with a passionate commitment to history, intellectual and political, fired by an unconstrained desire for liberating social change. He was not the economist that Marx or Vilfredo Pareto were to become, and less well schooled in philosophical argument than were Durkheim, Simmel, or Weber. Yet, by elaborating the teaching of his sometime employer, Henri

13. Ibid., 313, 306–8, 600.
16. Ibid., 263.
Saint-Simon, he did lay out in great detail a form of methodological positivism that inspired generations of social scientists during the ensuing century, even when they repudiated its more grandiose aspects.

Comte believed that humankind had historically progressed from theological entrapment in myth and fetish-worship to a metaphysical stage of skilled speculation, then finally achieving maturity in the positivist era – his own, of course, as he described it in the 1830s – which would put evidence and reasoned argument to use in establishing truth. Not only did he study and analyze religious and philosophical history, but also mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology in his far-flung attempt to prove that sociology would become the “queen of the sciences.” Comte’s vision for the social sciences generally, that they would put to use quantitative methods and data along with standard inductive practices, led him to argue that once sociologists had been installed as the secular priests of the social order, calamities such as the French Revolution would become unnecessary. Yet sociology’s roots for Comte always lay in philosophy, as he explained in “The Intellectual Character of Positivism”:

To effect this necessary intervention is the proper sphere of politics. But a right conception cannot be formed of it without the aid of the philosopher, whose business it is to define and amend the principles on which it is conducted. With this object in view, the philosopher endeavors to co-ordinate the various elements of man’s existence, so that it may be conceived of theoretically as an integral whole.19

The philosophical legacy of Comte continues to live invisibly in all modern social science, since the unspoken assumption underlying today’s research coincides perfectly with Comte’s fondest hope: once the unvarying “laws” of social behavior are uncovered through rigorous positivistic research, behavior can be tailored to fit society’s and individuals’ needs like a glove, and political miseries of the kind he knew during his own lifetime in France will no longer trouble the human condition. Comte’s simple notion of positivism, his theory of the three stages of human thought, and the so-called “religion of humanity” over which he and other “sociologist-priests” would preside via scientific method no longer appeal in the way they did among Mill’s peers. Yet this does not detract from Comte’s singular role in the early legitimation of sociology, and the necessary linkage he shaped between it and its philosophical heritage. And it is probably no accident that Comte was rediscovered, yet again, during the 1960s and 1970s, the “Age of Aquarius,” given that he introduced his “religion of humanity”

this way: “Love, then, is our principle; order our basis; and progress our end.” He learned late in life, through a beloved woman who died too soon after they had met, that love is the great motivating force in social life, and “reason” alone cannot inspire humans to develop a “religion of humanity” of the sort he envisioned in a trouble-free world.

The instance of Turgot is similarly interesting and illustrative in this regard, not only as it pertains to Comte’s development, but also as revealing the way early social theorists often routinely turned philosophical ideas to their own purposes. Turgot set out a three-stage theory of historical change in his famous 1750 address, “A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind,” which won high praise from Condorcet and others whom Comte also admired. One could therefore surmise (as did the noted chronicler Harry Elmer Barnes) that Turgot’s ideas directly influenced Comte when, seventy-two years later in 1822, he created his own tripartite theory of cultural “advance” (the theological–metaphysical–positivist eras). Yet, according to Pickering’s careful scrutiny of the evidence, this is not likely, because Comte apparently read Turgot only in 1852 or 1853, long after his own theory had been formulated. Moreover, his library contained none of Turgot’s own works, but instead, a well-used copy of Condorcet’s *Vie de Monsieur Turgot* (1787).

An intriguing intersection among the three thinkers occurs at the beginning of Condorcet’s “Essay on the Application of Mathematics to the Theory of Decision-Making” (1785), which opens with what from our vantage point can only seem poignant hopefulness:

> A great man, Monsieur Turgot, whose teaching and example, and above all whose friendship I shall always mourn, was convinced that the truths of the moral and political sciences are susceptible of the same certainty as those forming the system of the physical sciences, even those branches like astronomy which seem to approach mathematical certainty.

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20. *Ibid.*, 381. As noted above (note 11), this motto served as inspiration for the creation of the Brazilian flag.
21. Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–81) was a French economist and statesman, and an early proponent of economic liberalism. In his “A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind” is found what is considered the first complete statement of the Enlightenment “Idea of Progress.”
This opinion was dear to him, because it led him to the consoling hope that the human race will necessarily progress toward happiness and perfection, as it has done in the knowledge of truth.\textsuperscript{25}

Such sentiments are virtually identical with Comte’s, and continue even now to inspire a significant portion of modern sociological labors, even if usually in far more modest terms, chastened as they are by postmodern reflexivity and the failure of various large-scale social programs that were based on positivistic research (e.g. the James Coleman “busing report” of 1966).

**III. HENRI-CLAUDE DE SAINT-SIMON**

Even a cursory glance at Comte’s road to the creation of “sociology,” by name if not by practice, must pay special attention to Henri-Claude de Saint-Simon (1760–1825),\textsuperscript{26} for whom Comte served as a research associate from summer 1817 until March 1824. If the Marx/Engels relationship seems the least troubled, most productive, and “brotherly” of all such team efforts, it could be said that Saint-Simon’s and Comte’s – they were respectively forty-seven and nineteen when they met – represents the “dysfunctional family” model of collaboration at its worst. What began as worshipful attention of the younger for the elder ended as a paranoid tragedy in which Comte repudiated everything good about Saint-Simon’s ideas and person.

The parallels between the pair’s ideas have become increasingly obvious since their feuding bands of followers disappeared. Unlike Comte, who represented himself in logorrheic fashion, Saint-Simon’s ideas were best presented by his disciples (e.g. Amand Bazard’s *Exposition de la doctrine de St. Simon*; two volumes; 1828–30), and not in Saint-Simon’s own forty-seven volumes of collected writings (1865–78). He admitted in a letter to M. de Redern “to have thought a great deal and to have read very little to produce really new ideas,”\textsuperscript{27} which is wholly at odds with Comte’s synthesizing and inclusive mode of theorizing.

The notion so close to Comte’s heart, that science would guide “industrial society” toward universal prosperity and freedom, and that superstitious beliefs would be left behind, is indeed Saint-Simon’s. The latter thought that industrialists could be trusted to organize and run modern society (one is reminded of

\textsuperscript{25} In *Condorcet: Selected Writings*, Keith Baker (ed.) (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 33.

\textsuperscript{26} For a discussion of Saint-Simon, see the essay by Diane Morgan in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*.

Thorstein Veblen's paean a century later to a guiding “soviet of engineers”\textsuperscript{28}, and that a Christianized socialism would evolve from their efforts. Here a utopian condition would obtain in which the worst features of human behavior would “naturally” evaporate. Ironically, it was Saint-Simon's late injection of religiosity into his program for social change that alienated Comte, who would himself late in life make almost precisely the same move when he fashioned his “Religion of Humanity.”

In \textit{The New Christianity} (1825), Saint-Simon argued that the ultimate goal of his utopian society would be to eliminate poverty and to elevate what Marx would call “the proletariat” to a healthy and respectable condition. He envisioned the elimination of war, anarchy, and the egotistical impulses that gave rise to both when his religiously based social order was in place, one built on the conventional Catholic virtues of obedience and devotion to a larger, collective good. It must be remembered that Saint-Simon had suffered imprisonment and near-execution during the revolution, so his feelings for organized aggressiveness were not warm. Similarly, Comte grew up with the shadowy memory of the Terror, so, like many of their countrymen, including rightists such as de Maistre, he posited as the supreme societal virtue the elimination of war and anarchic brutality among its citizens. Saint-Simon's utopia would also give women the vote and would abolish inheritance, themes picked up by many revolutionary groups that followed him. His high regard for women is another theme adopted by Comte as the latter entered his concluding years of creative work, around 1852.

\section*{IV. ÉMILE DURKHEIM}

A telling yet neglected work that bridges many of these ideas is Émile Durkheim's \textit{Socialism and Saint-Simon}, a dense set of lecture notes from 1895–96, which he delivered at Bordeaux, assembled posthumously in 1928 by his nephew, Marcel Mauss.\textsuperscript{29} Durkheim (1858–1917) planned to write a comprehensive history of socialism drawn from separate lecture courses on Saint-Simon, Proudhon, Lasalle, Marx–Engels, and others, but his manifold duties – including the single-handed founding of French sociology! – prevented him from going beyond the first course. Many of Durkheim's students and colleagues were committed leftists, and even though he sympathized with their goal of ameliorating the grim

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{28. Thorstein Veblen, \textit{The Engineers and the Price System} (New York: Viking, 1921).}
\end{footnotesize}
lives of the working classes, he stood back from the fray and evaluated this broad movement "scientifically," following his usual tack.

His opinion of Saint-Simon’s work was quite high, and he did not hesitate to point out the relative weakness of Comte’s theorizing, and its heavy reliance on the older man’s more fundamental innovations: “Comte owed him much more than he acknowledged.”30 In fact, as Alvin Gouldner points out in his introduction to the English translation, “Durkheim firmly denies to Comte, and bestows on Saint-Simon, the ‘honor’ of having founded both positivist philosophy and sociology.”31 The argument hinges on the 1813 Mémoire sur la science de l’homme by Saint-Simon, published in 1859, where the lineaments of a positivist social science are clearly spelled out. Gouldner speculates that perhaps Saint-Simon’s “socialism” besmirched the less politically loaded term “sociology” to which Comte laid claim, and early historians of the field so wished to distance themselves from public association with the Left that they elected to remember Comte rather than his mentor. Either way, sociology of the French variety was born within a context of serious philosophical discussion, fusing aspects of Enlightenment secularism, newly formed positivism, and latent idealism.

Durkheim shrewdly observed that Saint-Simon, as rebellious youth, received encouragement and refinement from his acquaintance with D’Alembert, fueling his desire to update the Encyclopedia with an eye to advances in the natural sciences.32 Yet for all his materialism, Saint-Simon’s positivism rests on an idealist base: “knowledge … according to him is the moving power of progress … For it is the positive source of all social life. A society is above all a community of ideas.”33 This notion, contrary to Marx’s desires, was absorbed into twentieth-century sociology through ideas such as “norms,” “value consensus,” and “societal belief-systems.” And this stream clearly began with Saint-Simon’s unique transformation of Enlightenment skepticism and materialism. In fact, Saint-Simon went so far as to claim that “philosophy appears as a branch of sociology,”34 another notion firmly taken up by Comte.

Durkheim thought that he was in genuine intellectual competition with Spencer, but prior to battling his British foil, he first needed to trounce Comte’s version of the discipline in order to advance his own. He believed that Comte misunderstood, perhaps by denying Saint-Simon’s insights, the true nature of industrializing Europe. For Durkheim, of course, modern life’s multiplying interdependencies were cause not for alarm, but for rejoicing, since they meant that philosophic and practical differences between individuals and their

30. Ibid., 86.
32. Ibid., 82.
33. Ibid., 91.
34. Ibid., 93.
affiliated groups would “naturally” diminish over time. There was no need, so thought Durkheim, for a Comtean priesthood of propagandizing sociologists intent on controlling the unruly masses. The magical “division of labor” would resolve whatever tensions were left over from the shocking degradation of village “mechanical solidarity” into the steely social structures of modern, urban life that constituted “organic solidarity.” This profound transformation of human life was most memorably analyzed by Durkheim’s German competitor, Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936), whose *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) gave sociology two of its immortal and most contested terms. Tönnies understood that small-town life (*Gemeinschaft*) was made up of “community” relations, a naturally formed face-to-face intimacy that humans had perfected over millennia as an end in itself, whereas urban existence (*Gesellschaft*) bore within it an unavoidably alienating set of forces that has typified modern life, and led to a great number of “dysfunctions” (famously portrayed by Georg Simmel in “The Metropolis and Mental Life” of 1903).\(^{35}\) Problems with *anomie*, which Comte described without using the term itself, would vaporize, so Durkheim argued in opposition to Tönnies, as modern citizens assembled into professional groups that would legislate morality along “organic” rather than “mechanical” lines.

For Durkheim (whose early scholarship dealt with Kant) the major problem of industrialized social life was controlling the Byronic passions for superindividuality and egocentricity – perhaps of the very type that Comte perfected in his own sad life – that leads inevitably to social disorganization and crises. As he famously wrote in *Suicide* when defining “altruistic” self-destruction, “If, as we have seen, excessive individuation leads to suicide, insufficient individuation has the same results. When a man has become detached from society, he encounters less resistance to suicide in himself, and he does so likewise when social integration is too strong.”\(^{36}\) This broad-scale argument within theorizing, capsulized in the mid twentieth century as the “personality versus social structure” debate, was already “an issue” for the Scottish moralists (Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Dugald Stewart) by 1750, and, with Durkheim’s embrace of Saint-Simon and Comte, assumed the role of foundational timber for all sociology that followed.


V. GERMAN SOCIAL THEORY

One could surely go on in pursuing the Gallic sociological tradition – from Condorcet to Saint-Simon to Sismondi to Comte, de Maistre, Fourier, Quetelet, Gobineau, LePlay, Coulanges, to Tarde and Le Bon. It is an astonishing progression of thought, with deep roots in the Enlightenment consciousness of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and others, yet equally at home in part with the arch conservatism of the counter-Enlightenment. But it is only a third of the major story one might tell about the origins of classical social theory and its links with philosophy per se. Much was also going on, of course, in Germany and Britain – not to mention Italy, Russia, and Central Europe, as outlined in Barnes’s uniquely informative volume, as well as in Pitirim Sorokin’s early masterpiece, where an international cast of hundreds flits across his stage. In some ways, though, the German and British components are better known than the French, at least in the United States. This is mainly because the founding fathers of American sociology were profoundly directed by Europeans – Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and Tönnies – yet only one member of the early pantheon was French. And Durkheim’s viewpoint was so conceptually opposed to Tönnies’s in particular, and, by implication, to Weber’s and Marx’s, that most sociologists in the US have favored either the Gallic path or the Teutonic one, but seldom both.

The manifold connections between philosophical reflection and social theory as practiced in Germany has been explored many times in the US and Britain, as exemplified most forcefully by Talcott Parsons’s The Structure of Social Action in 1937. However, enthusiasm for Kant, Hegel, Dilthey, and Nietzsche, among others, has run high in these intellectual circles for two centuries. Even Goethe has been brought into discussions of social theory (e.g. regarding Marx, Weber, Simmel, and Georg Lukács), given the “elective affinity” these thinkers found in his Faust drama and other works. Friedrich Schiller’s role is similarly valued, not so much for his plays as for his Aesthetic Letters (1794), wherein a theory of freedom as play (Spieltrieb) and invention is proposed, the sociological influence of which has stretched from his time to Herbert Marcuse’s Eros and Civilization.

It was unsurprising, then, in 1975 when Marx’s dissertation on Democritus was first translated into English, to find that his membership in Berlin’s “Doctors’

37. See Sica (ed.), Social Thought.
38. Barnes, An Introduction to the History of Sociology.
40. For a discussion of Schiller, with particular reference to his aesthetics, see the essay by Daniel Dahlstrom in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
Club” – a talented group of Young Hegelians who, alienated from the right-wing University of Berlin faculty and administration, met nightly for intellectual exchange – was more than mere sociality. He had been a serious philosopher long before he turned in earnest to economics and politics. In fact, it is a truism among Marxists that his early works cannot be understood without prior grounding in Hegel, Feuerbach, Fichte, Bruno Bauer, and others who made up his philosophical worldview. The relationship between Dilthey, a great philosophical talent of his era, and Weber, Tönnies, or Simmel is less easily specified, but is always assumed to have mattered deeply to the younger men. Dilthey was the great pedagogue of the age at Berlin, and his biography of Schleiermacher, his theory (following Mill) of how the Geisteswissenschaften must differ from the Naturwissenschaften, and his pre-Husserlian version of phenomenological apperception all fed directly into the origins of German classical social theory. It is impossible to conceive, for instance, of Simmel’s Philosophy of Money (1900) or Weber’s theory of Verstehen without giving Dilthey his due. Simmel’s monumental study of how “the cash nexus” (to use Marx’s term) affected interpersonal and intrapersonal life owes a great deal to philosophical currents swirling around him in Berlin. His Philosophy of Money exhaustively documents how monetary exchange “rationalizes” social life, even in its most intimate settings (art or sex), and strips away the formerly unique qualities that inhered within such social realms, converting “quality into quantity.” Unlike Marx, however, Simmel did not view this in always negative terms, since quantification and the transformation of values that goes with it can lead to individual freedom that is impossible to experience in a premonetized social environment.

Weber’s verstehende Soziologie (“interpretive” or “understanding” sociology) has been analyzed repeatedly since he proposed it around 1915, and shows its debt to a number of philosophical voices, beginning with Dilthey’s. Humans operate within a zone of meanings that they constitute “automatically” by the sheer operation of their consciousnesses. When trying, as they must, to understand the motivations of one another, they must leave aside positivist notions of evidence and proof that work well in the natural sciences, and instead “participate” through empathy in the meaningful orbits of others in order to comprehend

44. For a discussion of Dilthey, with particular reference to hermeneutic theory, see the essay by Eric Sean Nelson in this volume.
the significance of various actions as lived by the actors themselves. Arguments over how exactly to carry out social science, as then understood, is what inspired the battle beginning in 1883 fought between Carl Menger (1840–1921; representing the more theoretical Austrian School) and Gustav von Schmoller (1838–1917; representing the historical school) over proper methods for economics. Menger believed that economics should become mathematized and follow the scientific methods already put to sterling use in the natural sciences, whereas Schmoller, a capable historian, thought that searching for the invariant “laws of economic action” would ruin the field, sacrificing the unique details of the past for models that failed to describe any particular economic data accurately. Menger’s followers in the twentieth century “won” the battle, but it remains to be seen if “economics as natural science” will forever hold the field, or if a resurgence of Schmoller’s historicist viewpoint will occur. The lineaments of this protracted argument were codified by the philosophy teacher Wilhelm Windelband in 1894, drawing attentive social theorists into its orbit for their entire professional lives.46

As explained by Weber in numbing detail in Roscher and Knies, these were no small matters to his peer group of innovators, since these decades-long squabbles among epistemologists defined what the social sciences would or should become in the twentieth century.47 Weber’s virtuoso performance of critique, published between 1903 and 1906, deals not only in excruciating detail with the methodological practices of Wilhelm Roscher and Karl Knies,48 but also considers the views of Benedetto Croce, Simmel, Hugo Münsterberg, and Friedrich Gottl as they bore on various conundrums concerning “laws” of social behavior. In its rigor and analytic depth, it is unique in the history of classical social theory, nearly matched only by some of Simmel’s work on historiographical methods49 and by Durkheim’s lectures on pragmatism50 or the recently “discovered” lectures on philosophy proper.51 In these essays, Weber works very hard at distinguishing the criteria for “truth” within the social sciences versus philosophy proper, and begins to lay out the ideas he would later immortalize in “Science as a Vocation”

48. Wilhelm Roscher (1817–94) and Karl Knies (1821–98) were German economists and founding figures in the historical school of political economy.
and “Politics as a Vocation,” just prior to his death in 1920. In these two canonical lectures (delivered in 1917 and 1919) he explained, among many things, how scholarship differs definitively from political action, with the responsibility of scholars always to the truth as best they can define it, whereas politics calls for heartless attention to the maintenance of power and support for a stated cause. They are naturally antinomical, so he claimed, based in part on his witnessing of German and French professors prostituting themselves during the First World War as propagandists for their governments. Weber’s famous “fact–value distinction” has given rise to endless debate to this day. The question he confronted, as have many before and since, is whether a “social scientist” – as opposed to an ethicist, theologian, or moralist – has any intellectually legitimate role to play in defining the ultimate values by which people carry out their lives. Weber argued rigorously that those thinkers who desire a leadership role in the realm of ethics ought not to become sociologists, since, as Tolstoy said and as Weber quoted, the only really important question in life is how we are going to live it in a way that is meaningful. And to this question, social science has no answers. For instance, when Weber accompanied the official German peace delegation to Versailles in 1919 as their constitutional law expert, the “fact” that Germany had lost the First World War was paramount, yet the “values” or “meanings” that the world took from this event varied enormously, country by country – with disastrous consequences twenty years later.

Thus we see that social theory, classically imagined and then practiced, is most properly considered a heterodox, troubled branch of philosophy from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. The prolonged struggle that most now view as needlessly prolix and indecisive, between the 1880s and the First World War, which sought to distance the social “sciences” from the humanities on epistemological grounds, and involving dozens of protagonists in Europe (and the US), did not succeed as completely as Durkheim, for instance, would have wished. The links between the theoretical apparatus of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, despite its reaching for a “scientific” identity, and the philosophical tradition that must include Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, and others have, if anything, become stronger over the past few decades. After Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, Giddens, Bourdieu, and their epigoni reintroduced Enlightenment philosophy into the social sciences during the 1960s and 1970s, it became obvious to all but the most hardened and unreflective positivists that the joint journey of philosophy and social theory would continue, as indeed it should.

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I. AGE OF ROMANCE, AGE OF REVOLUTION

Nineteenth-century science and mathematics is an erratic continuation of the monumental innovations of the Enlightenment. The eighteenth century laid the groundwork for so much of what was to happen in the late modern period, and was in turn prepared for these advances by the remarkable progress in the new observational and pure and applied mathematical sciences of the seventeenth century.¹

Philosophy of science in this early period was not thematically or methodologically distinguished from scientific commentary on the practice of science itself, and did not emerge as a distinct field of study until relatively late in the nineteenth century. It is from the 1800s onward, particularly in the writings of Bernard Bolzano, Auguste Comte, and Arthur Schopenhauer, among others, that philosophy and philosophy of science gained recognition as a subdiscipline standing on its own apart from the pursuit of knowledge in the most general sense of scientia. Mathematics throughout this same epoch was understood as belonging to a higher intellectual order, available to all as a tool and model of exact reasoning. It served, as it did from antiquity, for the quantitative expression of ideas and calculation of formal consequences in pure theory and in innumerable practical applications.²

². See, inter alia, W. S. Anglin, Mathematics: A Concise History and Philosophy (New York: Springer, 1994); David M. Burton, The History of Mathematics: An Introduction (Boston, MA:
The expansion of knowledge in the nineteenth century nevertheless was not merely a steady conservative building upon the precedents of early modern philosophy and Enlightenment science in a single unified direction. Rather, the century witnessed a number of important revolutions in both science and mathematics that were to have profound implications for the emergence of the philosophy of science as a separate field with an identifiable subject matter and methodology. Whereas in the eighteenth century, Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, among other leading figures, could still think of themselves as natural philosophers – and Newton, like so many others in these centuries, could without irony or pretension refer to his work as a contribution to philosophia naturalis, even in the title of his great treatise on kinematics – by the time of Charles Darwin, while still intelligible, as it is to us today, such identifications were an increasingly less recognized practice that had already started to become quaint-sounding. Natural philosophy thereafter becomes natural science, and in many contexts and for all practical purposes simply science, meaning that whatever can be explained is progressively considered as theoretically reducible to a purely mechanical physical phenomenon. The philosopher William Whewell is frequently credited with having coined the word “scientist” in his 1834 review of Mary Somerville’s On the Connexion of the Sciences, but the terminology did not find widespread acceptance until near the very end of the century.3

A snapshot of the transition from natural philosophy to (natural) science can be found in the history of the physics of electricity and magnetism in Scotland in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As late as the 1880s, the University of Glasgow and University of Edinburgh maintained a Chair in Natural Philosophy, occupied in 1846 in Glasgow by William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) and in 1860 in Edinburgh by Peter Guthrie Tait. Both of these researchers were practicing modern scientists making contributions to mathematics, physics, and chemistry, especially the theory of electrical phenomena, while publishing influential texts featuring the phrase “natural philosophy.”4 The same is true of Michael Faraday

at Marischal College in Aberdeen. Although James Clerk Maxwell, another great Scottish scientist and electromagnetic theorist, author of the well-known Maxwell equations unifying electricity and magnetism within a single applied mathematical framework, is also described as a “natural philosopher,” that exact term seldom appears in his writings, and his work falls squarely in the domain of experimental science as the concept has since come to be defined.\textsuperscript{5}

The gradual terminological shift from natural philosophy to natural science, or, simply, science, is itself of profound significance for understanding the history of developments in twentieth-century philosophy of science and mathematics.\textsuperscript{6} These subdivisions within philosophy arose precisely at this time, beginning in the nineteenth century with the first formulations of \textit{positivism} as a generalized theory of meaning and explicitly scientific philosophy. The writings of Comte inspired a later generation of scientifically trained philosophers who radicalized positivism as the conceptually most far-reaching \textit{logical positivism} in the philosophy of science, and, in the process, tried to reduce all of philosophy to a so-called logical positivist theory of the limited kinds of meanings available to thought in the sciences. Philosophy thereby became philosophy of science, and philosophy of science started to look increasingly like actual science, even as scientific explanation often appeared to be philosophical. Reflecting on the legacy of logical positivism – regardless of whether we celebrate its successes or bemoan the aftermath of its temporary stranglehold on metaphysics, philosophy of religion, and value theory – we should not lose sight of the fact that its origins derive in large part from Comte as a prominent nineteenth-century continental thinker, about whom we shall have more to say.\textsuperscript{7} The nineteenth

\begin{itemize}
\item For a discussion of developments in science and their relationship to continental philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century, see the essay by Babette Babich in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}.
\end{itemize}
century is notable also for incubating Darwin’s and Alfred Russel Wallace’s evolutionary theory of the natural selection of species, and for the logic, metaphysics, scientific methodology, and the rigorous development of the formal ideas of such philosophers and mathematicians as Charles Sanders Peirce, George Boole, Gottlob Frege, and Bertrand Russell. As the century progressed, increasing attention was paid to the philosophical foundations of geometry, occasioned by the logically consistent axiomatization of non-Euclidean geometries by Georg Friedrich Bernhard Riemann and Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky. In addition, David Hilbert’s formalistic philosophy of mathematics and program for the transparently formal metatheory of mathematical logic set a high standard for logically correct mathematical reasoning, while laying down specific goals for mathematical investigations within the principles prescribed by a well-articulated philosophy of mathematics.8

Revolutionary developments in nineteenth-century science, mathematics, and philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics need also to be understood against the background of other strands of thought that characterize this era, curiously enough, as a time of Romantic thought. By Romance in this context is not meant anything specifically erotic, but rather the conflict of human freedom with social, political, and causal necessity and constraint. The latter category has profound implications for the Romantic quest for freedom as natural science comes increasingly to paint a picture of all natural phenomena as subject to deterministic forces and antecedent physical events.9 The problem of understanding human choices in a world in which freedom seems to be denied by natural or political factors was certainly not new to the nineteenth century. It dates back at least to Aristotle’s problem of the sea battle tomorrow in De Interpretatione.10 As with other cultural trends, and owing to the convergence of a complex variety of independently interesting circumstances, the nineteenth century was ripe for an especially lively and literary as well as penetrating philosophical consideration of the struggle of human will against the forces of social conformity and political oppression in the economic and intellectual circumstances of the times. The opposition of freedom and necessity, with implications

also for the rise of modern science on which its philosophical discussion was predicated, itself became a topic of close philosophical scrutiny. The Romantic struggle as a reflection of the human condition attained an extraordinary degree of self-awareness among philosophers at the time, examining the prospects of science and mathematics, not only for their explanatory successes and engineering possibilities, but as yet another threat to the Romantic sense of the freedom of will. This was a rather deep-felt philosophical concern that we may not share today, but that alongside more traditional scientific and philosophical preoccupations also characterizes the nineteenth century as an extraordinarily complex chapter of philosophy.11

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

The plan of this section is to offer a historical overview of nineteenth-century philosophy of science and mathematics. The expansion of science and mathematics during this period is itself such an extensive subject that no single essay could possibly do justice to the discoveries made and the philosophical controversies that ensued. It is equally futile to try to fit into such a compact discussion all of the important movements in philosophy of science and mathematics during one hundred years of active philosophizing about the nature, meaning, and methodology of science and mathematics.

We cannot expect to offer more than a flavor of this rich and turbulent epoch, seen in retrospect and from a particular set of philosophical prejudices and predispositions. Interested readers are encouraged at every step to further explore the history of these subjects from other perspectives, and from the standpoint of an ever-expanding historical and philosophical commentary on the nineteenth-century development of the natural sciences. What is proposed instead is a sampling of characteristic moments spanning the period that helps shed light on particular chosen aspects of what makes the nineteenth century unique, and that also constitute forerunners of major topics that were later to figure prominently in philosophy of science and mathematics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The organization of these separate discussions is topical rather than strictly chronological, highlighting aspects of nineteenth-century philosophy of science and mathematics that collectively sketch a portrait of philosophy of science and mathematics in the era. The episodes chosen for

review embody in their selection, arrangement, and emphasis a particular view of the most noteworthy events in this field over the course of one hundred extraordinary active years in philosophy of science as it emerged into philosophical awareness. Accordingly, we shall consider ideas concerning the theory and practice of natural science and mathematics in featured writings of leading nineteenth-century thinkers, among numerous others equally deserving of attention: J. S. Mill and certain of his immediate predecessors, Bolzano, Comte, and Frege.

As we concentrate on these representative thinkers of nineteenth-century philosophy, we should not lose sight of the fact that philosophy of science and mathematics at this time was nourished by the new findings of such important scientists, mathematicians, and philosophers as Boole, Darwin, Augustus De Morgan, Charles Lyell, John Venn, and Wallace in Great Britain; William Rowan Hamilton in Ireland; Franz Brentano, Georg Cantor, Franz Joseph Gall, Hermann von Helmholtz, Alexander von Humboldt, and Schopenhauer in Germany; Ludwig Eduard Boltzmann, Sigmund Freud, Ernst Mach, and Gregor Mendel in Austria; Georges Cuvier, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Louis Pasteur, and Henri Poincaré in France; William James and Peirce in the United States. It was marked by powerful advances in physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, and technology. It was the century of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, of Darwin’s voyage aboard the Beagle to the Galapagos Islands and elsewhere in South and Central America, of analytic geometry and non-Euclidean geometry, of Carl Friedrich Gauss and Karl Weierstrass, of Abelian group and complex function and invariant theory, of the discovery of predicate logic or functional calculus, of Hilbert, and of the ill-fated but highly instructive and influential hybrid mathematical–philosophical program of nineteenth-century logicism. All of these scientific, mathematical, and philosophical innovations had enormous repercussions and resonances that, despite rather spectacular failures in some instances, continue to reverberate into the present century.12

When this part of the intellectual, scientific, and philosophical milieu of the nineteenth century begins to come into focus, it needs, in turn, to be supplemented by an appreciation for the art and music of the time, of Ludwig van Beethoven, Hector Berlioz, Johannes Brahms, Frédéric Chopin, Franz Liszt, Felix Mendelssohn, and Piotr Illitch Tchaikovsky, of the French Academy and Impressionism, the fabulous world of the nineteenth-century novel and other forms of literature, and important political events, including the rise of nationalism and socialism, and accompanying decline of monarchism, Napoleon

Bonaparte, the American Civil War, and countless other socially-philosophically significant occurrences.

III. BRITISH EMPIRICIST METHODOLOGY OF INDUCTIVE REASONING

The success of modern science owes much of its momentum to the articulation in the nineteenth century of explicit methods of inductive reasoning. The principal exponents of induction include such figures as John F. W. Herschel (1792–1871), William Whewell (1794–1866), John Stuart Mill (1806–73), and George Boole (1815–64). The general topic of induction is not new to this period of thought, since we know from David Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature* in the previous century that philosophers were already concerned about the logical credentials of inductive inference. It is perhaps no accident that many of the most important contributions to philosophy of science in the nineteenth century occurred in Great Britain and, to a lesser extent, in the United States, in the work of such logicians and mathematical philosophers as Peirce, where the experimental sciences at the time were most rigorously pursued.

Prior to Mill’s publication in 1843 of *A System of Logic: Raciocinative and Inductive*, his most notable predecessor was John F. W. Herschel. Herschel was the son of the famous astronomer William Herschel, and an accomplished mathematician and contributor to astronomy, optics, and other physical sciences. Herschel in 1830 wrote an important volume titled *Preliminary Discourse on Natural Philosophy*. The book is noteworthy not only for its philosophical content, but because it was the first English-language text in the philosophy of science written by a respected practicing scientist. Herschel, in keeping with a well-established tradition in expositions of scientific methodology, distinguishes

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*15. Peirce is the focus of the essay by Douglas R. Anderson in this volume.

between two phases of discovery and validation or justification. He discounts the means by which scientific hypotheses and other discoveries might be reached, focusing instead on their verification according to prescribed rules, regardless of how they are arrived at or presented to the scientific imagination. Herschel further distinguishes, also in the tradition of commentary on the interpretation of scientific findings originating with Galileo and John Locke, between primary and secondary qualities. He illustrates the distinction in one place by means of what he describes as a preliminary scientific analysis of the occurrence of sound, which he distinguishes as motion (primary quality) and sensation (secondary quality). He describes the purpose of science as the determination of causes of observed phenomena and is one of the first theorists to articulate the concept of a natural law.17

Herschel accordingly offers ten “general rules for guiding and facilitating our search, among a great mass of assembled facts, for their common cause.”18 Mill, in turn, in *A System of Logic*, condenses and summarizes the rules as:

1. Method of agreement: Constant conjunction of antecedent (cause) and consequent (effect).
3. Joint method of agreement and difference: Combination of (1) and (2).
4. Method of residues: Elimination of whatever part of a phenomenon is known by previous inductions to be the effect of particular antecedents, leaves whatever is left over as consequent of the remaining antecedents.
5. Method of concomitant variations: Whatever phenomenon varies when another phenomenon varies in a certain way, is either an antecedent or consequent of that phenomenon, or is connected with it through some fact of causation.19

What is significant in Mill’s inductive method is not so much the content of the principles themselves, but the fact that in presenting them he is offering both a descriptive characterization of scientific method and prescriptive advice about how scientific inquiry should be conducted. It is characteristic of nineteenth-century philosophy of science that it is conceived as an effort not only to explain

what science is and how it is done, but to legislate scientific practice by providing rules for correct empirical research. This is important in turn because it indicates a self-consciousness on the part of thinkers in addressing the methodology of science as a topic for philosophical reflection in which philosophy can contribute by standing back from the practice of science and considering the conditions for its success and failure. Mill, after Whewell, is one of the first philosophers to take this stance, and it is historically noteworthy that this happens in the nineteenth century when professional philosophy for the first time thematizes the methods of science. Mill builds on Whewell, but Whewell, unlike Mill, is a practicing scientist. It is always contentious to try to pinpoint the origin of a field of study to a particular time or particular author or publication. A case can nevertheless be made for Mill’s *A System of Logic* as the first work in philosophy of science, as a subject that emerges for philosophy for the first time in English-language philosophy.20

Mill’s study is remarkable for its combined philosophy of logic and mathematics. Having laid down the rules for determination of cause and effect relations and proper inductive reasoning, Mill presents an account of the nature of logic and mathematics as a formal theory of empirically encountered patterns of thought. His approach has frequently been criticized by such commentators later in the century as Frege, who accuses Mill of psychologism. Psychologism is the venial sin, from a Platonic realist standpoint, of confusing objective matters of abstract logical and mathematical relations, about which the mind is capable of forming opinions, with purely subjective aspects of the psychology of thinkers who reflect on and draw conclusions concerning the mind-independent truths of logic and mathematics.21

Mill would not have been disheartened by these criticisms. He deliberately chooses the empirical method in preference to any form of Platonism or rationalism, because he believes that experience is the only path to substantive truth. In another context, discussing the concept of nature and of laws of nature, in his essay “On Nature,” published as the first of three expositions in his collected volume of 1874, *Nature, the Utility of Religion and Theism*, Mill writes:

> Adopting this course [of clarifying the meaning of a term] with the word “nature,” the first question must be, what is meant by the “nature” of a particular object, as of fire, of water, or of some individual plant or animal? Evidently the ensemble or aggregate of its

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powers or properties: the modes in which it acts on other things (counting among those things the senses of the observer), and the modes in which other things act upon it; to which, in the case of a sentient being, must be added its own capacities of feeling, or being conscious. The nature of the thing means all this; means its entire capacity of exhibiting phenomena. And since the phenomena which a thing exhibits, however much they vary in different circumstances, are always the same in the same circumstances, they admit of being described in general forms of words, which are called the laws of the thing’s nature. Thus it is a law of the nature of water that, under the mean pressure of the atmosphere at the level of the sea, it boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit.22

As a sign of his reliance on empirical observation in the sciences, Mill posits unaided direct observation as the basis for discerning natural laws in every area of scientific inquiry. It is striking to see in this connection that Mill does not recognize the extent to which idealization beyond anything immediately perceptible to sensation is standardly required in the discovery and formulation of scientific laws. Considering the typical case of Newton’s first law of motion, according to which a moving projectile unimpeded by impressed forces continues indefinitely in a straight line, most laws of nature involve the postulation of entities that not only are nowhere observed in nature, but that are definitely known not to exist in nature. There are no moving bodies unimpeded by impressed forces, according to Newton’s own law of universal gravitation, since one and all are impeded by impressed forces, even if only negligibly across vast apparently empty distances of space. Mill seems oblivious to these aspects of idealization in the discovery of scientific laws of nature, which he claims in every instance are the direct result of empirical experience. It is with good reason, then, that some of Mill’s oversimplified claims about the nature of science and its methodology have come under criticism by later philosophers of science as naive and uninformed about actual scientific practice.23 Mill continues:

Since all phenomena which have been sufficiently examined are found to take place with regularity, each having certain fixed conditions, positive and negative, on the occurrence of which it invariably

happens, mankind have been able to ascertain, either by direct observation or by reasoning processes grounded on it, the conditions of the occurrence of many phenomena; and the progress of science mainly consists in ascertaining those conditions. When discovered they can be expressed in general propositions, which are called laws of the particular phenomenon, and also, more generally, Laws of Nature. Thus the truth, that all material objects tend towards one another with a force directly as their masses and inversely as the square of their distance, is a law of nature. The proposition, that air and food are necessary to animal life, if it be, as we have good reason to believe, true without exception, is also a law of nature, though the phenomenon of which it is the law is special, and not, like gravitation, universal.24

An impressive feature of Mill’s characterization of natural law is the large extent to which it agrees with what philosophers of science are still inclined even today to say about the object of scientific inquiry. Many of Mill’s detractors still admire his sense of what constitutes science, and confine their criticisms primarily to what they consider to be his misguided efforts to extend his notion of what constitutes good science to areas beyond its proper purview. In his own time, Mill was criticized most notably by Whewell, in his 1849 pamphlet On Induction, with Especial Reference to Mr. J. Stuart Mill’s System of Logic. Whewell takes issue with Mill’s uncompromising empiricism in the philosophy of logic and mathematics. Thus, Whewell writes:

But the elements and materials of Science are necessary truths contemplated by the intellect. It is by consisting of such elements and such materials, that Science is Science. Hence a use of the term Induction which requires us to obliterate this distinction, must make it impossible for us to arrive at any consistent and intelligible view of the nature of Science, and of the mental process by which Science comes into being.25

We see played out in Whewell’s nineteenth-century opposition to Mill a confrontation of rationalism with empiricism that goes back to Aristotle’s no doubt turbulent apprenticeship to Plato, and in later centuries between René Descartes, G. W. Leibniz, and Baruch de Spinoza, on the one hand, and, as

the Enlightenment gained traction, George Berkeley, Hume, and Thomas Reid. Later critics have objected to Mill’s interpretation of the ontic and epistemic status of logical and mathematical laws as all of a piece with the laws of nature, including the lawlike principles governing the psychology of logical and mathematical reasoning.

Mill’s philosophy of logic and mathematics as methods of empirical science, when compared with his moral and political philosophy, and the social policies philosophically grounded in Mill’s contributions to utilitarianism, had relatively scant influence on the European continent in his own day. His concept of logic and of mathematical principles was believed to have been discredited in some circles by virtue of its psychologism, as Frege and others were afterward to charge. Empiricist thinkers such as Brentano nevertheless saw in Mill’s empiricist foundations of logic and mathematics, and in his philosophy of science more generally, a powerful ally. A young Brentano in particular sought to meet with Mill, and was prevented from doing so after arriving in England only by the senior philosopher’s sudden unexpected death. The impact of Mill as well as Hume is tangible in Brentano’s work especially in philosophical psychology – *Deskriptive Psychologie, Phänomenologie*, and *Psychognosie* – developed by Brentano specifically as reflecting a Mill- and Hume-inspired empiricist anti-post-Kantian philosophy of science of “inner perception” (*innere Wahrnehmung*).26

### IV. BOLZANO’S NEORATIONALIST PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

At roughly the same time, Bernard Bolzano, writing in Czechoslovakia in German, was laying the groundwork for a very different approach to the philosophy of science, logic, and mathematics, in his highly influential 1837 *Wissenschaftslehre, Versuch einer ausführlichen und grösstheils neuen Darstellung der Logik, mit steter Rücksicht auf deren bisherige Bearbeiter* (Theory of Science, Attempt at a Detailed and in the Main Novel Exposition of Logic with Constant Attention to Earlier Authors).

Bolzano’s approach to the philosophy of science is in obvious ways diametrically opposed to Mill’s. Where Mill offers purely empirical interpretations of the natural sciences extended to logic and mathematics in order to provide logical foundations for all the sciences, Bolzano instead offers conceptual abstractions, including part–whole or mereological relations, abstract objects and their

attributes, formal syntax, propositions as the abstract meanings of sentences (Sätze an sich), sums and sets, collections, substances, adherences, subjective ideas, judgments, and sentence-occurrences, as the metaphysical basis for all of science. Bolzano proposes an ontology for science, conceived as an elaboration of his earlier work in the philosophy of mathematics, in which he similarly develops a distinction between the objective relationships holding between logical consequences and subjective understanding of the relations that obtain. Bolzano does not consider it sufficient to produce verification of mathematical or natural scientific truths, but regards it as the purpose of the pure and applied sciences to search for and articulate justifications for its conclusions in terms of more fundamental truths that are not always intuitively self-evident.27

Bolzano’s commitment to a kind of Platonism in the philosophy of science, represented especially by his doctrine of propositions, is complemented by his reception of actual numerical and geometrical infinities, a concept challenged by empiricist thinkers such as Berkeley, Hume, and Mill. Bolzano’s 1851 Paradoxien des Unendlichen (Paradoxes of the Infinite) does not pose but rather offers to resolve many traditional paradoxes concerning the concept of infinity that other thinkers of a more empiricist bent had previously put forward in the philosophy of mathematics.28 As a mathematician, Bolzano made original contributions in his proof of theorems concerning the areas of similar rhombi, and what has since come to be called the Bolzano–Weierstrass theorem in real analysis (calculus). Later independently discovered by Weierstrass, but jointly redesignated when historians discovered that Bolzano had previously derived a proof, the result shows that a subset of real-numbered extension is sequentially compact if and only if it is both bounded and closed. Bolzano provided the first fully rigorous definition of a mathematical limit, in his 1817 Rein analytischer Beweis (“Purely Analytic Proof”), which also presents a version of the differential calculus unencumbered by the concept of infinitesimals.29 Bolzano’s practical knowledge is in constant dialectic with his philosophical explorations of the nature of mathematics. The interaction of Bolzano’s mathematical and philosophical interests is exemplified by his Theorie der reelen Zahlen (“Pure Theory

of Numbers”), unpublished during his lifetime but included in his handwritten Nachlaß, incorporating a theory of real functions, and by his efforts predating Riemann and Lobachevsky to define a geometry independently of Euclid’s fifth or parallel postulate.30

V. COMTE’S POSITIVISM

Comte31 was born before Mill and died before Mill, but his legacy in philosophy of science extends beyond many of his contemporaries and far beyond the boundaries of nineteenth-century France where he worked. Comte was primarily a sociologist; indeed, he invented the term “sociology,” which he first referred to as physique sociale, or “social physics,” and later renamed sociologie. His contributions to philosophy of science were far-reaching, affecting not only the social sciences, but exerting a profound influence also on the conception of the physical sciences and their methodology.32

As a sociologist, Comte argued that all sciences were subject to what he designates the “Law of Three Phases.” According to this thesis, societies progress through three distinct periods: Theological, Metaphysical, and Scientific. Human knowledge moves from phase to phase as it advances from belief in gods and God, and in the divine origin of the universe and intervention in the world of nature. Belief progresses from faith to a more philosophical attitude marked by the development of metaphysical systems that propose to explain the world and the place of human beings in natural events in terms of philosophical principles. Eventually, in the third phase, thought advances to a widespread acceptance of natural scientific explanations that take the quantitative physical sciences and the verification of hypotheses by inductive methods as their model. Comte refers to the third and final phase as “Positive,” exploiting the meaning of the word by which it represents something affirmative, improved, and superior. In large measure, Comte’s philosophy of science is oriented toward the natural sciences as a norm of human progress, in which knowledge naturally inclines toward and eventually attains the standards


*31. Comte is also discussed in the essay by Alan Sica in this volume.

of scientific explanation that, from the time of the seventeenth century and beyond, the Enlightenment had proved were so successful in understanding the world and controlling natural forces through observation, experiment, and engineering applications.

In psychology, for example, in keeping with Comte’s model for greater rigor in the social sciences, Brentano carried forward an effort to make the study of mind a scientific enterprise in his 1874 (and later editions) *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* (Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint), and posthumously published (1982) lectures on *Deskriptive Psychologie* (Descriptive Psychology). Brentano also conducted basic scientific experiments in empirical cognitive psychology, and some of his students founded the first European laboratories for experimental psychology. As a consequence of his lectures on descriptive psychology, which he also referred to as *Psychognosie*, Brentano established the foundations for phenomenology as it was later to take shape in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl.33

Comte, in keeping with his special interests, places considerable confidence especially in applications of scientific method to social problems. The practical aspects of science as a solution to society’s woes puts Comte very much in the vanguard of other nineteenth-century thinkers who in some general sense of the word “science” were also hoping that science would solve social predicaments and lead to a betterment of society. Here we find a common theme in nineteenth-century philosophy of science that runs through the writings of Karl Marx, Thomas Robert Malthus, Jeremy Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill, Sigmund Freud, and others in this period. Comte’s concept of a progressive scientific phase of social evolution was considered philosophically advanced and humanitarian, although eventually it came to be regarded as too closely and naively wedded to an ideal that was more appropriate to the exact physical sciences than anything realistically achievable in the social sphere. Comte’s “law of three phases” is nevertheless rightly heralded as a groundbreaking attempt to formulate a theory of social evolution. In this respect, Comte led the way for later theorists, including Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Thomas H. Huxley, Oswald Spengler, and, looking ahead to the beginning of the twentieth century, Otto Weininger.

Comte also proposes an encyclopedic system for organizing and hierarchically classifying the sciences. His categories include the inorganic and organic, incorporating physics, chemistry, astronomy, and the earth sciences under the heading of inorganic sciences; and biology, psychology, and sociology as

organic sciences. In a variety of recognizable guises, something like this division of sciences and their organization, first articulated in Comte’s philosophy, is preserved to the present time as a scheme for arranging and categorizing the sciences. More important than the classification itself is the fact that Comte understood precisely these disciplines as “scientific,” and was prepared to include them in the larger project of scientific knowledge in the third stage of human social evolution culminating in the Scientific phase. Comte’s concept of a social science that was not merely philosophical was not unprecedented, but the extent to which he elevated the social sciences to a position of importance not only among the sciences but within a larger agenda of social reform, and the resolute way he advanced his project, was at once distinctive of his thought and characteristic of nineteenth-century philosophical and scientific movements. Comte, also typically of the nineteenth century, understands his own preferred sociological science as the final moment in the development of all the sciences, to which they are reducible. He believes that sociology will eventually encompass all the other sciences and integrate their discoveries into a single unified all-embracing master science.34

Comte’s project is interesting in this respect as a harbinger of Vienna Circle logical positivism from the first decade of the twentieth century. Comte is often credited as having inspired the positivism of a later era, and, within limits and the proper qualifications, this is undoubtedly true. It is nevertheless important to remember that for Comte sociology was the apotheosis of science that would bring all the other sciences together. Nor is this a delusional concept, since, after all, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, and the other so-called “hard” quantitative physical sciences are the products of individual thinkers living and working in and supported educationally, culturally, financially, and in countless other ways by social communities. The fact that Comte places sociology at the top of his unity of sciences model should nevertheless give pause to the idea that the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle merely continued a project set in motion half a century earlier by Comte. Although Comte in many respects takes the physical sciences as his prime example of a science that he thought a mature sociological science should imitate, ultimately he regards sociology as standing above and subsuming the physical sciences. This form of the unity of sciences is upside down from the standpoint of the later project of logical positivism as it was to define itself in the early part of the twentieth century. The later positivists, while recognizing their debt to Comte, considered physics to

be the ultimate science, incorporating whatever aspects of sociology could be made scientifically respectable by relying on public and repeatable phenomena and some form of hypothetical-deductive method for confirming and explaining natural occurrences.

It is a characteristic but by no means idiosyncratic feature of Comte’s form of positivism that it should place a science other than physics at the pinnacle of the unity of sciences. Other philosophers in the twentieth century, reacting against the suffocating effect of logical positivism, were to propose similar inversions of the unity of sciences model, as R. G. Collingwood does when he suggests in his later writings that history is the ultimate science encapsulating all others. Collingwood offers his reduction on grounds similar to those of Comte, reasoning that all sciences are the artifact of human reasoning dealing with the problems presented to and solved by means of reason at particular moments in the past.

35. Collingwood puts the complex interrelation of history and philosophy into perspective when he writes: “History without philosophy is history seen from the outside, the play of mechanical and unchanging forces in a materialistically conceived world: philosophy without history is philosophy seen from the outside, the veering and backing, rising and falling, of motiveless winds of doctrine. ‘Both these are monsters.’ But history fertilized by philosophy is the history of the human spirit in its secular attempt to build itself a world of laws and institutions in which it can live as it wishes to live; and philosophy fertilized by history is the progressive raising and solving of the endless intellectual problems whose succession forms the inner side of this secular struggle. Thus the two studies which, apart, degenerate into strings of empty dates and lists of pedantic distinctions … become, together, a single science of all things human” (Essays in the Philosophy of History, William Debbins [ed.] [Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1965], 4).

36. Collingwood’s understanding of the relation between history and philosophy, which evolved during the course of his career, has naturally given rise to controversies about his final considered opinion, and about the exact status of his views at any point in their development. See, for example, William Debbins’s “Introduction” in Collingwood’s Essays in the Philosophy of History: “Comple’s Philosophy of History” is a critical review of Croce’s Teoria e Storia della Storiografia (1917). Collingwood criticizes Croce for reducing philosophy to history; he argues that they are distinct disciplines even though there is an interrelation and dependence of each on the other. If it is true, as I have argued above, that philosophy of history was for Collingwood a critical examination of some of the problems encountered by the historian in the course of his work, then it would seem to follow that Collingwood consistently rejected the identification of philosophy and history” (Debbins, “Introduction,” in Collingwood, Essays in the Philosophy of History, xxxii). Compare E. W. F. Tomlin: “In studying a historical process, our task is to think ourselves into the action to discern the thought of its agent … Thus ‘all history is the history of thought’ … If all history is the history of thought, so all knowledge is historical knowledge. And since historical knowledge is that which the historian absorbs into his own experience, the activity of historical thinking is simultaneously a means of self-knowledge … History is therefore ‘the self-knowledge of mind’ … The identification of philosophy and history was in effect an identification of theory and practice” (R. G. Collingwood [London: Longmans, Green, 1953], 30–33).
Ironically, but inevitably, perhaps, many of what Comte would have considered his most important contributions to the quantitative science of sociology have since come to be regarded as unscientific. Comte’s work in science has in this respect become the unexpected victim of the unanticipated success of his own philosophy of science.

VI. FREGE’S SCIENTIFIC SEMANTICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF MATHEMATICS

Frege is best known for his discovery of a prototype of the functional calculus or predicate-quantificational logic, and for his later treatment of philosophical semantics as represented by the distinction between the conventional and indirect sense (\textit{Sinn}) and reference (\textit{Bedeutung}) of proper names or individually referring terms and sentences. Frege postulates an ideal language or \textit{Begriffsschrift} (literally, concept-script or concept-writing) for the scientific expression of meaning.\footnote{Gottlob Frege, \textit{Conceptual Notation and Related Articles}, Terrell W. Bynum (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); originally published as \textit{Begriffsschrift: Eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens} (Halle: Louis Nebert, 1879).}

Frege hammers out a symbolic logic in order to formalize the foundations of arithmetic in his 1879 \textit{Begriffsschrift: Eine der arithmetischen nachgebildete Formelsprache des reinen Denkens} (Concept-writing: a formula-language for pure thought modeled on arithmetic).\footnote{See Michael Dummett, \textit{Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Danielle Macbeth, \textit{Frege’s Logic} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Pavel Tichý, \textit{The Foundations of Frege’s Logic} (New York: de Gruyter, 1988).} A \textit{Begriffsschrift}, in Frege’s sense, in addition to satisfying other requirements of expressive adequacy, must prohibit the occurrence of multiple terms for the same entity (redundancy), the same term for distinct entities (ambiguity and equivocation), and disallow nondesignating singular terms such as those that purport to refer to fictional nonexistent objects, such as “Pegasus,” “Santa Claus,” or “the greatest even number” (putative reference to nonexistent objects). A \textit{Begriffsschrift} is meant to be a purely formal symbolic language, in effect, a mathematical notation, for the expression of any proposition in any area of discourse and, in particular, of any proposition dealing with the predications of properties to objects individually and in universal or existential quantifications.

Frege adopts a Platonic theory of \textit{Gedanken} or propositions, as the abstract meanings of inscribed sentences, like Bolzano’s \textit{Sätze an sich}. Translation from one language to another is then a matter of grasping the sense of the thought as expressed in one language and rendering the same abstract thought within
the grammar and vocabulary of another language. The analogy that suggests itself is that of the distinction in mathematics between numbers and numerals. Numbers are often thought to be abstract entities, say, the number 2 that exists on the number line in a particular position precisely between 1 and 3, while there are unlimitedly many different concrete numerals in unlimitedly many different concrete mathematical languages by means of which the same number can be expressed, including “2,” “II,” “two,” “|√4|,” “1 + 1,” “9 – 7,” “6/3,” and so on.39

Frege, in his later writings after 1890, offers a theory of meaning in which the reference or extension of terms and sentences is determined by their sense or intension. The conventional sense of a term is the set of properties the designated object possesses. The sense of the name “Aristotle,” for example, is the abstract set of all of Aristotle’s properties, including being Macedonian, born in Stagira, a student of Plato, teacher of Alexander the Great, author of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and all the many other things that are true of him. The reference of the name “Aristotle” is that unique existent entity that has just the set of properties belonging to the sense of the name. This is the manner in which, according to Frege’s semantic theory, the sense of a term determines its reference, or intension determines extension. Where sentences are concerned, the sense of a sentence is a function of the senses of its significant terms or, broadly construed, proper names, including definite descriptions. The reference of a sentence is in turn a reified truth-value, which Frege designates as “the True,” in case the sentence is true, and “the False,” in case the sentence is false. Singular referring terms and sentences in colloquial language outside a *Begriffsschrift* on Frege’s distinction can have sense while lacking reference. An example of each is “Pegasus” and “Pegasus is a winged stallion.” The indirect reference of a name or sentence, according to Frege, is its conventional sense. If I quote a term in a context predicating a property of the term, as in “‘Aristotle’ contains nine letters,” then the name “Aristotle” does not refer directly to Aristotle, but to the conventional sense of the name. By this distinction, Frege proposes to avoid a number of difficulties in understanding the complex uses of language in talking about itself and referring to the contents of thoughts, quoting what another person says, and similar challenges to interpreting the expression of meaning and determination of truth value.40


40. Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Meaning,” in *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy*, Max Black et al. (eds); originally published as “Über Sinn und Bedeutung,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100 (1892). For useful commentary, see, as recommended in a vast secondary philosophical literature, Michael Beaney, *Frege: Making
Frege requires that the meaning of a term be understood holistically or contextually in light of its contribution to the meaning of an entire sentence. This condition is related in turn to what has come to be known as Frege’s compositionality thesis. Frege further rejects and polemicizes vehemently against psychologism in logic and semantics, and his objections have inspired generations of extensionally minded logicians and meaning-theorists also to avoid psychological, phenomenological, or generally intentional factors in understanding the nature of meaning. Indeed, one of the principal targets of his attack against psychologism, as we have already noted, is Mill’s *A System of Logic*. Frege wants semantic theory to be scientific, generally defined, and so he shuns any explanation that involves private psychological subjective factors that can be different in the thoughts of every different thinker and are, in that sense, at best accidental to the objective meaning of a word or sentence.\(^41\)

Frege’s researches in logic and theory of meaning provide the foundation for his groundbreaking efforts to advance the philosophical program of logicism. Logicism is the project to reduce all of mathematics, beginning with the basic concepts of arithmetic, to more basic principles of logic. It is this program that we find Frege trying to advance in his 1884 *Grundlagen der Arithmetik: Eine logisch-mathematische Untersuchung über den Begriff der Zahl* (*The Foundations of Arithmetic: A Logical-Mathematical Investigation into the Concept of Number*).

If we think of logic as the most fundamental discipline, one that sets the standards of good reasoning for all other fields, then the idea of reducing arithmetic and eventually all of mathematics to logic can exert a very strong appeal to the philosophical imagination. If the reduction of arithmetic to logic were to succeed, then it would guarantee the starting place of that part of mathematics concerning number the absolute certainty that we expect to hold of deductively valid inferences in logic, and we would have simplified our understanding of mathematics as nothing more than a complicated outgrowth of purely logical principles. Logicism in its original form, as Frege and others in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tried to develop it, ultimately failed. It did so, nonetheless, in an instructive way that continues to inform philosophical discussion, and that in refined revisionary versions has been more recently exploited again in new quasilogist approaches to the philosophy of mathematics.\(^42\)

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41. See note 21 above.

Early in his career, Frege believed that Kant’s proto-intuitionistic account of space and time as pure forms of intuition constituting the transcendental grounds respectively of geometry and arithmetic was correct with respect to geometry but not with respect to arithmetic. The failure of his efforts to provide an independent logicist foundation for arithmetic in concepts of logic eventually prompted Frege to rethink this position. Later in life, particularly after Russell in 1901 revealed a contradiction in Frege’s final formulation of a predicate logic reduction of arithmetic in Frege’s 1893 *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik*, Frege began to rethink his view that Kant was wrong about arithmetic having an intuitive foundation in innate preconditions for the human experience of time, and began to consider more seriously again a unified Kantian approach to the perceptual basis of both arithmetic and geometry.43

Frege’s extraordinary accomplishments in logic, philosophy of language, philosophical semantics, and philosophy of mathematics, along with his careful, self-conscious methodological reflections in theory and practice, in many ways laid the groundwork for mainstream analytic philosophy that has flourished from Frege’s time to the present day.44

**VII. PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW CENTURY**

Whereas there is some truth and legitimacy to the oversimplifications by which the seventeenth century in philosophy is characterized as the period of rationalism, and the eighteenth century as the period of enlightenment and empiricism, the nineteenth century in dramatic contrast does not lend itself to such misleading labels as these for previous eras in the philosophy of science and mathematics, and philosophical methodology more generally. Especially on the European continent at this time, there is set loose a wide diversity of philosophical programs that defy easy summary or ideological sloganeering. In philosophy of science and mathematics, what generalization will serve to encapsulate a century over a stitched-together topography of philosophically very different European cultures that managed to produce such thinkers as Fichte and Cantor, Schelling and Darwin, Hegel and Frege, Schopenhauer and Hilbert, Marx and Dedekind, Nietzsche and Boole, to name but a few intellectual contrarieties?

The best we can do, after emphasizing all the appropriate caveats and qualifications, is to identify selected major trends that seem to be exemplified by the

most influential and highly regarded philosophers of science and mathematics from this dynamic century. We can suggest how the work of some important historical figures paved the way for later developments in what was soon to be a relatively unified transition to philosophy of the exact sciences in the twentieth century. From its fractured precursor, representing one hundred years of philosophical endeavor, twentieth-century philosophy of science and mathematics, using especially the machinery of formal symbolic logic, increasingly tracks the rigor demanded of formal mathematical and empirical scientific inquiry. As the sciences themselves continued to develop within an increasingly self-conscious methodology of what is properly meant by “science,” in practical terms as well as abstract theory, so the philosophy of science and mathematics has interpreted the requirements for maximizing the discovery of interesting truths to satisfy our need for information, while minimizing the risk of error in empirical judgment.

No account of nineteenth-century philosophy of science would be complete without taking notice of the idealistic movement that characterized much of the period and lent its influence to the Romantic strain of nineteenth-century thought. Unlike their intellectual forebear, the philosophers after Kant for the most part did not think of science as a continuation of the same observational and experimental hypothesis-testing tradition begun by Galileo, Descartes, Boyle, and Newton. They freely used the word “science” (Wissenschaft) to describe their own work in philosophy, but, with the exception of Schopenhauer, who began his university studies in medicine, most of the other German philosophers after Kant, including at least those mentioned above, were much more interested in art and literature than in the natural science of their time. Nor were any of this line of philosophers, beginning with Kant and this time including Schopenhauer, known for having made any contributions to, or demonstrated any serious command of, mathematics. Not being scientists or mathematicians does not necessarily preclude any of these thinkers in principle from doing respectable work in the philosophy of science or philosophy of mathematics, but when their actual lack of personal training and experience in the rigorous sciences is considered together with the content of their writings and what they have to say about what they call science and mathematics, it raises interesting questions as to what exactly they mean by the use of the words “science” and “scientific.” The follow-up inquiry is then to ask whether what they as philosophers have to say about what they call science should be considered a chapter in the history of the philosophy of science, or whether they are not rather doing metaphysics or epistemology, or something other than philosophy of science in the sense of the kind of science practiced by Galileo, Descartes, and Newton, and by such nineteenth-century contemporaries as Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, Hilbert, Cantor, and others in the mainstream of scientific and mathematical investigations.
Although nineteenth-century science and mathematics continued to refine its methods, nineteenth-century philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics in some philosophical subcultures did not keep pace, but persisted in a priori generalizations and expectations of how independently accessible truth must be projected onto the world without the benefit of good observational or experimental evidence and what in the twentieth century came to be known as the scientific evaluation and interpretation of such empirical evidence. The archetypal example of this confusion of sound scientific methods with unscientific speculative philosophical conjecture is perhaps Hegel’s 1801 doctoral dissertation (De orbitus planetarum, University of Jena), in which he takes seriously an argument from Plato’s Timaeus about the occurrence of arithmetical sequences in nature to suggest that there could be only seven planets in our solar system, in a bid to challenge the truth of Bode’s law concerning the orbital distances of planets, which has since been vindicated by more contemporary astrophysics.

In this respect, and seen from the perspective of contemporary science and mathematics and philosophy of science and mathematics, the leading lights of nineteenth-century continental philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics are not Hegel or Fichte or the other a priori transcendentalists in which the nineteenth century excelled, but figures such as Mill, Whewell, Frege, Hilbert, Cantor, Darwin (indulging in methodological asides), Boole, and others. It is this latter group, and not the nineteenth-century idealists, who self-consciously share a recognizably similar general modern scientific outlook, which might be partly described as a commitment to rigorously collected, carefully evaluated, interpreted, and reliably tested scientific truths about the properties of abstract formal structures and spatiotemporal empirical phenomena.

As science and mathematics and philosophy of science and mathematics came to define themselves in the nineteenth century, many lineages of philosophical thought were not carried into the twentieth century as fruitful approaches to explaining the nature, and understanding the methods, of mathematics and the natural sciences. As a result, what we see is the absence of a viable contemporary Hegelian, Fichtean, Schellingian, Marxist and so on philosophy of science and mathematics in the ensuing centuries. We see as well that the greatest thinkers of nineteenth-century continental philosophy – excluding Frege and Hilbert and the others we have already singled out as early exponents of a kind of rigorous scientific philosophy that emerged from the century’s free experimentation with ideas under the constraint of agreement with properly accepted and interpreted abstract formal relations and empirical facts – made their greatest contributions not to philosophy of science or mathematics, but to ethics and aesthetics, philosophy of culture and politics, social thought, and the struggles of the heart.

Whether this intellectually seething century, marked as much by a Romantic idealist struggle of freedom with necessity as by the steam engine and transfinite
cardinals, would have produced the breakthroughs in mathematics and natural science that in turn provided the basis for new developments in nineteenth-century continental philosophy of science and mathematics in the absence of Hegel, Fichte, and others since deemed to have been unscientific in their philosophical reflections, is difficult to affirm or to deny with any confidence. We know that philosophy is a dialectical activity, a conversation, between thinkers and themselves, and we know that philosophy only thrives within a culture and by interaction with that culture’s triumphs and tragedies. We see concretely during this productive time in human thought that Frege developed his ideas partly in response to his criticisms of Mill, that Brentano labored to make philosophical psychology scientific in a sense both modern and reaching back to Aristotle’s empiricism, specifically against the dominant trend in his day of post-Kantianism among the followers of Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling. If that is so, then perhaps the ideological preparation needed for the progression from nineteenth- to twentieth-century mathematical and scientific discoveries, and their traces in the transition from nineteenth- to twentieth-century philosophy of science and mathematics, would never have occurred or taken quite the historical form and content that they have in the twentieth century as a more distinctly scientific age.
I. PEIRCE AND PRAGMATISM

On the contemporary scene, pragmatism, under the influence of the work of Richard Rorty, is often misleadingly regarded as an antirealist, constructivist philosophy of language. I say “misleadingly” because however much contemporary pragmatism meets this description, the work of the early pragmatists Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, F. C. S. Schiller, and John Dewey is not captured by such an account. Early pragmatism was a philosophy of experience, not of language. Importantly, experience was not thought to be a veil between mind and world nor a barrier to our knowing the world. Rather, experience was considered to be the site of our direct engagement with that which environs us. As Dewey put it, “if anything seems adequately grounded empirically it is the

*1. For a discussion of Rorty, see the essay by David R. Hiley in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.

2. Charles Sanders Peirce (September 10, 1839–April 19, 1914; born in Boston, MA; died in Milford, PA) was educated at Harvard College (BA 1859, MA 1862), Lowell Scientific School (BS 1863). His influences included Aristotle, Augustus De Morgan (1806–71), Hegel, Kant, Leibniz, and Scotus, and he held an appointment at Johns Hopkins University (1879–84).

3. William James (1842–1910), psychologist and philosopher at Harvard University and close friend of Peirce, gave pragmatism its name in a talk entitled “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Beliefs” in 1898. John Dewey (1859–1952) was the third original American pragmatist. He identified himself as an instrumentalist and experimentalist, and developed educational and political theories that were influential in the twentieth century. Schiller (1864–1937) was a German-born, British-trained philosopher who developed a version of pragmatism he named “humanism.” He corresponded at length with James regarding their mutual philosophical interests.
existence of a world which resists the characteristic functions of the subject of experience, which goes its way, in some respects, independently of those functions, and which frustrates our hopes and intentions.\footnote{4} In its own way early pragmatism was “realist” in the sense that our beliefs about things are directly constrained by what is sometimes called an “external world.” Even James, whose notion of truth is misconstrued as antirealist, argued: “All our truths are beliefs about ‘Reality’; and in any particular belief the reality acts as something independent, as a thing found, not manufactured.”\footnote{5} To get a fuller sense of pragmatism, of its importance for the history of philosophy, and, indeed, even of its contemporary guise, it is important to revisit the work of Peirce, who found a “pragmatic” tradition in the history of Western philosophy and brought it to the American scene in the late nineteenth century.

In 1868 Peirce published “On a New List of Categories” in Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In it Peirce took himself to be rethinking the universal categories established by Aristotle and Kant. Peirce did not use the word “pragmatism” in the essay, but he sketched the structural outline for what he would later call his “pragmaticism.” Peirce’s three universal categories – what he later named Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness – are derived from his reconception of perception. These categories appear across the board in Peirce’s work. In ontology they are the reality of qualitativenss, the reality of otherness, and the reality of generality or continuity. He immediately put them to work in several important ways. He offered his first published account of the triadic structure of a sign in which an interpretant understands a correlate’s reference to a ground or relate. Peirce exemplified this process of representation as follows: “a word represents a thing to the conception in the mind of the hearer, a portrait represents the person for whom it is intended to the conception or recognition, a weathercock represents the direction of the wind to the conception of him who understands it.”\footnote{6} Peirce proceeded to make his first triadic distinction among signs: likenesses (later called icons), indices, and symbols. Finally, he brought his categories to bear on arguments and made an initial attempt to show the differences among hypothesis (later abduction or retroduction), deduction, and

\footnotesize{5. William James, Pragmatism (New York: Longmans, Green, 1907), 243–4. Ralph Barton Perry, James’s student and biographer, wrote: “Some pragmatists, such as James, are avowedly, and on the whole consistently, realistic” (Present Philosophical Tendencies [New York: Longmans, Green, 1912], 214). The key is that while the pragmatists believed that reality constrained inquiry and belief, they did not believe that all ideas were imagistic “copies” of reality.} 
induction. This last triad came to play an important role in Peirce’s rethinking scientific and philosophical inquiry; this rethinking in turn influenced James’s reconsideration of the limits of science and Dewey’s development of what he called “experimental method.”

Peirce developed his interest in method more fully in a series of six papers published in Popular Science Monthly in 1877–78. He entitled the series “Illustrations in the Logic of Science,” and in them he laid the groundwork for pragmatism as theory of meaning but also for the larger experiential and experimental philosophy that would become identified with the word pragmaticism at the turn of the century. The first two papers of the series are among the best known of Peirce’s work: “The Fixation of Belief” and “How to Make Our Ideas Clear.” In “Fixation,” Peirce argued for an experimental method of inquiry that is self-correcting and can therefore trump what he took to be the *a priori* process of most modern philosophers. He also laid the ground for a pragmatic notion of true belief as that which satisfies our doubts. “The most that can be maintained,” he argued, “is, that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true” (EP I: 115).

In the second paper we find the basis for a pragmatic theory of meaning that looks to the potential effects, fruits, consequences, or implied habits of a concept rather than its origin. Peirce provided here his first rough attempt at the pragmatic maxim: “Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object” (EP I: 132).

With method and meaning addressed, the key concepts of pragmatism were in place. However, it is important not to overlook the other themes that appeared in these early essays; these themes help provide a much fuller picture of pragmatism and its projects.

In “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” Peirce applied his new maxim to the philosophical conception of reality. His idea, which he modified significantly over the course of his career, was to show that reality’s independence of any particular perceiver or thinker could be cashed out by linking it to inquiry because the “sensible effect” of that which is real is to cause belief. Thus the real could finally be articulated by way of the beliefs of an indefinite run of inquiry; the real is that which would be agreed to by all good inquirers in the long run. It is easy to see the linkage here with James’s later focus on pragmatic truth as that which is “expedient in the way of our thinking”7 and Dewey’s focus in his own logic on what he called “warranted assertability.”8 These underpinnings of later

pragmatism come into sharper focus if we take into account as well the final four essays of Peirce’s *Popular Science Monthly* series.

In these essays Peirce developed the relations between inquiry and reality, and foreshadowed not only his own later thought but some key ideas in the work of James and Dewey. In general he argued that deduction is inadequate as a method of philosophy. We must instead make conjectures that are initially plausible, use the pragmatic meaning of the conjectures to make deductive predictions about what “would follow” if the conjecture were true, and then inductively establish ways to test for the prediction. Peirce outlined this method in the final essay, “Deduction, Induction, and Hypothesis.” This method is set against Peirce’s rethinking of the “order of nature.” He rejected the modern notion of a stable, solid-state universe that is shot through with order and necessity. He suggested instead that there is real chance and diversity in a universe that is constantly evolving. Moreover, this universe, Peirce argued, reveals continuity and indefiniteness in origin and future. Peirce suggested here what he later explicitly stated. Statistical inquiry is crucial to the development of science not only because of the finitude of inquirers but because it captures the “tychistic” – or chance-laden – nature of the world. In these essays, the tychism and focus on continuity that influenced James’s notion of a “pluralistic universe” are apparent in incipient form. On the inquiry side, we find explicit foreshadowings of Dewey’s emphasis on the communal nature of science. In “The Doctrine of Chances,” Peirce argued:

> logicality inexorably requires that our interests shall *not* be limited. They must not stop at our own fate, but must embrace the whole community. This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation. It must reach, however vaguely, beyond this geological epoch, beyond all bounds. He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is, as it seems to me, illogical in all his inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in the social principle. (EP I: 149)

The linking of logic and reality in a very down-to-earth manner became the trademark of early American pragmatism, and it reveals the importance of empiricism as an avenue of knowing. This connection, one made repeatedly by James, is well established. However, this linking of logic and ontology also discloses a close affinity between pragmatism and German idealism, where the logic of the inquirer is revelatory of an objective logic. The pragmatists, we might say, kept the objective logic but loosened the hold necessity had on that logic such that the logic of inquirers is an experimental and statistical logic and the logic of Nature is tychistic and pluralistic.
As Loyd D. Easton and others have adequately shown, the philosophical thought of Hegel appeared on the American scene well before the Civil War. In New England, Theodore Parker and Frederick Henry Hedge introduced German idealism to the transcendentalist movement. In 1848, Judge J. B. Stallo of Ohio published his *General Principles of the Philosophy of Nature* developing Hegelian themes. Then, in the 1850s, the St. Louis Hegelians, led by Henry Brokmeyer, William Torrey Harris, and Denton Snider, brought Hegel to the heart of the US. Harris edited the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* from 1867 to 1893, and published work by Peirce, James, and Dewey. Thus Hegel’s work – and much of German idealism – was not only a living option for the early pragmatists, but was infused into the very history of thought through which their own work came to life.

**William James and Hegelianism**

James was well known for his ongoing combat with the American and British Hegelians of his day, rejecting what he took to be their conception of the universe as a closed or “box” system. Hegel’s system, James remarked, “resembles a mouse-trap, in which if you once pass the door you may be lost forever.” James began reading Hegel as early as 1867 while studying in Germany. Over the course of his career he consistently exposed and argued against the “Hegelisms” in the work of his contemporaries. He was also adamantly opposed to what he took to be the mechanical progress of Hegel’s dialectical method: it offered too neat a picture of history and human experience. Nevertheless, he believed some features of Hegel’s outlook were redeemable, given proper reorientation. Thus, in *A Pluralistic Universe* he came to the conclusion that:

> Taken in the rough, Hegel is not only harmless but accurate. There is a dialectical movement in things, if such you please to call it, one

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10. Henry Brokmeyer (1818–1906) was a German immigrant who, after engaging in a variety of enterprises, settled in St. Louis and helped establish a group to study the thought of Kant and Hegel. He was the spiritual leader of the St. Louis Hegelians and made his own translation of Hegel's *Logic*. William Torrey Harris (1835–1909), a New England transplant, became superintendent of St. Louis schools, introducing kindergarten to American culture. He also created and edited the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* and later taught at the Concord Summer School in Massachusetts. He also served as US Commissioner of Education. Denton Snider (1841–1925) was another member of the St. Louis movement who wrote extensively on philosophy and education and worked for a time with Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago.
that the whole constitution of concrete life establishes; but it is one that can be described and accounted for in terms of the pluralistic vision of things far more naturally than in the monistic terms to which Hegel finally reduced it.12

It would be a mistake, then, to maintain that James was merely an anti-Hegelian and that no Hegelian influence found its way into his version of pragmatism. As his student and biographer Ralph Barton Perry (1876–1957) pointed out:

Despite this early and lasting dislike of its form James continued his study of Hegelian philosophy intermittently throughout his life, with what was on the whole an increasing respect. In the 70s and 80s he was reading the translations and expositions of Hegel published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* by W. T. Harris, “our most prominent American Hegelian.”13

Two features of Hegel’s work struck James as especially significant for his pragmatism. The first was what he considered to be Hegel’s evolutionary conception of truth: that is, that final truth arrives at the end of a long, historical process. The difference was that James insisted on a dialectical procession that was non-necessitarian. Understood in this light, “the pragmatist view of truth lends … a cordial hand to the evolutionary side of Hegelianism.”14 The second important feature was, for James, closely tied to the first, because the intellectualist truth toward which inquiry aimed began for Hegel in immediate perception. As James put it:

Hegel connects immediate perception with ideal truth by a ladder of intermediary concepts – at least, I suppose they are concepts. The best opinions among his interpreters seems to be that ideal truth does not abolish immediate perception but preserves it as an indispensable “moment.” … In other words, Hegel does not pull the ladder up after him when he gets to the top, and may therefore be counted as a non-intellectualist, in spite of his desperately intellectualist tone.15

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For James’s pragmatism, being nonintellectualist was a central virtue. When James turned to Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, he found in Hegel a kindred spirit who immersed himself in immediate perception. In this much, Hegel’s work was among the influences on James’s development of his radical empiricism, an empiricism that did not rely on atomistic, external sense impressions but dwelled in what James called the “thickness” of experience. If one kicks away the structure of the “mouse-trap,” one can see the Hegel who “plants himself in the empirical flux of things and gets the impression of what happens. His mind is in very truth *impressionistic*.”

James thus found kinship in a loose sense of dialectical development that worked through history in the direction of truth and in Hegel’s impressionistic mode of inquiry. Dewey, on the other hand, whose instrumentalist pragmatism grew out of his reading of James and Peirce, was initially tempted by Hegel’s absolute. Ultimately, however, his own focus on social transformation led him away from the absolute toward a Hegelian manner of conceiving the means and structures of such transformation.

**John Dewey and Hegelianism**

From its inception, Dewey’s pragmatism was threaded with strands of Hegel’s philosophical outlook. While a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, Dewey studied Hegel with his mentor G. S. Morris (1840–89). However, as did James, Dewey resisted necessitarianism and thus conceived Hegelian dialectic as retaining some contingency. Moreover, as James Good suggests, “the American Hegelian tradition encouraged Dewey to see Hegel as a politically liberal and eminently practical philosopher, to embrace his view of the individual’s relationship to society and his concept of positive freedom, and to develop a theory of learning and human growth similar to Hegel’s.”

Dewey was much less interested in the wholesale system of Hegel’s *Logic* than in its import for social development, which he believed took the form of reconstruction of historical circumstances in light of new ideas. Despite the “necessary interdependence of idea and machinery, of thought and institution,” Dewey argued, “there comes a time when one side conflicts with the other. At such a period reconstruction is necessary.” Throughout his early career, Dewey aligned social reconstruction with Hegel’s descriptions of historical development. Later, he learned to pursue reconstruction in his own ways, having kicked away the Hegelian ladder.

There was a period extending into my earlier years at Chicago when, in connection with a seminar in Hegel’s Logic I tried reinterpreting his categories in terms of “readjustment” and “reconstruction”. Gradually I came to realize that what the principles actually stood for could be better understood and stated when completely emancipated from Hegelian garb.¹⁹

As Dewey indicates, his movement away from Hegel and Hegelian influences was gradual and never fully completed. He claimed that he drifted away from Hegel’s absolutism toward his own pragmatic reconception of social development, and that his later work retained traces of Hegel’s influence. One of the most pervasive traces of this influence can be found in Dewey’s belief that selves, institutions, and cultures are achieved outcomes and not ready-made essences. Moreover, such achievements have to take full account of their cultural and historical settings. Understanding one’s situation is an initial condition of one’s development, growth, or reconstruction.

The responsibility Dewey laid on human communities required adequate means for considering how given situations might be moved forward or ameliorated. Thus, late in his career Dewey developed the experimental logic he had begun in earlier years. It is not surprising that this logic reveals more affinities with Hegel’s logic than it does with the narrowly deductivist practices that came to define logic in the twentieth century. For Dewey logic is, in its broadest sense, a theory of inquiry that provides tools for transforming the very nature of the situations in which we find ourselves.

Finally, Dewey noted early on that Hegel “elaborated the idea that the chief function of the state is educational.”²⁰ This focus on education follows from the general belief that the primary function of all social institutions was “to further the realization of the freedom of all.”²¹ Dewey openly embraced the centrality of education and the empowering of individuals through social institutions. In his hands education became the key condition for any culture that tried to live democratically. However, he noted that Hegel remained “haunted by his conception of an absolute goal,”²² and in the end failed to accomplish anything more than to “consecrate the Prussian State to enshrine bureaucratic absolutism.”²³

²². Dewey, Middle Works, vol. 9, 64.
We see, then, that James loosely borrowed the spirit of immediate perception from Hegelianism and Dewey appropriated Hegel’s dialectic in the service of social reconstruction. Peirce, the most systematic of the pragmatists, was not initially enamored of Hegel’s thought. But over the course of his career he came to respect Hegel’s insights and to use Hegel’s system as a standard by which to consider his own architectonic, and particularly his conception of Nature.

**Peirce and Hegelianism**

Peirce’s assessment of Hegel as a thinker varied considerably over the course of his career. Early on, Peirce read the *Encyclopedia* and the *Logic*. Nevertheless, by his own strict standards of scholarship he disavowed a sufficient understanding of Hegel. Indeed, as late as 1897 he noted, regarding some lectures he was preparing: “It is not my intention at all to attempt a criticism of Hegel. I have not studied him deeply enough to do so. But certain remarks about him strike me, from time to time; and those I insert.”

Peirce was not always this circumspect, and throughout his career worried about three aspects of Hegel’s thought: (i) what he took to be Hegel’s inadequate background in math and logic; (ii) what he took to be Hegel’s *a priori* and thus private method; and (iii) what he construed as Hegel’s ultimate abandonment of two of the three “categories” he initially introduced. Of the first, he remarked that “Hegel had the misfortune to be unusually deficient in mathematics” and that “Hegel’s dialectical method is only a feeble and rudimentary application of the principles of the calculus to metaphysics.”

Regarding his second concern, he argued that “The Absolute Knowledge of Hegel is nothing but G. W. F. Hegel’s idea of himself” (CP 8.118). Peirce’s final criticism was the one he most often leveled at Hegel: that he introduced the three categories only to take back two of them:

The third stage is very close indeed to Thirdness, which is substantially Hegel’s *Begriff*. Hegel, of course, blunders monstrously, as we shall all be seen to do; but to my mind the one fatal disease of his philosophy is that, seeing that the *Begriff* in a sense implies


26. Peirce often aligned his own categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness with Hegel’s three stages of thought as well as with other triadic structures in Hegel’s thought. I will describe the Peircean categories more fully below.
Secondness and Firstness, he failed to see that nevertheless they are elements of the phenomenon not to be *aufgehoben*, but as real and able to stand their ground as the *Begriff* itself. (CP 8.268)\(^{27}\)

Amid Peirce’s criticisms, we find his deep respect and admiration for Hegel. As we note in the claims just cited, he repeatedly aligned his own universal categories of Firstness (qualitative immediacy), Secondness (otherness), and Thirdness (mediation) with Hegel’s three stages of thought. “My three categories,” he claimed, “are nothing but Hegel’s three grades of thinking” (CP 8.213).\(^{28}\) He also appreciated the historical and evolutionary dimension of Hegel's objective logic and argued that “Hegel’s system of Nature represents tolerably the science of his day” (CP 1.524). We can see here the implicit suggestion that it will be up to Peirce, the pragmatists, and others to take the Hegelian method and bring it into alliance with the evolutionary science of the late nineteenth century. And, finally, Peirce, like James, appreciated the down-to-earthness of the *Phenomenology*. Whatever the instrumental importance of logic may be, philosophy is a science that employs “attentive scrutiny and comparison of the facts of everyday life, such as present themselves to every adult and sane person, and for the most part in every day and hour of his waking life.”\(^{29}\) To begin such a science, we ought to follow Hegel’s lead: “We must not begin by talking of pure ideas – vagabond thoughts that tramp the public roads without any human habitation – but must begin with men and their conversation” (CP 8.112). Thus, for Peirce, Hegel was “in some respects the greatest philosopher that ever lived” (CP 1.524). This remark is worth remembering because pragmatism is so often viewed simply as an antagonist of the neo-Hegelian idealisms in Britain and the US at the turn of the twentieth century. On the contrary, pragmatism was one of the avenues by which Hegel’s thought found its way into twentieth-century America. To overlook this, as many who currently fly the flag of pragmatism do, is to misunderstand pragmatism at its roots, as Peirce argued:

The truth is that pragmatism is closely allied to the Hegelian absolute idealism, from which it is sundered by its vigorous denial that the third category … suffices to make the world …. Had Hegel, instead of regarding the first two stages with his smile of contempt, held on

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27. See also CP 5.79, 8.41, 8.272.
to them as independent or distinct elements of the triune Reality, pragmaticists might have looked up to him as the great vindicator of their truth. (CP 5.436)

Indeed, as early as 1893 Peirce described his relation to Hegel as follows: “The principles supported by Mr. Peirce bear a close affinity with those of Hegel; perhaps are what Hegel's might have been had he been educated in a physical laboratory instead of in a theological seminary” (CP 8, bibliography note).

My aim at this juncture is not to see to what extent Peirce got Hegel right.30 I want simply to explore one avenue by which German idealism makes an appearance in early pragmatism. I have noted Peirce's affinities and disaffinities with Hegel's thought. It is worth adding to this that Peirce often described himself as a Schellingian. Schelling, perhaps more than Hegel, at least in Peirce's eyes, kept freedom and Firstness more alive as a category. Moreover, he brought to life Fichte's relation of the “me” and the “not-me” in his conception of Nature. Through both Hegel and Schelling, Peirce arrived at a conception of Nature that is quite at odds with the conception held by the likes of Herbert Spencer, Karl Pearson, Thomas H. Huxley and others working out the tradition of British empiricism. In exploring Peirce's idealistic conception of Nature, we can begin to see the pragmatic differences it makes in a philosophy of science – differences in the aims of science, in the uses of statistics, and in the general methods of inquiry. These differences, as many contemporary readers of Peirce have suggested, clearly separate Peirce's thought from what has come to be called pragmatism in the early twenty-first century. Using Peirce's conception of Nature as a marker for pragmatism is not, however, arbitrary. As we noted earlier, pragmatism began as a description of meaning and for Peirce, as well as for Dewey and James, evolved into a notion of inquiry that tested proposed hypotheses by checking experimental results against deduced predictions. Thus, in 1903 Peirce offered a lecture entitled “Pragmatism as the Logic of Abduction” (EP II: 226). For Peirce, the logic of abduction hinged on an affinity between the mind of the human inquirer and the world. “I infer,” Peirce stated, “in the first place that man divines something of the secret principles of the universe because his mind has developed under the influence of these same secret principles” (CP 7.46, see also 1.81, 5.604). Thus an idealistic conception of Nature in which the logic of the natural inquirer was attuned to the logic of events made sense for Peirce as a way of understanding how our scientific practices are possible. In this regard, he saw Schelling and Hegel as his intellectual progenitors.

III. PEIRCEAN NATURE

Peirce is well known for his scientific practice and his writings on the philosophy of science. He invariably described himself as “a scientific man,” and he believed thinkers who had worked in laboratories made better philosophers (CP 1.618). Indeed, he argued that nineteenth-century philosophy suffered “because it had been pursued by men who have not been nurtured by dissecting rooms and other laboratories, and who consequently have not been animated by the true scientific Eros” (CP 1.620). His pragmaticistic method was, after all, an experimental method. Thus it seems ironic to some that he identified himself as an idealist, asserting that “the one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism that matter is effete mind” (CP 6.685). As a consequence, various commentators on Peirce’s work have tried to argue that this dimension of his thought is old-fashioned or outmoded. However, Peirce understood very well what he was doing in claiming idealism as his own. As he saw it, he was looking forward not backward. For this reason it makes sense to at least try to understand what he meant.

For Peirce, the old-fashioned and outmoded version of philosophy was the nominalism that was traceable back to William of Ockham. As Peirce saw it, “all modern philosophy of every sect has been nominalistic” (CP 1.19). It was especially true, he believed, of the British empirical tradition, which was also associated with what Peirce called the “daughters of nominalism”: “sensationalism, phenomenalism, individualism, and materialism” (CP 8.38). By the end of the nineteenth century, he complained, it was almost impossible to find a scientifically minded person who was not also a materialist. Peirce’s objective idealism was, on the contrary, built on a strong scholastic realism that argued for real generality and continuity in the universe, and that was capable of underwriting the reality of the laws of Nature.

For Peirce, idealism and scholastic realism together provided a better account of the practices of scientists than did materialistic nominalism. Moreover, they made it easier to grasp the import of the most significant scientific theory of the late nineteenth century: biological evolution. In short, Peirce believed that the common nominalistic conception of Nature was inadequate and that it needed to be replaced with an idealistic conception of Nature. In a 1908 letter to Cassius Keyser, he remarked that a “logical, Hegelian-like evolution must be recognized as logically preceding the temporal evolution.”

Peirce’s conception of Nature began, as did all of his metaphysical thought, with his logic. On this score, he saw himself in the tradition of Aristotle and Hegel. Logic, for Peirce, dealt not only with deduction but with the full range

of human reasoning. His pragmaticism and his semiotic were both featured parts of his logical theory. Logic, then, as a theory of inquiry seeks to describe and prescribe, in a general way, scientific practice. What impressed Peirce most was that many, although not all, scientists of his day believed they were coming to understand Nature, to find out truths about it. And the history of sciences, according to Peirce, confirmed this belief from a pragmatic point of view. That is, the ideas of the sciences reveal their truth in history through their effectiveness in dealing with the world. True ideas bear an experimental track record: “We call them in science established truths, that is, they are propositions into which the economy of endeavor prescribes that, for the time being, further inquiry shall cease” (CP 5.589).

If scientists are right about their mission, and Peirce believed they were, then human inquirers must be able to know Nature. Nature, that is, must be intelligible to human inquirers. As Peirce acknowledged to a group of Harvard students, he agreed with the “popular notion that modern science is so very great a thing as to be commensurate with Nature and indeed to constitute of itself some account of the universe” (CP 5.585). Or again, “The only end of science, as such, is to learn the lesson that the universe has to teach it” (CP 5.589). This requires a fittingness on both ends of the inquiry process. The human inquirer must be able to know Nature; and Nature must be able to be known. Of the first Peirce says, “I am quite sure that you must be brought to acknowledge that man’s mind has a natural adaptation to imagining correct theories of some kinds” (CP 5.591). On various occasions he stated that persons have an instinct for “guessing right” – not all of the time, but more often than not. Only such a belief could underwrite Peirce’s abductive/inductive theory of inquiry. Creating and selecting fitting or plausible hypotheses from an infinite realm of logically possible hypotheses requires this instinct for guessing or imagining. “It is somehow more than a mere figure of speech,” he argued, “to say that nature fecundates the mind of man with ideas which, when those ideas grow up, will resemble their father, Nature” (CP 5.591). On the side of Nature, he maintained, “Nature only appears intelligible so far as it appears rational, that is, so far as its processes are seen to be like processes of thought” (CP 3.422). Nature must have an element that is idea-like, that is akin to the working of the human mind. This should not be surprising if the human mind is itself a feature of Nature, as Spinoza, Schelling, and Hegel suggested. Thus the process of inquiry must be a working, living analogy between inquirers and Nature: “It is certain that the only hope of retroductive reasoning ever reaching the truth is that there may be some natural tendency towards an agreement between the ideas which suggest themselves to the human mind and those which are concerned in the laws of nature” (CP 1.81). This hypothesis that Nature is in some part idea-like is the beginning of Peirce’s idealistic conception of Nature. However, idealism
in its extreme forms argues that Nature is nothing but Idea, Spirit, or Mind. As we noted earlier, Peirce often charged Hegel with precisely this reductive sort of move. “The capital error of Hegel,” he wrote, “is that he almost altogether ignores the Outward Clash” of experience (CP 8.41). In the terms of Peirce’s own philosophical vocabulary: Hegel regards “Category the Third as the only true one. For in the Hegelian system the other two are only introduced in order to be aufgehoben” (CP 5.79). This concern led Peirce, in his conception of Nature, to return to his early essay “On a New List of Categories.” As we noted, in this piece he provided his own revision of the Aristotelian and Kantian categories of the Real. He argued that both logically and phenomenologically reality reveals itself as three-categorized, and he named these three, simply but awkwardly, Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. Unlike either the materialist or the extreme idealist, Peirce refused to excommunicate any of the categories or to reduce any one of them to the others. The reason to appropriate the term “idealism” was that it could include Thirdness without needing to get rid of Firstness and Secondness. Peirce’s idealism involved a reciprocal order of dependence among the categories akin to that operative among Kant’s relata of substance, cause, community. There, causality is first described as the interaction of two substantive individuals. However, for full causality, the entire situation or communitas in which the individuals interact is required. Thus, community cannot occur without substance and the dual relation of cause and effect, but the individuals and their interaction cannot be sustained without a community that provides the continuity of the relation. Materialism, on the contrary, had no way by which to include Thirdness. Thus Peirce revised idealism in light of his new list of categories, and this in turn led to his revised conception of the Nature into whose workings scientists inquire. Again, the argument is initiated by logic. Given an affinity between the reasoner and Nature, “It follows,” Peirce said, “that if we find three distinct and irreducible forms of rhemata, the ideas of these should be the three elementary conceptions of metaphysics” (CP 3.422). Nature must, therefore, be rethought in terms of the ideas attending “the three forms of rhemata … firstness, secondness, and thirdness; firstness, or spontaneity; secondness, or dependence; thirdness, or mediation” (CP 3.422). Elsewhere he described Firstness as variety and indeterminacy, Secondness as resistance, and Thirdness as generality and continuity.

Peirce believed that Nature revealed to inquirers traits of each of the three categories. Firstness was to be found in Nature’s growing variety, in the actuality of possibility and spontaneity, and in Nature’s statistical form. Secondness is disclosed most clearly in human experience where we find ourselves constrained in action and belief by Nature’s “facts.” Moreover, our residual belief in “things” or “individuals” is an indication of our acquaintance with Secondness in Nature. Finally, Nature’s Thirdness is found in its generality, continuity, and lawfulness.
It is not difficult to see Hegel’s stages of thought lurking in Peirce’s categoriology. What is missing is not the historical development of Nature and culture, but a lock-step process of necessity by which this development occurs. Let me provide a sketch of each of Peirce’s categories of Nature in turn.

**Nature’s Firstness**

From early on in his career Peirce was dissatisfied with what John Stuart Mill called the “uniformity of nature.” But his rejection of such uniformity was not grounded in an atomism or nominalism that outrightly rejected the reality of lawfulness or uniformity. Rather, it was his scientifically based belief in Nature’s growth that resisted the picture of uniformity in a steady-state universe. What science tended to find, Peirce argued, was not perfect regularity and determinateness, but a regularity accompanied by surprises, change, and growth. Uniformity or perfect regularity in Nature may be a “natural belief” but, as Peirce consistently maintained, “Natural beliefs … also require correction and purification from natural illusions” and so “the adaptations of nature, beautiful and marvelous as they verily are, are never found to be quite perfect; so that the argument is against the absolute exactitude of any natural belief, including that of the principle of causation” (CP 6.50). The uniformity of Nature is a reasonable ontological hypothesis but it fails to square with experience, as does the philosophical determinism that is its intellectual companion. Peirce argued:

> Nature is not regular. No disorder would be less orderly than the existing arrangement. It is true that the special laws and regularities are innumerable; but nobody thinks of the irregularities, which are infinitely more frequent. Every fact true of any one thing in the universe is related to every fact true of every other. But the immense majority of these relations are fortuitous or irregular. (CP 5.342)

Peirce’s evolutionary conception of Nature required a nonmechanistic outlook, one that admitted conditions for genuine growth.

Peirce, whose father helped create the first English translation of Laplace, rejected Laplace’s suggestion that chance or probability in Nature was simply a function of human ignorance. Nature rather seemed to disclose a wide range of “unlawful” or “irregular” events. In everyday experience, for example, whom we encounter and under what circumstances we encounter them are for the most

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32. *See also ibid.*
33. Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749–1827) was a French astronomer and seminal thinker in mathematical statistics.
part unlawful events. On the intellectual front, evolutionary theory and developments in statistics led Peirce to his “tychism,” the belief that there is always an element of chance or spontaneity in the universe. To his friend Chauncey Wright, a defender of both Mill and Darwin, Peirce stated, “Mill’s doctrine was nothing but a metaphysical point of view to which Darwin’s theory, which was nourished by positive observation, must be deadly” (CP 5.64). That is to say, Darwin’s observations suggested that there are real possibilities in Nature’s developments, real may bes as opposed to a seamless system of must bes and would bes: “The principle of sporting is the principle of irregularity, indeterminacy, chance” (EP II: 272). Tychism is supported by the simple observation of increased variety in Nature. From our limited perspective on earth, we see new species come and go and within species we find individuals that push the boundaries of the class. “The premises of Nature’s own processes,” Peirce argued, “are all independent uncaused elements of facts that go to make up the variety of nature which the necessitarian supposes to have been in existence from the foundation of the world, but which the Tychist supposes are continually receiving new accretions” (CP 5.119). Against Herbert Spencer’s influential blend of mechanism and evolutionary theory, he held that since Nature reveals both its growth and its diversification, we must abandon mechanism since “mechanical law can never produce diversification” (CP 1.174). Thus, for Peirce, just as in our logical theory we must shift from a deductivist and necessitarian outlook to an abductive/inductive logic, so in ontology we must move from an assumption of the uniformity of Nature to a tychistic ontology and cosmology that includes the spontaneity that can account for increased diversification. Nature is itself probabilistic – statistics describe its being directly: “if the laws of nature are still in process of evolution from a state of things in the infinitely distant past in which there were no laws, it must be that events are not even now absolutely regulated by law.” And:

just as when we attempt to verify any law of nature our observations show irregular departures from law owing to our errors, so there are in the very facts themselves absolutely fortuitous departures from law … which … must manifest themselves in some indirect way on account of their continual occurrence. (CP 7.514)

Peirce willingly acknowledged that his tychistic conception of Nature was hypothetical. But he believed it better accounted both for our ordinary experiences of indeterminacy and for the late-nineteenth-century developments in science than did the uncritical adoption of the uniformity of Nature and determinism. I believe his outlook on this score remains viable in the twenty-first century, although we are still occasionally tempted by the natural belief of uniformity.
Nature’s Secondness

The category of Secondness in Nature is the least problematic, I think, for contemporary science. Our human practice of scientific inquiry requires Nature’s Secondness. A Nature that is pure Secondness or atomistic actuality is the Nature of the late-nineteenth-century mechanist and nominalist. Peirce’s difficulty here is not so much to persuade scientists that Nature reveals Secondness, but to show that an idealistic conception of Nature can include Secondness. In other words, he must show that he is not Hegelian as he understood Hegelianism. Trading on evolutionary theory, Peirce recognized human beings as a natural result of evolution: humans are a feature of Nature. However, the human ability to inquire and to know seems to establish, as Fichte suggested, a duality in the midst of Nature. As inquirers, we become Nature knowing itself: “we are all of us natural products, naturally partaking of the characteristics that are found everywhere throughout nature” (CP 5.613). This accounts for the affinity between our ideas and Nature’s laws, as suggested at the outset, but it also insists on a fundamental otherness. There must be in reality both an ego and a non-ego; the inquirer must be able to objectify the rest of Nature, including herself. There is an inner and an outer, a subject and an object, and so forth – all within Nature. The key is to see these as functional features of Nature – they are not extra- or super-natural, as Dewey often put it; rightly or wrongly, Peirce seemed to believe that Schelling retained this view but that Hegel lost it by neglecting Secondness. For Peirce, our experience is itself the key indicator to us of the Secondness, the otherness: what he called the “outward clash” in Nature. “Experience,” he believed, “means nothing but just that of a cognitive nature which the history of our lives has forced upon us” (CP 5.539); it refers “to that which is forced upon man’s recognition, will-he, nill-he” (CP 5.613). Individually and communally, our beliefs are resisted by Nature’s otherness; this is the truth of any empiricism. And when as inquirers we experiment, we aim to make sense of this external constraint on our thought. Borrowing from the chemist Julius Adolph Stöckhardt (1809–86), Peirce described “experiment” as “a question put to nature” (CP 5.168).

Peirce thus resisted the idealistic temptation to claim that Nature is “nothing but mind”: an undifferentiated categorial whole. Material reality in the normal sense of things is a feature of our experience. According to Peirce, “An idealist need not deny the reality of the external world, any more than Berkeley did. For the reality of the external world means nothing except that real experience of duality” (CP 5.539). There are individual things and events to which we, as agents and inquirers, must respond. Indeed, one of our human purposes in

34. For an extended discussion of Hegel and Secondness, see Stern, “Peirce, Hegel, and the category of Secondness.”
35. See also CP 5.57.
discovering Nature’s truths is to be able to act more effectively within an oppositional environment. Knowing a law of Nature is not enough; we must also have the ability to act in a specific situation. As Peirce put it, “a law of nature left to itself would be quite analogous to a court without a sheriff” (CP 5.48).

Peirce shares with the nominalist a belief in the actuality of things and events; Nature has its Secondness. However, understanding Nature requires more than a bare acquaintance with individuals; we seek the intelligibility of the relations of things and the regularities of their behavior. Just as the court of law requires a sheriff for action, the sheriff reciprocally requires the court of law for guidance. It is not the individual facts and events themselves that require explanation – it seems foolish to ask in any full ontological sense why one’s shirt is blue. But we do require explanation for the regular behavior of things. “Law,” Peirce argued, “is par excellence the thing that wants a reason” (CP 6.12). All inquiry, scientific or otherwise, is an investigation into Nature’s Thirdness – its lawfulness, its meaning, its reasonableness.

**Nature’s Thirdness**

As we noted earlier, Peirce’s rejection of Nature’s uniformity was not a rejection of its regularity. And it is precisely this regularity about which the scientist hopes to learn. Even a statistical rather than a deterministic regularity shows that individuals in Nature have habits and ways of behaving that are general, or third-like. Peirce did not argue, therefore, for the *existence* of laws as objects or individuals – this would be to reduce them to seconds and would void their ability to cover a variety of instances. Instead, Peirce argued for the *reality* of laws, a reality that is evidenced by the past regularity of the actions of things as well as by the predictability of the future. It is here in Nature’s Thirdness that Peirce put his scholastic realism to work.

For the scientific world the question of Nature’s Thirdness is closely bound to our conceptions of laws of Nature. The traditional British empiricist/nominalist argued that what we call “laws” are simply arbitrary descriptions attributed by persons to things in Nature. Pearson, for example, argued that a law is “essentially a product of the human mind and has no meaning apart from man.”36 Or, as Peirce argued more generally, the conceptualists “say that the laws of nature and the properties of chemical species are the results of thinking” (CP 1.27). Given the work of Rorty and a wide variety of other thinkers, such an outlook still seems very much in vogue. Indeed, those who, like Rorty, follow the logic of nominalist reasoning to its conclusion, admit that science is a modern mythologizing and that Nature itself is a human fabrication.

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Peirce resisted this line of reasoning not only because he believed science revealed something of Nature's intelligibility but also because we find ourselves practically constrained not only by Nature's actuality, its factual resistance, but by the force of Nature's laws. We cannot indeed truly think and act as we please. In describing gravity in a lecture, Peirce maintained that we come to believe by way of experience that any stone dropped on earth will behave in a reasonably similar way and that “there was a real reason, that is, a real general” that governed its falling (CP 6.99). We find a natural law that enables us to tell what would be the case in the future under certain circumstances.

The description, of course, is simple and commonplace. The difficulty seems to be in seeing the necessity of Peirce's realistic, idealistic ontology for making the description effective. The pragmatic meaning of natural laws, however, should bring the force of their reality home to us. These laws have what Peirce called “a sort of esse in futuro .... That is to say, they will have a present reality which consists in the fact that events will happen according to the formulation of those laws” (EP II: 153). A law's reality, its independence from what you or I think about it, is what enables us to make predictions according to it: “it is a prognostic generalization of observations” (EP II: 68). It is our very scientific and experimental use of Nature's laws that reveals and confirms their pragmatic meaning – gravity, for example, is found in its would-be consequences. “The scientific man,” Peirce said, “looks upon a law ... as a matter of fact as objective as fact can be” (EP II: 74). Only it cannot be an individual fact or a fact of Secondness; in order for prediction to be possible through its use, a law must be general and apply to an indefinite range of possible events.

Strictly speaking, Nature's laws reveal a kind of final causality in Nature. Such a claim is antithetical to nominalism and atomism, which begin and end with efficient and proximate causes, and it sounds strange to those who think of finality only in terms of conscious beings. But since a law has its “being in futuro,” it constrains events to take some forms and to resist others. Thus, for Peirce, “To say that the future does not influence the present is untenable doctrine .... All our knowledge of the laws of nature is analogous to knowledge of the future” (CP 2.86). To say, then, that the future is in some part governed by present laws is to argue for final causality in Nature.

Finally, Peirce's claim that Nature involves Thirdness, that generality is real, also means that Nature itself reveals generality and continuity to us as inquirers. It does this through lawfulness, as we have been arguing, but it also does so through some phenomenological features of our experience. For example, we on occasion experience sympathy with other living beings, and we quite routinely experience the efficacy of the communication of meaning. But for ideas or meanings to be communicable, Peirce claimed, we must be able to enter into them; ideas are real generals that do not reside in us but that any of us may
enter into. This was the feature of Hegel’s *Logic* that intrigued Peirce. Moreover, in order for me to sympathize with another person or animal, there must be continuity between their experiences and mine. Thus simple everyday experiences bring home to us the real generality of Nature; that we tend to overlook or dismiss this fact is a function of the depth of our habituation to a nominalistic version of the world. In scientific work we find such continuity similarly suggested. Evolutionary theories tend to argue for a process that moves forward by “insensible degrees.” Thus, in identifying species, Peirce argued, the naturalist notes that the qualities of his specimens “are not precisely alike.” Therefore “the differences are such as to lead him to believe that forms could be found intermediate between any two of those he possesses” (CP 2.646). The upshot is that natural kinds are real, but the borders between them are continuous such that new species may appear, and such that some individual specimens may partake in both—they may be border creatures.

For those who conceive of Nature as a steady-state, box universe, Peirce’s three-categorized Nature may seem to involve some extravagant claims. Many in the history of Western thought have been tempted by the simplicity of materialism and extreme conceptual idealism because of the clarity they can bring to explanation. However, Peirce found in the world of scientific practice enough evidence to call the simplicity of both materialism and conceptual idealism into question. To account for our natural experiences of possibility, of physical resistance, and of predictability, Nature must be diverse and spontaneous, factual and constraining, general and evolutionary. It must be, for Peirce, the same complex and living sort of Nature to be found in the thought of Hegel and Schelling.

**IV. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

In concluding, I would recall that for Peirce one’s metaphysical account of Nature is never without a practical and pragmatic meaning. It can affect whether we inquire, how we inquire, and even, as we now know, how we fund inquiry. It is for this reason, as well as for his concern for finding the truth, that Peirce worried about the nominalistic disease that had permeated not only nineteenth-century science but many features of everyday life. A nominalist lives in a Nature where truth, beauty, and goodness are not real regulative hopes but are arbitrary constructions of individual beings. Indeed, the nominalist, unlike the Peircean idealist, has no intrinsic reason to care about Nature since it bears no constitutive meaning. Peirce’s Nature, as did Hegel’s and Schelling’s, does bear meaning and may require aesthetic and moral consideration. Let me close, then, with a final sketch of Peirce’s resistance to Pearson’s nominalistic account of Nature. Pearson, as we noted, argued that natural laws are in a strict sense arbitrary
human conventions. And prior to Rorty, Pearson maintained that the world itself is a construction of the finite mind. Therefore, for Pearson, scientific practice could not legitimately be aimed at a real general called “truth.” Instead, it must be conducted for other reasons. Specifically, he argued, the sole reasons for science are to “promote the welfare of human society, to increase social happiness,” and “to strengthen social stability” (EP II: 57). At first blush these may seem worthy aims. But as Peirce was quick to point out, Pearson, an original leader of British eugenics, meant by these aims the preservation of British aristocracy. Peirce, who had by that time learned that even intelligent persons could become impoverished, retorted: “to demand that man should aim at the stability of British society, or society at large, or the perpetuation of the race as an ultimate end, is too much” (EP II: 60). Thus a nominalist Nature too has its consequences. As Peirce well knew, there is much more at stake in his idealistic conception of Nature than conversation among philosophers or scientists. And yet, to bring the issue full circle, this is the best reason why we, as philosophers and scientists, should continue to inquire into the efficacy and truth of such a conception. For if it is not the case that the truth is merely what works, it remains the case for Peirce that the truth will in the long run work:

The very being of law, general truth, reason, – call it what you will, – consists in its expressing itself in a cosmos and in intellects which reflect it, and in doing this progressively; and that which makes progressive creation worth doing, – so the researcher comes to feel, – is precisely the reason, the law, the general truth for the sake of which it takes place. (EP II: 58–9)

To see Peirce’s Nature in this way is to see that pragmatism’s roots in German idealism are deep and strong, even when they are not stated explicitly. We also see that these roots are heavily modified by the pragmatists’ experimental method, by their acceptance of a tychistic dimension of Nature, and by their evolutionary outlook. Missing this connection, however, is precisely what has unfortunately led to the many contemporary misreadings of the pragmatic tradition as antirealist, as subjective and relativistic, and as thoroughly constructivist. Especially for Peirce, pragmatism was not a radically novel philosophical outlook, but a reasonable development of the history of philosophy given the states of philosophy, science, mathematics, and logic at the close of the nineteenth century.
MAJOR WORKS


The question can be raised whether the category or discipline of philosophical aesthetics existed before the eighteenth century. Unlike “logic,” “ethics,” and “physics,” a traditional Stoic division of philosophy with great staying power, “aesthetics” is clearly a product of modernity. As Paul O. Kristeller demonstrated in “The Modern System of the Arts,” it was in the eighteenth century that the idea of the aesthetic as a distinctive human capacity and the parallel consolidation of the notion of the fine arts crystallized in the writings of (mostly) French, German, and English philosophers and critics.¹ The modern concepts of art and aesthetics emerged together. Any history or genealogy of aesthetics will have to confront the possible tensions between an orientation to the arts and one to aesthetic subjectivity; it should take account of the canon of the fine arts that the new field of aesthetics inherited from the eighteenth century as well as its conflicts, margins, and exclusions. We should be aware, for example, that the very notion of literature (in contrast to earlier traditions of poetics and rhetoric) arose around 1800, and almost immediately generated the idea of

world literature (which, as Marx observed in 1848, is a recent invention of the bourgeoisie).  

There is, then, only a modern aesthetics. The Greeks and Romans were concerned with the power of poetry and music and the beauty of the *kosmos*, but had no “aesthetics,” and nor did the medievals, despite their hermeneutic fascination with the meaning of biblical narrative. For the development of aesthetics in the specifically modern sense two things were required: (i) *the discovery of “man”* in the meaning that Michel Foucault gives to that term, that is the being who understands that his entire construction of the world is possible only through his own finite powers, and who sets himself the infinite and, as it turns out, impossible task of clarifying the nature of these powers, including aesthetic sensibility or taste; and (ii) the critical and practical formation of a *system of the fine arts*, in which poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and others (including some later marginalized, e.g. gardening and landscape architecture) were understood as having fundamentally similar aims and roots.  

The arts became a philosophically crucial form for the self-understanding of the finite human being at the time when it became possible to speak of art in something like the usual modern sense. This understanding was pursued in settings and institutions such as museums and concert halls where the arts had both a privileged and a newly isolated place. Aesthetics was the experience of beauty, sublimity, and art in which the human being manifests its universal capacities, coming to a knowledge of itself as reflective subject (Kant) or as participating in the work of *Geist* (Hegel).

Both Kantian and Hegelian aesthetics are centered in the concept of a universal humanity that comes to understand some of its deepest powers through aesthetic experience, including that of the arts.  

2. The earliest occurrence of “literature” documented by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 1812; the word does not appear in Grimm’s *Wörterbuch*.  


*4. For discussions of Kant’s and Hegel’s aesthetics, see the essays by Thomas Nenon and Terry Pinkard, respectively, in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
grand narrative of art, as developed in Hegel’s lectures, is a story of spirit coming
to itself historically, within the medium of sensuous material, a medium from
which it eventually twists free, transforming itself into religion and philosophy.
This universal historical hermeneutics concludes elegiacaclly by proclaiming the
notorious “death of art,” or to follow Hegel more precisely, the judgment that
art is no longer an original source of thought, having been surpassed by and
comprehended (aufgehoben) in religion and philosophy. Between roughly 1840
and 1900 philosophers assumed the task of elaborating and sometimes trans-
forming the conception of the universal aesthetic human and the meaning of
art that Kant and Hegel had pursued in their distinctive ways.

I. AESTHETICS AFTER HEGEL

Although a number of Hegel’s critics and commentators assume that he spoke
of the “death of art,” what he actually claimed was more complex and not at all
as naive as this phrase sounds. Hegel had said that art had completed itself in
its essential movements, that it had become a subject of science (Wissenschaft),
and could no longer play its former role as a primary source of thought, having
been superseded (aufgehoben) by religion and philosophy. What we could now
expect was not the disappearance or death of art, but its dissolution or unrav-
eling (Auflösung), which would involve stylistic experimentation, play, and
ironic self-consciousness. Hegel remarks that the knee no longer bends before
the painted Madonna seen as an artistic image, but art continues to be the great
educator of humanity and a fertile field of cultural life.5

The artistic world inherited by the post-Hegelian generation was one in
which relatively new institutions such as the museum and the concert hall had
firmly established themselves as the sites of art, corresponding both to Kant’s
divisions among the cognitive, practical, and aesthetic spheres and to Hegel’s
elaboration of a science of aesthetics. This new situation was contingent on
the rise of the bourgeoisie, greater literacy, and global markets that fostered
various forms of translation. The rising middle class sought credentials for its
new social standing in the exercise of universal taste (to put it in Kantian terms)
or in becoming knowledgeable heirs of art’s universal history (to reflect this in a
Hegelian way).6 This project fit well with the European restoration of order that
prevailed from Napoleon’s defeat in 1815 to the revolutionary period of 1848.

5. G. W. F. Hegel, Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, T. M. Knox (trans.) (New York: Oxford Uni-
versity Press, 1975), vol. I, 11 (art on its highest side a thing of the past), 103 (the knee does
not bend); vol. II, 593–611 (dissolution of Romantic art).
6. For a Marxist account, see Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetic (Oxford: Blackwell,
1990), esp. 1–30.
While many artists and philosophers who took this new cultural context for granted found inspiration in Hegel’s aesthetics and his dialectical approach, the question arose whether Hegel had claimed premature closure in his triad of symbolic, classic, and Romantic art, and in his system of the individual arts, which traced a development from the most material and earth-bound art of architecture to the purely imaginative world of poetry. Post-Hegelians such as Karl Rosenkranz and F. T. Vischer were impressed by Hegel’s dialectical procedure, but argued that he had unduly restricted the scope of aesthetics by limiting its field to the beautiful. They set out instead to demonstrate that the beautiful was only one of a nest of related fundamental aesthetic forms that also included (at least) the sublime, the comic, and the ugly. In Vischer’s early work *On the Sublime and the Comic* (1837), and in his later massive and encyclopedic *Aesthetics* (1846–57), he implicitly claimed to out-Hegel the master, situating the beautiful as only the first or immediate moment of the aesthetic, a moment thrown into relief by its negation in the sublime, itself a negative and excessive movement, surpassing the self-contained harmony of the former. The final, reconciling moment is the comic, conceived as combining the immediate appeal of the beautiful with the disparity and conflict typical of the sublime. Vischer, after completing his monumental eight-volume *Aesthetics*, wrote an essay acknowledging that he had vastly underestimated the role of the perceiver, or the aesthetic subject, which contributed to Benedetto Croce’s later verdict that Vischer’s *Aesthetics* was “the tombstone of Hegelian aesthetics.” Rosenkranz’s *Aesthetics of the Ugly* (1853) employs a similar structure, but he pushes the dialectic further to explore the extremes of horror. While we can see how the tables of contents of Vischer’s and Rosenkranz’s treatises could appear to be (as F. H. Bradley said of Hegel) a “ballet of bloodless categories,” Rosenkranz’s stress on Hegel’s “power of the negative” in aesthetics was an important (if little

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7. Johann Karl Friedrich Rosenkranz (April 23, 1805–July 14, 1879; born in Magdeburg, Germany; died in Königsberg) was educated at the Universities of Berlin, Halle, and Heidelberg. His influences included Hegel and Schleiermacher, and he held appointments at the University of Halle (1831–33) and University of Königsberg (1833–79). His major works include *Hegels Leben* (1844), *Aesthetik des Hässlichen* (1853), and *Hegel als deutscher Nationalphilosoph* (1870).

Friedrich Theodor Vischer (June 30, 1807–September 14, 1887; born in Ludwigsburg, Germany; died in Grunden) was educated at the University of Tübingen. His influences included Hegel, and he held appointments at the University of Tübingen (1837–55, 1866–87) and University of Zürich (1855–66). His major works include *Über das Erhabene und Komische* (1837), and *Aesthetik, oder Wissenschaft des Schönen* (1846–57).


acknowledged) step in a tradition represented by Theodor W. Adorno, who saw Rosenkranz’s aesthetics of the ugly (Hässliche) as anticipating a more recent concern with dissonance as a fundamental aesthetic category.10 As Rosenkranz proceeds from the formless to disfiguration, the destruction of the image, the demonic, evil, and terror, he effectively explores a dimension of subjectivity opened up in Kant’s analysis of the sublime. Reading beyond the obsessively systematic tables of contents of such works, we discover a number of philosophically rich discussions of music, literature, and other arts, some of which were read by American transcendentalists and pragmatists.11

Søren Kierkegaard took a different direction from Hegel. Many of his writings, especially those in the first volume of Either/Or, could (except for their ironic tone and pseudonymous authorship) be taken as contributions to Hegelian aesthetics like those proliferating in Germany; closer attention to context will take account of Kierkegaard’s agonistic relations with contemporary Danish Hegelians.12 In “The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama,” a pseudonymous author argues that the modern world is comic, insofar as it presents subjectivity as pure form; whereas in Greece the social bond brought people together in common life, the modern state, in abandoning any real claim of authority, leaves the modern subject to lead an essentially isolated life.13 Since ethical substance is lacking in modernity, the suffering of the modern hero must be completely self-inflicted. If Hegel’s analysis of Antigone rightly discerned the tragic in the clash of two substantial powers – the universal claims of the state and those of family and ancestral piety – the modern Antigone would be one condemned to an absolutely private existence with a secret about her father, whose anxiety would be increased by her unresolvable uncertainty as to whether her father also knew and suffered from knowing it. Kierkegaard’s own pseudonymous authorship, playing as it does with various forms of the secret and the incommunicable, involves a complex strategy for awakening an intense awareness of the caesura of public and private. He deploys the forms of Romantic irony against the aestheticism of the movement, as he parodies the practices of Hegelian philosophy in order to validate the concept of individuality.

11. Much post-Hegelian and post-Schellingian aesthetics was published in translation in the Journal of Speculative Philosophy (1867–93), a basic source of philosophical education and discussion for such North American philosophers as Peirce, James, and Dewey (Dewey’s Art as Experience [1934] has been said to be his most Hegelian work).
12. For a discussion of Kierkegaard that situates his work in relation to Danish Hegelians, see the essay by Alastair Hannay in this volume.
Kierkegaard would no doubt have been amused by the growth of positivist aesthetics in France and Germany later in the century. He would have seen in the “experimental” aesthetics, pursued by Johann Friedrich Herbart, Gustav Fechner, Robert Zimmermann, and Carl Stumpf, a comic exhibition of how even the aesthetic could be emptied of subjectivity in the modern age. These aestheticians typically model their methods on a positivist interpretation of the natural sciences, one that imagines that theory must not only be confirmed by data but that our knowledge of laws arises from a process of accumulating observations. They wedded this to a reduced conception of the aesthetic judgment; characteristically, they have little or nothing to say about the notion of the aesthetic subject, simply taking as given the datum of the judgment of taste that Kant begins to analyze in the first four moments of his “analytic of the beautiful.” Fechner distinguishes an “aesthetics from above” (in the manner of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel) and an “aesthetics from below” that involves determining the laws of pleasure and displeasure; these can be determined only by observation. Zimmermann follows Kant in distinguishing mere feelings (which may vary widely from subject to subject, being pathological in Kant’s terms) from aesthetic judgments. Yet, unlike Kant, he claims that the experimental methods of the exact sciences can be used to “identify the specific relations of sound or color” that produce aesthetic judgments. This approach abandons any attempt to derive the whole of aesthetics from a single principle (such as “harmony is pleasing”). Zimmermann argues that “there are just as many objective principles of taste as there are aesthetic judgments.” Aesthetics should follow the model of the exact sciences, he proposes, reducing “the most complex expressions of taste, as produced by the works of nature and art, to those original factors which are incapable of further analysis.” This is a project that can be completed, Zimmermann asserts, yielding “a normative standard of eternal validity.” In practice this means that with respect to the visual arts, for example, experimental aesthetics attempts to understand the work in terms of responses to color, form,


15. Robert Zimmermann, “Toward the Reform of Aesthetics as an Exact Science” (1861), Nicholas Walker (trans.), in Art in Theory: 1815–1900, Harrison et al. (eds), 607–9.
and other measurable and observable properties. In an 1892 critical review of
the history of aesthetics, Wilhelm Dilthey argued that “experimental aesthetics
is unable to explain how the work of art is more than a heap of impressions.”

Recent efforts to construct psychological theories of art and the aesthetic are in
danger of analogous reductionism, which can be put in Dilthey’s terms by saying
that they lack a hermeneutic dimension.

Dilthey argued that the experimentalists were unable to recognize holistic
properties of artworks, notably style, that they had a reductive view of thought
and content in art, and so necessarily produced an arid formalism as the ground
of their researches. Both experimental and rational approaches (which he iden-
tifies with a tradition including Descartes, Leibniz, and Baumgarten) omit the
activity of creativity and genius that gives each work “an inner delineation,”
or style: “Style exudes an energy which enhances the vitality of the viewer
and his feeling of life … the psyche, by its delight in the inner form of its own
activity, assumes a superiority over the crude satisfaction of impulses.”

To this “Kantian” pronouncement, Dilthey adds the “Hegelian” insistence that the
artist’s spirit is necessarily formed by the spirit of his age. Dilthey concludes with
programs for both the arts and aesthetics: aesthetics must be enriched by the
historical sense, which will involve attention to the circumstances of the present,
in which naturalism is pointing to real conditions of life; and art awaits “men
of genius” who will discover styles for the new age in which we are becoming
aware of “the relation of the worker to the machine and the farmer to his soil,
the bond of persons working together for a common end, genealogical lines of
descent and heredity, the confrontation of the sexes, the relation of passion to its
social and pathological basis and of the hero to masses of unnamed people who
make him possible.” Like so many programmatic statements, Dilthey’s betrays
its own limits when he declares that these are tasks for the unique depth of the
“Germanic character,” as distinct from the Latin, Nordic, or Slavic.

Dilthey’s own distinctive contribution was his Weltanschauungslehre, or
theory of worldviews, and after distinguishing the Greek and Roman, medieval,
renaissance, and early modern views, he suggests here some of the themes of the
emerging worldview of the “new age.” The disclosure of worldviews, and the way
in which great artists or “geniuses” dealt with these, was part of his project for
a renewed hermeneutics, which was provoked by his study of Schleiermacher.

Neville (trans.), in Dilthey, Poetry and Experience, Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi (eds)
*17. For a discussion of Dilthey’s approach to hermeneutics, see the essay by Eric Sean Nelson in
this volume.
19. Ibid., 221–2.
That project and his critical-philosophical essays on Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin and other poets (later collected in *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, 1906) had great importance for Martin Heidegger and his student Hans-Georg Gadamer, both of whom would criticize the very notion of aesthetics, replacing it with hermeneutics and ontology.

II. AESTHETICS AND REVOLUTION: MARX AND WAGNER

The 1840s were a time of political and social unrest, marked by revolutionary demands and activity aiming at greater democracy and asserting the rights of the working class. This ferment contributed to newly expanded conceptions of the universal aesthetic subject and to programs for new forms of art that could speak to the sense of future possibility aroused by radical social movements. The composer and theorist Richard Wagner absorbed his Left Hegelianism from Feuerbach;\(^\text{20}\) it chimed with the eclectic transmission of German idealism he received from miscellaneous sources, including Thomas Carlyle. Wagner greeted the revolutionary spirit by calling for a revolution in art. He followed the Hegelians in seeing the defining characteristic of Greek art as its public role in the *polis*. While this led to a scathing criticism of the compartmentalization of art and the aesthetic in bourgeois society, Wagner refused to accept the “death of art” entailed by this culture. He called for the new revolutionary art to draw its inspiration from the complexly organized industrial activities of the modern metropolis:

> Who, then, will be the artist of the future? The poet? The performer? The musician? The plastic artist? – Let us say it in one word: the folk [*das Volk*]. That very same folk to whom we owe the only genuine art-work, still living even in our modern memory, however much distorted by our restorations; to whom alone we owe all art itself.\(^\text{21}\)

Yet Wagner’s invocation of this apparently natural base of the people, echoing Feuerbach’s call for a *Philosophy of the Future* in its naturalism, concludes with a call for an ethico-aesthetic revolution under the symbolism of the divine that will join the universal humanity of Jesus with the beauty and strength of Apollo. This puzzling synthesis was left mysterious, although it may have played a role

\(^{20}\) Feuerbach and the Left Hegelians are discussed in the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*, as well as in the essay by William Clare Roberts in this volume.

Marx’s early philosophical writings disclose an analogous perspective. He saw modern industrial society as necessarily leading to the alienation of workers from their deepest human possibilities, notably involving free and spontaneous human activity and from the development of the senses. Marx’s analysis of alienated labor, in which humans make themselves other than they are, presupposes a conception of the human as an aesthetic subject, which, if it were in touch with its genuine nature, would be involved in creative and expressive work. Marx did not write a single systematic work in aesthetics, and this dimension of his thought was largely ignored until it proved to be a rich inspiration for later thinkers such as Georg Lukács, Walter Benjamin, Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and others. In the 1830s Marx aspired to be a poet and a drama critic; while he soon abandoned these ambitions for philosophy, his writings draw extensively on world literature (whose reality and concept he saw as a contribution of the bourgeoisie). Marx’s early aesthetic utopianism owes much to Schiller and Hegel. He suggests that the whole range of human sensibility is not fixed in our nature, but the product of an ongoing historical development, one in which the arts could play a role in expanding our possibilities of perception and creation: “Only through the objectively unfolded wealth of human nature is the wealth of the subjective human sensibility either cultivated or created – a musical ear, an eye for the beauty of form, in short senses capable of human satisfaction, confirming themselves as essential human capacities.”

The critique of post-Hegelian philosophies of subjectivity in *The German Ideology* (co-written with Friedrich Engels) rejects any valorization of a pure consciousness that would be independent of the lived, material, and social world of human beings. The early writings identify productive labor as the human essence, or “species-being,” and this activity is genuinely free only when free of physical need; in this respect Marx’s very model of nonalienated labor comes close to the Kantian notion of the aesthetic as independent of practical interest. If nonhuman animals are bound by the instincts of their species in their production (e.g. of nests and dwelling places), “the human knows how to produce according to the standards of any species and at all times knows how


*23. Essays treating all of these figures can be found in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*

*24. For a discussion of Schiller’s aesthetics, see the essay by Daniel Dahlstrom in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.*

to apply an intrinsic standard to the object. Thus humans create also according to the laws of beauty.”26 “The laws of beauty” are not further defined, and taken together with Marx’s later remarks on the eternal charm of Greek art, which he explains as the eternal attraction of the childhood of the species, this formulation betrays a taste solidly formed in the Kantian and Hegelian traditions.27 Yet Marx was not completely bound by the aesthetics of the beautiful. He made a close study of Vischer’s *Aesthetics* in 1857–58, and it seems that Vischer’s account of the sublime as intrinsically excessive, surpassing all limits, played a role in Marx’s later formulations (notably in *Capital*) of how capitalist production and social relations also embody the power of the negative, giving some theoretical grounds for the famous words of the *Communist Manifesto* that declare how in capitalism “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air ….”28

This analysis is at the root of later interrogations of the culture industry and the feverish transformation of aesthetic style in late capitalism by Benjamin and Adorno. The poetics and rhetoric of Marx’s epic, prophetic, and parodic texts (e.g. *Capital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, and *Herr Vogt*) reflect his Hegelian and post-Hegelian formation; they also show his limited adoption of an artistic, conceptual persona developed in fuller form by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

On one level, Marx’s conception of the aesthetic subject can be seen as his translation of German idealism into the history of the laboring social body. As such it stands under the sign of the beautiful, the fundamental category of Hegel’s aesthetics. Yet Marx, like the post-Hegelians, also accorded special significance to the sublime and the comic. In the opening pages of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, he implicitly criticizes the bourgeoisie’s displacement of the aesthetics of the beautiful into the political realm, remarking that:

> the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living … in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries, and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language.

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Through this merger of aesthetics and politics they find “the ideals and the art-forms, the self-deceptions that they needed in order to conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggles and to maintain their passion on the high plane of great historical tragedy.” The alternative is not the abandonment of the poetic for a narrowly practical and mundane realism, nor an acceptance of the capitalist divorce of work and things of the spirit, itself simply a hypertrophied development of the initial division of intellectual and manual labor. Marx’s concept of human activity involves an irreducibly aesthetic dimension. A new revolutionary aesthetic will free itself from the elegiac attachment to the past: “The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future …. [In earlier revolutions,] the words went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the words.” The aesthetic of the coming revolution, formulated here in traditional terms of form and content, is sublime rather than beautiful; it acknowledges the unanticipatable character of the future; rather than imagining itself in terms of a beautiful past, it accepts the absolute novelty of futurity that lies beyond all present limits.29

III. SCHOPENHAUER AND NIETZSCHE: FROM PURE CONTEMPLATION TO THE PHYSIOLOGY OF AESTHETICS

Following the failure of the revolutionary activity of 1848, the time was ripe for Arthur Schopenhauer’s aesthetics of pure contemplation, which offered a redeeming transcendence of the will, and so of all practical and political activity.30 If circumstances did not allow the development of the active aesthetic human, it still seemed possible to cultivate one’s own aesthetic sensibility. Schopenhauer radicalized the Kantian aesthetic subject, and his valorization of music (not poetry, as in systems of the arts like Hegel’s) as the art giving the deepest insight into our subjectivity, coincided with the ongoing modern formation of taste in which music effectively serves as the ultimate test in distinguishing elite from common taste.31 While his major work, The World as Will and Idea, was first published in 1818, it was the expanded edition of 1844 that marked the


30. For a detailed discussion of Schopenhauer, see the essay by Bart Vandenabeele in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.

31. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu: “Music represents the most radical and absolute form of the negation of the world, and especially the social world, which the bourgeois ethos tends to demand of
beginning of Schopenhauer’s influence.\textsuperscript{32} For Schopenhauer, aesthetic contemplation involves a complete suspension of the will; the latter is the obscure, dark side of the world and of human life, and as long as we are in its power we are tossed restlessly on the sea of desire, unable to be content for more than a moment with any of our satisfactions. Only pure religious resignation and philosophical contemplation offer any similar relief from the suffering that is necessarily bound up with the domination of the will that rules most lives most of the time. Like Kant, Schopenhauer distinguishes aesthetic subjectivity from cognition and desire, but raises the stakes by his claim that we are desperately in need of escape from representation and desire:

\begin{quote}
[when consciousness] considers things without interest, without [individual] subjectivity, purely objectively ….. Then all at once the peace, always sought but always escaping us on that first path of willing, comes to us of its own accord and all is well with us … that moment we are delivered from the miserable pressure of the will. We celebrate the Sabbath of the penal servitude of willing; the wheel of Ixion stands still. 
\end{quote}

(WWI 1: 196)

The artist, too, must have been in a “calm, tranquil, will-free frame of mind,” something that is evident in an art form such as Dutch still life and landscape painting, where it is necessary to focus an impartial attention on the most ordinary and humble objects (WWI 1: 197). Arts other than music allow the viewer or reader to see the will objectified in the world; an attentive aesthetic contemplation will reveal the various gradations of the will or its “adequate embodiments,” not as particulars but as Platonic Ideas. So Schopenhauer (like the Hegelians) constructs an extensive hierarchical system of the arts, leading from architecture, which embodies elemental resistance to the force of gravity, to tragedy, in which we observe the will in conflict with itself. Even animal painting and animal sculpture (or the aesthetic contemplation of actual animals) allows us to know the “restlessness and impetuosity of the depicted will, It is that willing, which also constitutes our own inner nature, that here appears before us in forms and figures.” All of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics, then, rests on this tension between the pure contemplative state and the seething, indeterminate will that we are. The simplest explanation of what we discover in the aesthetic state is to be found in the Hindu watchword “That art thou” (WWI 1: 219–20).

\begin{footnotes}
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Schopenhauer’s theory of art and the aesthetic is structured by this duality between a fully luminous consciousness and the obscure and aimless will at the heart of reality. At the point where our consciousness is clearest and least obstructed, we are confronted with the chaotic will that we really are. This ultimate dualism is the last word of Schopenhauer’s aesthetics; the aesthetic subject can never become a whole. The opposition finds its highest tension and deepest resolution in music, which is “by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself” (WWI 1: 257). Music is such a copy because it embodies the entire gamut of human feelings, not this or that particular “affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment or peace of mind,” but all of these emotions, or movements of the will as they are in themselves, independent, as is music, from any specific representation such as we find in plastic art or poetry (accordingly Schopenhauer dismisses program music as an inferior form [WWI 1: 261]).

In The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche offers an analysis of the aesthetic human (ästhetische Mensch), a concept he takes immediately from Schopenhauer and Wagner. Nietzsche had befriended the older Wagner, who by this time had adopted Schopenhauer’s thought (apparently confirming Nietzsche’s later judgment in On the Genealogy of Morality that artists are always the “valets” of religious or philosophical ideas). Nietzsche defines human art in terms of two natural art impulses, named theologically after Apollo and Dionysus. Yet these are natural forces, so the Apollonian can be considered initially as the dream-like and visionary dimension of life, and the Dionysian as its intoxicated, orgiastic, and ecstatic side. Nietzsche betrays a divergence from the early Wagner in replacing the latter’s projected alliance of Jesus and Apollo with the productive agon of the two Greek figures; so in describing Raphael’s Transfiguration in The Birth of Tragedy he refers to the painter’s Jesus only as the radiant Apollo (BT §4). This binary of aesthetic forces is analogous to Schopenhauer’s indeterminate, surging will and the principle of individuation. Nietzsche accepts Schopenhauer’s teaching that life is suffering (finding it already in archaic Greek poetry) but transvalues his idea of art: great art, like Greek tragedy, is one that affirms life in all its suffering, and involves a play between beautiful Apollonian phantasy (Schein) and Dionysian excess and undifferentiated multiplicity. Tragedy consists in staging various versions of the ritual in which there is a clash and creative agon between individual figures (heroes, actors) and the music and dance of the chorus. An artistic manifesto, as well as a rewriting of Schopenhauer (as the post-Hegelians rewrote Hegel), The Birth of Tragedy

expands Schopenhauer’s idea of music with Richard Wagner’s program of the Gesamtkunstwerk (the total work of art), and deploys it in a call for a renewed cultural nationalism that requires its own tragic myth, a myth that must be independent of morality in order to safeguard its place in the “purely aesthetic sphere” and which admits the ugly, the disharmonious, and the dissonant (BT §24).

In 1886, Nietzsche severely criticized this early statement for its Hegelian attempt to produce a grand aesthetic synthesis through opposed concepts, and its failure to find an appropriate voice for his thought, which was a confused medley of poetry and prose. He continued to affirm the necessity of a tragic worldview and The Birth of Tragedy’s general project of situating the question of science within that of art, and that of art within the question of life. Nietzsche’s later philosophy of art involves a scathingly direct attack on the Kantian–Schopenhauerian theory of disinterested contemplation (GM III: §6) and sketches a philosophy of life as the will to power. In this later perspective, the Greeks are no longer the privileged origin of art, but simply its finest practitioners as well as its finest enemies, as in Socrates’ replacing the multiplicity of perspectives staged by tragedy with the “one great Cyclops eye” of reason and science (BT §14). In another late work, Nietzsche says that what he learned from the Greeks was the eternal recurrence of life; so the questions of origin, teleology, and return that are basic to Hegelian aesthetics are folded into an antidualitical vitalism of difference.34 Art no longer has a privileged origin or goal, but in its sheer excess and affirmation it is now seen as the will to power articulating itself for itself. Nietzsche announced the project of a “physiological aesthetics.”35 Indications are that this was to be centered on the artist, and the receptive experience was to be understood as an analogous quickening of powers. The indispensable “physiological condition” of artistic creativity is Rausch (intoxication, frenzy, or excess); while Rausch had been specifically associated with the Dionysian in The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche says in Twilight of the Idols that the Apollonian too is a form of Rausch, being a frenzy of the eye. Music as we know it is “only the remnant of a much fuller world of expression of the aff ects, a mere residue of the Dionysian histrionicism.”36 While Nietzsche’s discussions of music and literature (to use the names of these reduced genres) are much more extensive than his writings on architecture, painting, and landscape design, he


was already concerned in *The Birth of Tragedy* with the diagram of forces that enables the perspectivism of the Greek theater, and in *Twilight of the Idols* he exempts architecture from the Apollonian–Dionysian duality, seeing it as an eloquence of power capable of “the grand style,” which is powerful enough to eschew being pleasing. There is then in Nietzsche the sketch of an aesthetics oriented as much to spatial construction as to musical composition. It is telling that when he cites Heraclitus to explain the Dionysian phenomenon, he chooses an unusual variant of one of his sayings, comparing the “world-forming power” to a primitive architectural activity, to “a playing child who sets down stones here, there, and the next place and who builds up piles of sand only to knock them down again” (BT §24).37

**IV. THE AESTHETIC HUMAN: NEW VERSIONS, ALTERNATIVES, AND QUESTIONS**

Alain Badiou takes Nietzsche to be the typical philosopher of the “age of the poets,” an era whose beginning and end can be designated by the names of Hölderlin and Heidegger.38 In this era philosophy not only takes the poem or artwork as its organon (a position already announced by Schelling) but sees philosophy itself as a form of poetry. Nietzsche confirms the designation when he says that the fundamental opposition is that between Plato and Homer (GM III: §25), or in writing what he took to be his most important work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as a poetic narrative that parodically plays with multiple genres. Nietzsche develops the idea that all language is poetic, as in the celebrated claim, in his unpublished essay “On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense,” that “truth is a mobile army of metaphors and metonymies” or figures of speech. On this view there is no absolutely literal level of language that can serve as contrast term to the poetic; the philosopher who is true to this insight will have to become something of a poet in order not to perpetuate the illusion of a purely cognitive language. Yet to the extent that it is language that speaks us (adopting a

37. Editors typically cite this as fragment 52 in the Diels-Kranz numbering; however, the phrase comes from Plutarch (“On the E at Delphi,” in *Moralia* V, 393F) and is not there specifically attributed to Heraclitus. In context, a speaker in Plutarch’s dialogue cites lines from Homer (*Iliad* 15.360–64) to demonstrate the folly of speaking of Apollo, who is absolutely one, as changing or entering into human affairs, after accusing Heraclitus of similar theological blasphemies. So Nietzsche has both transformed condemnation into praise and adapted a spatial and architectural metaphor to the description of music, ordinarily taken to be a temporal art.

Heideggerian locution that Nietzsche anticipates) we might speak of an age of poetry rather than poets, a gloss that accords with Nietzsche’s treatment of the “I” or ego as a misleading metaphysical interpretation of grammar and helps to explain his importance for poststructuralist thinkers such as Foucault and Derrida. By suggesting the primacy of language, Nietzsche points the way toward a nonhumanist aesthetics, one in which the primary concepts are rhetorical and textual, rather than psychological. Language or corresponding sets of conventions, styles, and diagrammatic procedures could be seen as replacing the individual creative genius; the reception of art was then described not as the quickening of the deep subject (Kant), the assumption of a purely contemplative consciousness (Schopenhauer), or the virtual model of the freely productive human (Marx), but in terms of activities such as reading and interpreting. At the same time that Nietzsche was opening up such possibilities with his philosophy of language, Charles Sanders Peirce was developing a general theory of signs (growing in part out of his own Hegelian and Schellingian criticisms of Cartesian intuitionism), which had analogous consequences in a variety of semiotic approaches to the arts in the next century.

Two important texts from around 1900, Benedetto Croce’s *Aesthetic* (1902) and Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1900), are marked by the contrast between the continuing quest to define the aesthetic human on the one hand, and the articulation of alternative, more linguistically oriented approaches to art and the aesthetic on the other. Croce’s full title explains that he considers aesthetics “as science of expression and general linguistics.” As expression, the artwork is to be seen as the unique completion of a process of intuition; it is an ideal fact, not to be confused with a physical artifact or text. In contrast to all attempts in the Aristotelian and rhetorical traditions to formulate the rules and principles by which artworks are formed, Croce argued for an absolute distinction between the expressive-intuitive work of art, whose result can never be anticipated, and the product of craft, which presupposes a prior intention.

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*40. For Peirce’s semiotics see *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–58), vol. II, paras 219–444; the editors thoughtfully entitle this selection “Speculative Grammar,” calling attention to Peirce’s medieval sources for thinking about language and categories; some of Heidegger’s early thinking on these topics emerges from his study of Duns Scotus, one of Peirce’s sources. [*] For a detailed discussion of Peirce, see Douglas Anderson’s essay in this volume.

*41. For a discussion of Croce’s place in Italian philosophy in the twentieth century, see the essay by Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.*

and rules of technique. The artist is not a maker but a creator; poësis excludes technē. Linguistics is to be freed from grammar because “language is perpetual creation.” The upshot is a valorization of what “new critics” in the anglophone world came to call “the poem itself,” a self-sufficient totality or organic unity in which form and content are ultimately indistinguishable, and these very categories may be abandoned because they are embedded in the inappropriate model of craft or technē.

If Croce reduces linguistics to poetics, Freud’s work points in a very different direction. The Interpretation of Dreams seems to echo Schopenhauer, portraying human life as dominated by unconscious desires (which are disclosed by artists, as in Sophocles’ and Shakespeare’s depiction of the Oedipus complex); it also agrees with Nietzsche in seeing the dream as a prototype of artistic production. Freud articulates a poetics for interpreting the dream that recalls the rhetorical tradition that Croce seeks to demolish. Looking at the dream on the analogy of a hieroglyphic text, Freud identifies elementary procedures of its composition: condensation, displacement, scenic representation, and secondary revision. This is, of course, an unconscious rhetoric, but one that can be reconstructed by the analyst in interpreting and decoding the dream. In Freud’s later essays on literature and the visual arts, these principles are put to critical work, while he nevertheless retains more traditional concepts, confessing that psychoanalysis still cannot unravel the secret of genius, which distinguishes great art from mundane production.

V. THE QUESTION OF THE CANON: NATURAL BEAUTY AND LANDSCAPE GARDENING

In What is Art? Leo Tolstoy offers a version of expressionist aesthetics, but one that dispenses with the concept of genius, or reassigns it to the collective spirit of the people. Authentic expression must be sincere and communal, the expression of religious feelings of a universal humanity, the expression of common feeling that is universally intelligible. While this leads to Tolstoy’s repudiation of all high art (including Shakespeare and his own famous novels), his celebration of folk art coincides in some respects with the programs of Wagner, early Nietzsche, and others who see art in terms of the need to recapture an authentic origin that has been obscured by what they see as modernity’s compartmentalization of aesthetics. Like Dilthey and Croce, Tolstoy supports this position with

43. Croce, Aesthetic, 150.
44. Freud’s work and its influence on subsequent philosophy are discussed in detail in the essay by Adrian Johnston in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
a critical history of aesthetics, which he sees as the rationalization of elite tastes that resolve themselves into markers of social distinction. Aesthetics turns out to be nothing but an ideological dodge for justifying class superiority. However crude Tolstoy’s judgments of high art and folk art may be, his manifesto highlights an otherwise unthought presupposition of the history of aesthetics from its mid-eighteenth-century beginnings to his own time, that is, the question of the canon. He argues that there is a circular and unexamined relationship between the art valued by cultured taste and the principles of aesthetics that aim to explain and justify the production and appreciation of such art:

[T]his science of aesthetics consists in first acknowledging a certain set of productions to be art (because they please us), and then framing such a theory of art that all those productions which please a certain circle of people should fit into it.45

… what is considered the definition of art is no definition at all but only a shuffle to justify existing art.46

Later writers such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu47 argue in similar fashion for a more explicitly social conception of taste and the artistic canon; Bourdieu in effect reformulates Tolstoy by declaring that “taste is an acquired disposition to ‘differentiate’ and ‘appreciate’ … It functions as a sort of social orientation, a ‘sense of one’s place.’”48

The nineteenth century was marked by a number of disputes about the canon. Wagner, at first an outrageous rebel, became a touchstone for poets as well as musicians. The impressionists and postimpressionists, initially excluded from the salons, overshadowed the academicians who had ridiculed them. Nevertheless, as Tolstoy would point out, such disagreements still took place within certain implicit boundaries and were resolved within relatively cohesive social groups (indeed, it was the Emperor Louis-Napoleon who sponsored the Salon des refusés that allowed Manet to exhibit his scandalous Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe in 1863 when it was refused by the official Salon). More telling is the way in which some forms of art disappear from the canon or reappear unexpectedly. For example, the eighteenth-century formation of modern aesthetics coincided with a taste that accorded a high place among the arts to landscape

45. Leo Tolstoy, What is Art?, Aylmer Maude (trans.) (Indianapolis, IN: Library of Liberal Arts, 1960), 44.
46. Ibid., 47.
47. For a discussion of Bourdieu, see the essay by Derek Robbins in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
design, but European taste after Hegel meant, as a recent historian of the art has noted, that “garden encyclopedias replaced treatises in aesthetics.”49 While Kant, following a number of British critics, sees landscape gardening as a major art (a form of painting), Hegel represents a drastic change in taste that was typical of the culture by 1830 when he dismisses parks and gardens as trivial accompaniments to architecture. The disappearance of gardens from the canon also coincided with a decided turn away from a concern with natural beauty (and its affines, the sublime and the picturesque). Ten years after writing his massive, systematic Aesthetics, Vischer issued a self-criticism in which he declared that his entire long treatment of natural beauty was a fundamental mistake, and that his “agreeable excursion through the domain of natural beauty” was fundamentally flawed because he had not begun by making the crucial point that beauty is a subjective production, a thesis that he came to only in the third moment of his original system.50 Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are striking exceptions to the general neglect or exclusion of both the aesthetics of nature and various forms of landscape and land art. Schopenhauer compares the poet to the hydraulic engineer who creates displays of water in fountains and cascades; both present Platonic Ideas by exploring the extremes and not just the ordinary conditions of what they depict (WWI 1: 152). Nietzsche’s philosophical-poetic Thus Spoke Zarathustra is, among other things, a landscape poem that follows its protagonist through complex geographical and climatic variations. When he wakes from confronting his most abysmal thought, Zarathustra’s animals tell him what he must believe as the teacher of eternal recurrence, but the only part he accepts of what they say is that “the world awaits you like a garden.” In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche devotes a chapter to “Peoples and Fatherlands,” which is in effect a geoaesthetics in which national cultures and their representative arts, specifically music, are situated with respect to human and natural geography; for example, Wagner’s music and Hegel’s philosophy are both said to be foggy and nebulous, echoing the German climate. North and south (and similar concepts) become aesthetic categories in this hint of a “physiological aesthetics” that could remind us of Marx’s concept of the earth as “the human’s inorganic body” and that looks forward to Heidegger’s investigations of place in Greek and German poetry and Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of music as a way of occupying space.51

VI. CONCLUSION: TENDENCIES AND DIRECTIONS

In the wake of Hegel’s monumental and systematic aesthetics, later philosophers and critics were left with the task of either revising his system within the framework he established or striking out along new paths. In a revisionary mode the primacy of beauty was challenged within the Hegelian school by new analyses of the sublime, the ironic, and the comic that were still indebted to the dialectical approach and the idea of history as a meaningful development of spirit. More radical departures took the form of reversing Hegel’s notion of the transformation of art into the science of art by exploiting the supposed irreducible and ironic discrepancy of the internal and the external (Kierkegaard), or rethinking art as the engine of a new cultural revolution (Wagner, Marx, the younger Nietzsche). These radicalized forms of aesthetics could be seen as the intensification of what Hegel called “moments” of the Absolute: irony and the unhappy consciousness in the case of Kierkegaard, or (impossible) reversions to an art-oriented society of the sort Hegel saw in ancient Greece, as with the cultural revolutionaries. Both tendencies continued to be effective in the twentieth century. The arts saw a variety of minimalist projects that seemed to question the fullness and harmony of the beautiful (e.g. the painters Malevich, Mondrian, and Reinhardt), while surrealism encouraged a transformation of daily life and, not coincidentally, frequently acknowledged its debt to Hegel (this tendency is represented in continental philosophy by Georges Bataille and Jacques Lacan, who linked the Freudian unconscious to the Hegelian dialectic\(^\text{52}\)).

While even Baumgarten had already spoken of semiotics as one of the main dimensions of aesthetics, it was left to the structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers of the twentieth century to work out the implications of aesthetics’s “linguistic turn.” Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Julia Kristeva were inspired by Nietzsche’s and Freud’s meditations on language as well as by Saussure’s. The contest between hermeneutics and semiotics tended to refashion the contrast between philosophies of the self-knowing aesthetic subject (as in Hegel) and notions of language as an autonomous system. The questions that thinkers such as Tolstoy had begun to raise about the social and economic presuppositions of the idealist aesthetics that dominated the nineteenth century were sharpened and intensified with different emphases by, for example, the social theorist Bourdieu and philosophers such as Derrida (e.g. (Amherst, NY: Humanity Press, 2000). For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s discussion of music as a form of territorialization, see “The Refrain,” in A Thousand Plateaus, Brian Massumi (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

\(^{52}\) For further discussion of Bataille and Lacan, see the essays by Peter Tracy Connor and Ed Pluth in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
in “Economimesis”). Such inquiries led to increased questioning of the canon of high or great art that thinkers as different as Hegel and Nietzsche had taken for granted, so that by the second half of the twentieth century writers such as Barthes, Umberto Eco, and Jean Baudrillard were deploying their analytic energies in explicating such putative artistic sites and genres as television wrestling and Disneyland rather than Sophoclean tragedy or Italian Renaissance painting.
### CHRONOLOGY

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<td>1641</td>
<td>Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em></td>
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<td><em>Logique du Port-Royal</em></td>
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<td>1665</td>
<td>Newton discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1675</td>
<td>Leibniz discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1677</td>
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<td>1687</td>
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<td><em>Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Two Treatises of Civil Government</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1694 Birth of Voltaire</td>
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<td>1695 Bayle, <em>Dictionnaire historique et critique</em>, vol. I</td>
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<td>1712 Birth of Jean-Jacques Rousseau</td>
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<td>1724 Birth of Immanuel Kant</td>
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<td>1727 Birth of Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot</td>
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<td>1739 Hume, <em>A Treatise of Human Nature</em></td>
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<td>1742 Handel, <em>Messiah</em></td>
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<td>1743 Birth of Nicholas de Condorcet</td>
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<td>1744 Birth of Johann Gottfried Herder</td>
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<td>1749 Birth of Pierre-Simon Laplace</td>
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<td>1750 Turgot, &quot;A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind&quot;</td>
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<td>1751 Diderot and D'Alembert, <em>Encyclopédie, vols 1 &amp; 2</em></td>
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<td>1755 Rousseau, <em>Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes</em></td>
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<td>1759 Birth of Friedrich Schiller</td>
<td>Voltaire, <em>Candide</em></td>
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<td>1760 Birth of Henri de Saint-Simon</td>
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<td>Birth of Bernard Bolzano</td>
<td>Death of Turgot</td>
<td>Joseph II initiates important reforms in Austria including elimination of serfdom and full civil rights for non-Catholics</td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</em></td>
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<td>Schiller, <em>Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen</em></td>
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<td>(–1797) Fichte, <em>Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre</em></td>
<td>Frederick William II of Prussia succeeded by Frederick William III, who introduces stricter censorship</td>
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| 1804 Birth of Ludwig Feuerbach  
Death of Kant | | Napoleon Bonaparte proclaims the First Empire  
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| 1805 Birth of Karl Rosenkranz  
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| 1806 Birth of John Stuart Mill and Max Stirner | Goethe, *Faust, Part One*  
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| 1807 Birth of Friedrich Theodor Vischer  
Hegel, *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* | | |
| 1808 Birth of David Friedrich Strauss | | |
| 1809 Birth of Bruno Bauer and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon | | Wilhelm von Humboldt becomes director of education in Prussia |
| 1811 Schleiermacher, *Dialektik* | Krupp opens his first steel factory in Essen | |
| 1812 (~1816) Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* | | |
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<td>Mary Shelley, <em>Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</em></td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Schleiermacher, <em>Hermeneutik</em> Schopenhauer, <em>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</em> Schopenhauer, <em>Über das Sehn und die Farben: Eine Abhandlung</em></td>
<td>Byron, <em>Don Juan</em></td>
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<td>1820</td>
<td>Birth of Friedrich Engels and Herbert Spencer</td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Hegel, <em>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</em> Schleiermacher, <em>Der christliche Glaube</em></td>
<td>Birth of Fyodor Dostoevsky</td>
<td>Death of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1823</td>
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<td>Beethoven's Ninth Symphony</td>
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<td>1824</td>
<td>Death of Maine de Biran</td>
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<td>1825</td>
<td>Death of Saint-Simon Saint-Simon, <em>Nouveau Christianisme</em></td>
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<td>1827</td>
<td>Death of Laplace</td>
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<td>1828</td>
<td>Birth of Nicolai Chernyshevsky</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>Herschel, <em>Preliminary Discourse on Natural Philosophy</em> (–1842) Comte, <em>Cours de philosophie positive</em> in six volumes</td>
<td>Stendhal, <em>The Red and the Black</em></td>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, <em>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</em></td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Birth of Jules Lachelier Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Death of Goethe Clausewitz, <em>Vom Kriege</em></td>
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<td>1834</td>
<td>Death of Schleiermacher</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>Strauss, <em>Das Leben Jesu</em></td>
<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<td>1836</td>
<td>Schopenhauer, <em>Über den Willen in der Natur</em></td>
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<td>1838</td>
<td>Bauer, <em>Kritische Darstellung der Religion des Alten Testaments</em>; Cournot, <em>Researches into the Mathematical Principles of Wealth</em>; Ravaisson, <em>De l’habitude</em></td>
<td>Charles Dickens, <em>Oliver Twist</em></td>
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<td>1839</td>
<td>Birth of Charles Sanders Peirce; Feuerbach, <em>Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie</em></td>
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<td>1840</td>
<td>Bauer, <em>Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes Proudhon, Qu’est ce que la propriété?</em>; Ravaisson, <em>Les Fragments philosophiques de Hamilton</em></td>
<td>Birth of Claude Monet; Death of Niccolò Paganini</td>
<td>King Frederick William IV takes the throne in Prussia</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Birth of William James</td>
<td>Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Stirner, <em>Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung; oder: Humanismus und Realismus und Kunst und Religion</em></td>
<td>Honoré de Balzac, Preface (Avant-propos) to <em>La Comédie humaine</em></td>
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<td>1845</td>
<td>Stirner, <em>Der Einzige und sein Eigentum</em></td>
<td>Alexander von Humboldt, <em>Kosmos, Volume One</em></td>
<td>Feargus O’Connor founds the National Land Company as the Chartist Cooperative Land Company</td>
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<td>1847</td>
<td>Boole, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
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<td>Factory Act (aka Ten Hours Act) in Great Britain</td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Birth of Gottlob Frege Death of Bolzano</td>
<td>Publication of the <em>Communist Manifesto</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the French Second Republic</td>
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<td>1849</td>
<td>Comte, “Positivist Calendar”</td>
<td>Death of Frédéric Chopin Robert Schumann completes the music for Byron’s <em>Manfred</em></td>
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<td>1850</td>
<td>Birth of Eduard Bernstein</td>
<td>Death of Balzac Nathaniel Hawthorne, <em>The Scarlet Letter</em></td>
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<td>1852</td>
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<td>Death of Louis Braille</td>
<td>Napoleon III declares the Second Empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>Rosenkranz, <em>Aesthetik des Hässlichen</em></td>
<td>Johannes Brahms meets Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf</td>
<td>(–1856) Crimean War</td>
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<td>1855</td>
<td>Chernyshevsky, <em>Aesthetic Relations to Art of Reality</em></td>
<td>Walt Whitman, <em>Leaves of Grass</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>Birth of Ferdinand de Saussure Death of Comte</td>
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<td>1858</td>
<td>Birth of Émile Durkheim and Georg Simmel</td>
<td>Expedition led by Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke reaches Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria in Central Africa</td>
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<td>1860</td>
<td>Death of Schopenhauer Dilthey, “Das hermeneutische System Schleiermachers in der Auseinandersetzung mit der älteren protestantischen Hermeneutik”</td>
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<td>1862</td>
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<td>Victor Hugo, <em>Les Misérables</em></td>
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<td>1863</td>
<td>Chernyshevsky, <em>What is to be Done?</em></td>
<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Notes from the Underground</em></td>
<td>Death of King Frederick VII of Denmark Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<td>1864</td>
<td>Birth of Max Weber</td>
<td>Charles Babbage, <em>Passages from the Life of a Philosopher</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Death of Proudhon</td>
<td>(–1869) Leo Tolstoy, <em>War and Peace</em> Premiere of Richard Wagner’s <em>Tristan und Isolde</em></td>
<td>Surrender of General Robert E. Lee signals conclusion of American Civil War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Birth of Benedetto Croce Death of Whewell</td>
<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Crime and Punishment</em></td>
<td>The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1867</td>
<td>Marx, <em>Das Kapital</em>, Vol. I</td>
<td>Birth of Maria Skłodowska (Marie Curie) in Warsaw</td>
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<td>1870</td>
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<td>Birth of Vladimir Lenin (–1871) Franco-Prussian War Establishment of the Third Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Nietzsche, <em>Die Geburt der Tragödie</em></td>
<td>(–1877) Tolstoy, <em>Anna Karenina</em></td>
<td>End of German Occupation following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Death of Mill Mill, <em>Autobiography</em></td>
<td>Première of <em>Danse Macabre</em>, by Camille Saint-Saëns First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Guillaume and Berthe Morisot)</td>
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<td>1875</td>
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<td>Première of Georges Bizet's <em>Carmen</em></td>
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<td>1876</td>
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<td>Death of George Sand (Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin) Première in Oslo of Ibsen's <em>Peer Gynt</em>, with incidental music composed by Edvard Grieg</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Death of Cournot (–1878) Peirce, “Illustrations in the Logic of Science”</td>
<td>Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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<td>1878</td>
<td>Engels, <em>Anti-Dühring</em></td>
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<td>Birth of Joseph Stalin</td>
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<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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| 1879  | Death of Rosenkranz Frege, *Begriffsschrift* | Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*  
Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*  
Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle  
Thomas Edison exhibits his incandescent light bulb | Germany and Austria-Hungary form the Dual Alliance |
| 1880  | Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* |                 |                 |
| 1881  | Death of Dostoevsky |                 | Assassination of Czar Alexander II |
| 1882  | Death of Bauer | Premiere of Wagner’s *Parsifal* in Bayreuth  
Robert Koch announces his discovery of the bacterium that causes tuberculosis | Formation of the Triple Alliance as Italy joins Germany and Austria-Hungary |
| 1883  | Birth of Karl Jaspers and José Ortega y Gasset  
Death of Marx  
Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften*  
(–1885) Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* | Death of Wagner  
| 1884  | Birth of Gaston Bachelard  
Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*  
Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* | Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* | (–1885) Berlin Conference (aka Africa or Congo Conference) |
| 1885  | Birth of Ernst Bloch and György Lukács  
Chernyshevsky, *The Nature of Human Knowledge* | Émile Zola, *Germinal* |                 |
| 1886  | Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* | Death of Franz Liszt |                 |
| 1887  | Death of Vischer  
Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* | Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with a Straw Hat*  
Foundation of the Pasteur Institute in Paris |                 |
<p>| 1888  | Birth of Jean Wahl | Johan August Strindberg, <em>Miss Julie</em> | William II becomes German emperor and king of Prussia |</p>
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<tr>
<td>1889 Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein&lt;br&gt;Death of Chernyshevsky&lt;br&gt;Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
<td>Paris World’s Fair, featuring the Eiffel Tower</td>
<td>William II dismisses Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and repeals the Anti-Socialist Law of 1878</td>
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<td>1890 William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
<td>Death of van Gogh</td>
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<td>1891 Birth of Antonio Gramsci</td>
<td>Monet, <em>Haystacks</em></td>
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<td>1893 Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>Birth of Mao Zedong</td>
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<td>1894</td>
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<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>1895 Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of projected motion pictures&lt;br&gt;Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1897 Birth of Georges Bataille&lt;br&gt;Durkheim, <em>Le Suicide</em>&lt;br&gt;James, <em>The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy</em>&lt;br&gt;Labriola, <em>Socialism and Philosophy</em></td>
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<td>1898 Birth of Herbert Marcuse&lt;br&gt;James, <em>Human Immortality</em></td>
<td>Zola, article “J’accuse” in defense of Dreyfus&lt;br&gt;Premiere of Giacomo Puccini’s <em>La Bohème</em></td>
<td>Start of the Second Boer War</td>
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<td>1899 Bernstein, <em>Evolutionary Socialism</em>&lt;br&gt;Dewey, <em>The School and Society</em></td>
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<td>1900 Birth of Hans-Georg Gadamer</td>
<td>Freud, <em>Interpretation of Dreams</em></td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Death of Nietzsche and Ravaission</td>
<td>Planck formulates quantum theory</td>
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<td>Dilthey, Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik</td>
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<td>(–1901) Husserl, Logische Untersuchungen</td>
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<td>Simmel, Philosophie des Geldes</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Croce, Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic</td>
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<td>James, The Varieties of Religious Experience</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavaillès</td>
<td>Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk</td>
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<td>Death of Renouvier and Spencer</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>Death of Labriola</td>
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<td>Spencer, Autobiography, or The Life and Letters</td>
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<td>(–1905) Weber, Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Birth of Jean-Paul Sartre and Raymond Aron</td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Séder Senghor</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Hyppolite Bergson, L’Evolution créatrice</td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes Les Demoiselles d’Avignon</td>
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<td>Dilthey, Das Wesen der Philosophie</td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. O. Quine</td>
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<td>Plekhanov, Fundamental Problems of Marxism</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>Birth of Isaiah Berlin</td>
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<td>Lenin, Materialism and Emperio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>Death of William James</td>
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<td>Dilthey, Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Death of Dilthey</td>
<td>Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article on Husserl: &quot;Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d’une Logique pure&quot; in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>Death of Peirce</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Death of Durkheim and Brentano</td>
<td>Publication of Saussure’s <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
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<td>1919</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Death of Max Weber</td>
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<td>Wittgenstein, <em>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</em></td>
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<td>Bataille begins his twenty-year career at the Bibliothèque Nationale</td>
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<td>Kahil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<td>1923 Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein</td>
<td>Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded</td>
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<td>1924 Birth of Jean-François Lyotard Lachelier, Du fondement de l’induction suivi de Psychologie et Métaphysique et de Notes sur le pari de Pascal</td>
<td>André Breton, Le Manifeste du surréalisme</td>
<td>Death of Vladimir Lenin</td>
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<td>Sartre, Raymond Aron, Georges Canguilhem, Daniel Lagache, and Paul Nizan enter the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain</td>
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<td>1925 Birth of Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze, and Frantz Fanon</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, The Trial</td>
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<td>Death of Frege</td>
<td>First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<td>1926 Birth of Michel Foucault</td>
<td>Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl’s phenomenology: Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</td>
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<td>Jean Hering</td>
<td>The film Metropolis by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin</td>
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<td>The Bauhaus School building, designed by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
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<td>1927 Heidegger, Sein und Zeit Marcel, Journal métaphysique</td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse</td>
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<td>1928 Birth of Noam Chomsky</td>
<td>The first work of German phenomenology appears in French translation: Scheler’s Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l’étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle</td>
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<td>The first work of German phenomenology appears in French translation: Scheler’s Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l’étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle</td>
<td>Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) writes The Threepenny Opera with composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950)</td>
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<td>The first television station begins broadcasting in Schenectady, New York</td>
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<td>1929 Birth of Jürgen Habermas</td>
<td>Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik and Was ist Metaphysik? Husserl, Formale und transcendente Logik and “Phenomenology” in Encyclopedia Britannica</td>
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<td>Wahl, Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms</td>
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<td>Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front</td>
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<td>Levinas, <em>La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Husserl’s <em>Ideas</em> is translated into English</td>
<td>Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s <em>Cartesian Meditations</em></td>
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<td>1932</td>
<td>Birth of Stuart Hall</td>
<td>Aldous Huxley, <em>Brave New World</em></td>
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<td>Death of Eduard Bernstein</td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion</em></td>
<td>BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>University in Exile is founded as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(-1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at École Pratique des Hautes Études</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>Penguin publishes its first paperback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sartre, “La Transcendance de l’égoc” in <em>Recherches philosophiques</em></td>
<td>First issue of <em>Life Magazine</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Picasso, <em>Guernica</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Death of Gramsci</td>
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<td>Berdiaiev, <em>The Origin of Russian Communism</em></td>
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<td>Zedong, <em>On Contradiction</em></td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>Death of Husserl</td>
<td>Sartre, <em>La Nausée</em></td>
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<td>Berlin, <em>Karl Marx: His Life and Environment</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1938 Stalin, <em>Dialectical and Historical Materialism</em></td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em></td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 Berdiaev, <em>Slavery and Freedom</em> (-1941) Hyp SOPHite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em></td>
<td>John Steinbeck, <em>The Grapes of Wrath</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium</td>
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<td>Founding of <em>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</em></td>
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<td>1940 Death of Benjamin Wright</td>
<td>Richard Wright, <em>Native Son</em></td>
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<td>1941 Death of Bergson</td>
<td>Arthur Koestler, <em>Darkness at Noon</em></td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and US enters the Second World War</td>
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<td><em>Marcuse, Reason and Revolution</em></td>
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<td>Germany invades the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>1942 Birth of Étienne Balibar Camus, <em>L’Étranger</em> and <em>Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l’absurde</em></td>
<td>Herman Hesse, <em>The Glass Bead Game</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>La Structure du comportement</em></td>
<td>Ayn Rand, <em>The Fountainhead</em></td>
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<td>Lévi-Strauss meets Roman Jakobson at the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York</td>
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<td>1943 Death of Simone Weil Farber, <em>The Foundation of Phenomenology</em></td>
<td>Jorge Luis Borges, <em>Ficciones</em></td>
<td>Bretton Woods Conference and establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sartre, <em>L’Être et le néant</em></td>
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<td>Paris is liberated by Allied forces (August 25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
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<td>1945 Merleau-Ponty, <em>Phénoménologie de la perception</em></td>
<td>George Orwell, <em>Animal Farm</em></td>
<td>End of the Second World War in Germany (May); Atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of War in Japan (September)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of <em>Les Temps modernes</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946 Hyppolite, <em>Genèse et structure de la “Phénoménologie de l’esprit” de Hegel</em></td>
<td>Bataille founds the journal <em>Critique</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the French Indochina War</td>
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<td>Establishment of the Fourth Republic</td>
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<td>PHILosophical EVENTS</td>
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<td>1946 Sartre, <em>L'Existentialisme est un humanisme</em></td>
<td>Camus, <em>The Plague</em></td>
<td>Creation of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (–1951) Marshall Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947 Adorno and Horkheimer, <em>Dialektik der Aufklärung</em> Beauvoir, <em>Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté</em> Heidegger, &quot;Brief über den Humanismus&quot;</td>
<td>Anne Frank, <em>The Diary of Anne Frank</em></td>
<td>The United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948 Death of Berdiaev Althusser appointed agrégé-répétiteur (&quot;caïman&quot;) at the École Normale Supérieure, a position he holds until 1980 (–1951) Gramsci, <em>Prison Notebooks</em></td>
<td>Debut of <em>The Ed Sullivan Show</em></td>
<td>Foundation of NATO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949 Beauvoir, <em>Le Deuxième sexe</em> Heidegger's <em>Existence and Being</em> is translated Lévi-Strauss, <em>Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté</em></td>
<td>Orwell, <em>1984</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the Korean War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl's <em>Ideas I</em></td>
<td>Marguerite Yourcenar, <em>Memoirs of Hadrian</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1951 Death of Alain and Wittgenstein Arendt, <em>The Origins of Totalitarianism</em> Quine, &quot;Two Dogmas of Empiricism&quot;</td>
<td>Samuel Beckett, <em>Waiting for Godot</em></td>
<td>Death of Joseph Stalin Ceasefire agreement (July 27) ends the Korean War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 Death of Croce, Dewey, and Santayana Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Ralph Ellison, <em>Invisible Man</em></td>
<td>Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20) Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954 Lyotard, <em>La Phénoménologie</em> Scheler, <em>The Nature of Sympathy</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955 Marcuse, <em>Eros and Civilization</em></td>
<td>Vladimir Nabokov, <em>Lolita</em></td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?: Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Sartre's <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em> Founding of Philosophy Today</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>On the Road</em> Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Günter Grass, <em>The Tin Drum</em> Gillo Pentecorvo, <em>The Battle of Algiers</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Death of Camus Gadamer, <em>Wahrheit und Methode</em> Sartre, <em>Critique de la raison dialectique</em> Spiegelberg, <em>The Phenomenological Movement</em></td>
<td>First issue of the journal <em>Tel Quel</em> is published The birth control pill is made available to married women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Death of Fanon and Merleau-Ponty Fanon, <em>Les Damnés de la terre</em>, with a preface by Sartre</td>
<td>Joseph Heller, <em>Catch 22</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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| 1961 | Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*  
Heidegger, *Nietzsche*  
Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* | France grants independence to Algeria  
Cuban Missile Crisis |
| 1962 | Death of Bachelard  
Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*  
Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*  
Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage*  
Heidegger, *Being and Time*  
appears in English translation  
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*  
appears in English translation  
First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois |  |  |
The first artificial heart is implanted | Assassination of John F. Kennedy  
Imprisonment of Nelson Mandela |
| 1964 | Barthes, *Eléments de sémiologie*  
Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*  
The Beatles appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show* | Gulf of Tonkin Incident  
US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin |
| 1965 | Death of Buber  
| 1966 | Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*  
Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme*  
Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*  
Lacan, *Écrits* | Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*  
Jacques-Alain Miller founds *Les Cahiers pour l’Analyse*  
*Star Trek* premieres on US television  
Johns Hopkins Symposium ”The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” introduces French theory to the American academic community | (~1976) Chinese Cultural Revolution  
Foundation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale |
<p>| 1967 | Derrida, <em>De la grammaïologie, La Voix et le phénomène, and L’Écriture et la différence</em> | Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em> |  |</p>
<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition</em> and <em>Spinoza et le problème de l'expression</em> Habermas, <em>Erkenntnis und Interesse</em></td>
<td>Beatles release the White Album</td>
<td>Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall, first African-American Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<td>1968</td>
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<td>Carlos Casteneda, <em>The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge</em></td>
<td>Events of May ‘68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike</td>
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<td>Stanley Kubrick, <em>2001: A Space Odyssey</em></td>
<td>Prague Spring</td>
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<td>Assassination of Martin Luther King</td>
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<td>Tet Offensive</td>
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<td>Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Death of Lukács and Marcuse Lyotard, <em>Discours, figure</em> Founding of <em>Research in Phenomenology</em></td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>End of the gold standard for US dollar</td>
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<td>President Richard Nixon visits China, beginning the normalization of relations between the US and PRC</td>
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<td>PHILosophical Events</td>
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<td>1973 Death of Horkheimer&lt;br&gt;Derrida, <em>Speech and Phenomena</em> appears in English translation&lt;br&gt;Lacan publishes the first volume of his <em>Séminaire</em></td>
<td>Founding of <em>Critical Inquiry</em>&lt;br&gt;Creation of the first doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Resignation of Nixon</td>
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<td>1974 Irigaray, <em>Speculum: De l’autre femme</em>&lt;br&gt;Kristeva, <em>La Révolution du langage poétique</em></td>
<td>Cixous and Clément, <em>La Jeune née</em>&lt;br&gt;Signs begins publication&lt;br&gt;The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales</td>
<td>Death of Francisco Franco&lt;br&gt;Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize&lt;br&gt;Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War&lt;br&gt;First US–USSR joint space mission</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975 Death of Arendt&lt;br&gt;Foucault, <em>Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison</em>&lt;br&gt;Irigaray, <em>Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un</em>&lt;br&gt;Derrida begins teaching in the English Department at Yale&lt;br&gt;Foucault begins teaching at UC-Berkeley&lt;br&gt;Foundation of GREPH, the Groupe de Recherches sur l’Enseignement Philosophique</td>
<td>Foundation of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature</td>
<td>Death of Mao Zedong&lt;br&gt;Uprising in Soweto</td>
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<td>1976 Death of Heidegger and Bultmann&lt;br&gt;Foucault, <em>Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La Volonté de savoir</em>&lt;br&gt;Derrida, <em>Of Grammatology</em> appears in English translation&lt;br&gt;Barthes is elected to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>The Centre Georges Pompidou, designed by architects Renzo Piano (1937– ) and Richard Rogers (1933– ), opens in Paris</td>
<td>Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel</td>
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<td>1977 Death of Ernst Bloch&lt;br&gt;Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Anti-Oedipus</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1977 Rodolphe</td>
<td>240 Czech intellectuals sign Charter 77</td>
<td>Camp David Accords</td>
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<td>Arendt, <em>Life of the Mind</em></td>
<td>Birmingham School: Centre for Contemporary Culture releases <em>Policing the Crisis</em></td>
<td>Margaret Thatcher becomes British Prime Minister (first woman to be a European head of state)</td>
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<td>Derrida, <em>La Vérité en peinture</em></td>
<td>Louise Brown becomes the first test-tube baby</td>
<td>Nicaraguan Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bourdieu, <em>La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement</em></td>
<td>Edgar Morin, <em>La Vie de La Vie</em></td>
<td>Election of Ronald Reagan</td>
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<td>Lyotard, <em>La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir</em></td>
<td>Jerry Falwell founds Moral Majority</td>
<td>Solidarity movement begins in Poland</td>
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<td>Prigogine and Stengers, <em>La Nouvelle alliance</em></td>
<td>The first cognitive sciences department is established at MIT</td>
<td>Death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito</td>
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<td>1980 Death of Sartre and Barthes</td>
<td>The first cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US</td>
<td>Release of American hostages in Iran</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 2. Mille plateaux</em></td>
<td>Lacan officially dissolves the <em>École Freudienne de Paris</em></td>
<td>François Mitterrand is elected as the first socialist president of France's Fifth Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Derrida, <em>La Carte postale</em></td>
<td>Cable News Network (CNN) becomes the first television station to provide twenty-four-hour news coverage</td>
<td>Confirmation of Sandra Day O'Connor, first woman Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>The History of Sexuality, Vol. One</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1981 Death of Lacan</td>
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<td>Habermas, <em>Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
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<td>1982 Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
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<td>Falklands War</td>
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<td>1983 Death of Aron</td>
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<td>Lyotard, <em>Le Différend</em></td>
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<td>Sloterdijk, <em>Kritik der zynischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1984 Death of Foucault</td>
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<td>Lloyd, <em>The Man of Reason</em></td>
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| 1985 | Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*  
First complete translation into French of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* | Don Delillo, *White Noise*  
Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* | Mikhail Gorbachev is named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
| 1986 | Death of Beauvoir  
Establishment of the Archives Husserl de Paris at the École Normale Supérieure | Toni Morrison, *Beloved*  
Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*  
Discovery of Paul de Man's wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America | Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR  
Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines |
| 1987 | Derrida begins his appointment as Visiting Professor of French and Comparative Literature at UC-Irvine | Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska  
Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web | In June Gorbachev inaugurates the perestroika (restructuring) that led to the end of the USSR  
The First Intifada begins in the Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| 1988 | Badiou, *L'Être et l'événement* | | Benazir Bhutto becomes the first woman to head an Islamic nation  
Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland |
| 1989 | Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*  
Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* | | Fall of the Berlin Wall  
Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing |
| 1990 | Death of Althusser  
Butler, *Gender Trouble* | The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases  
Beginning of the Human Genome Project, headed by James D. Watson | Nelson Mandela is released from prison  
Reunification of Germany  
Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars  
Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland |
| 1991 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* | Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*  
The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet | First Gulf War |
| 1992 | Death of Guattari  
Guattari, *Chaosmose* | | Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union |
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Dissolution of Czechoslovakia; Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic</td>
<td>Groz, <em>Volatile Bodies</em></td>
<td>The Channel Tunnel opens, connecting England and France</td>
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<td>Dits et écrits</td>
<td>End of apartheid in South Africa; Nelson Mandela is sworn in as president</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1992, goes into effect</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Antiglobalization forces disrupt the WTO meeting in Seattle</td>
<td>Balibar, <em>Nous, citoyens d'Europe? Les Frontières, l'État, le peuple</em></td>
<td>Terrorist attack destroys the World Trade Center</td>
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<td>The Second Intifada</td>
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THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

General Editor: Alan D. Schrift

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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition's complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and...
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy's subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s On Bentham and Coleridge (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Alan D. Schrift, General Editor

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Volume 3
“The twentieth century began by insisting on its secession from the past.” So writes Peter Conrad in his magisterial treatment of life and art in the twentieth century. Between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed an acceleration of time and the dispersal of places, revolutions in the arts and society set the agenda for the rest of the century. In philosophy, too, it is a period in which we witness the birth and development of new programs and new modes of inquiry, including the phenomenon of “Bergsonism,” the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the coming into maturity of sociology. As Michael Friedman and Thomas Ryckman note in their essay in this volume, all four of the major protagonists in both the analytic and continental traditions – Gottlob Frege and Rudolf Carnap, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger – saw themselves as making revolutionary breaks with the philosophy of the past through the invention of new types of philosophical tools (Bertrand Russell is another relevant figure). In the period 1890–1930 we witness a remarkable series of thinkers, many of whom are covered in this volume, who review, evaluate, and transform into new directions the mixed results of nineteenth-century thought, and include Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Heidegger, Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, Georg Simmel, Max Weber, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The results, according to one commentator, included wrestling with an ambivalent legacy, on the one hand, a dominant optimism based on the expansion of industrialization and democratisation, and on the other hand, a subordinate pessimism centered on the

corrosive effects of the rationalism that presided over the tremendous processes of social change: “the turn-of-the century generation puts the brakes on intellectual progressivism, but fought not to give up on life, though the myth of rationalism, in both its materialist and spiritualist forms, had been shattered.” In short, a generation of thinkers completed the disenchantment of the world and sought a new re-enchantment, so continuing in key respects the task Nietzsche, whose philosophical work had ceased in 1889 with his mental collapse, had set philosophy in the 1880s: “there are so many dawns that have not yet broken.”

The period that this volume covers can fairly be identified as the period that witnesses the second scientific revolution, with our own era, with the rise of electronics, digitalization, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, and so on, being the third. In this period, a number of important discoveries take place, including the X-ray, radioactivity, and the electron, and out of this experimental research emerge atomic physics, the laws of relativity, and quantum theory. Writing in the 1890s, the French poet and critic Paul Valéry described the period as one “completely formed by the sciences, in perpetual technological transformation, where nothing escapes the will to innovation.” In its initial phases it is a period of technological progress and even utopianism, with the emergence of the motor car, the extension of travel by trains, bicycles, and tramcars, with countries now linked up by an international mail system and new modes of communication such as the telephone, and, finally, the rise of cinematography and the presentation of moving images. Valéry wrote of the “dizzying transformations of modern life,” noting that the world had never before undergone such a rapid and profound transformation: “our ideas and our powers over matter, time, and space, conceived of and utilized completely differently than they were up to our time.” It has become impossible, he noted, to make a comparison between the way things were fifty years ago and how they are now in the time he is reflecting on. Values have been negated and ideas have been dissociated.

By the 1930s the tone of “energetic fascination” with which Valéry described the world has gone, being replaced by a mood of ambivalence and anxiety. Europe is undergoing a crisis both economically and intellectually. Between the 1890s and 1930s, several important political events have taken place and left an impact – the Dreyfus Affair in the mid-1890s, the Great War, and the rise of fascism among them – and the decade of the 1930s witnesses the coming into

5. Ibid., 115.
power of Hitler’s National Socialist Party. As Guerlac also notes, for the poet, the intellectual crisis centered on a crisis of the sciences with our idea of the universe decomposing, “losing all hope of a single image” and giving rise to a culture of disorder and chaos.

Valéry’s mood finds sustained philosophical expression in Husserl’s reflections on “the Crisis of the European Sciences” in the mid-1930s. For Husserl, the problem is centered on the positivistic concept of science that “decapitates philosophy.” He takes positivism to entail the reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science, giving rise to a crisis of science as the loss of its meaning for life: “Can we live in this world, where all historical occurrence is nothing but an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment?” In the midst of the unreason sweeping over Europe in the 1930s he sought – vainly, some would say – to restore belief in the ideal of a universal philosophy in which humanity radically renews itself through the new philosophy. He speaks of “the new man,” echoing Nietzsche’s exhortation that the Übermensch is to be the meaning of the future of the new earth that comes into being in the wake of the death of God. What guides this new human is the faith he has in securing a rational meaning for his individual and common existence; if this faith is being lost – which is Husserl’s chief concern in the book – then this will entail a loss of faith in man’s “own true being.” Husserl insists that this “true being” is not a possession the human has, like the self-evidence of the “I am,” but, and again echoing Nietzsche, a task: “True being is everywhere an ideal goal, a task of epistêmê or ‘reason.’” The task centers on the possibility of “universal knowledge.” For Husserl, the true struggles of the time are spiritual ones between philosophies (skeptical and vital ones) and between a humanity that has collapsed and one struggling to find new roots. Husserl’s perspective is Eurocentric – which is part of the reason why his analysis has been taken to task in our own time – in which it needs to be decided, he argues, whether or not European humanity bears within itself an absolute idea, as opposed to “being merely an empirical anthropological type like ‘China’ or ‘India,’” and, following from this, whether or not “the spectacle

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6. Ibid., 16.
7. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 7.
of the Europeanization of all other civilizations bears witness to the rule of an absolute meaning," that is, a meaning that is not simply historically arbitrary or contingent. In contrast to other sciences, such as psychology, what is at stake for philosophy, Husserl insists, are the ideas and ideals of "mankind," "humanity," and the future of our faith in the human as the being in search of truth and rational modes of being.

Historians in the early decades of the twentieth century were writing snapshots of philosophy as it was unfolding and what they privilege and focus attention on is quite different from how the history of this period is now conceived. Bergsonian thought was typically taken to be central to the era, but it is only in recent years, in our own time in fact, that Bergson's thought is being taken seriously once again. Until very recently Bergson has enjoyed a minimal presence in the rise and spread of academically practiced continental philosophy. Taking stock of the situation in philosophy at the beginning of the century, the Danish historian of philosophy Harald Höffding divided modern philosophers into three groupings corresponding to what he identified as three dominant tendencies: the "objective-systematic tendency" represented by the likes of Wilhelm Wundt in Germany, F. H. Bradley in the UK, and Alfred Fouillée in France; the "epistemological biological tendency" represented by various philosopher-scientists such as James Clerk Maxwell and Ernst Mach, and, finally, the "philosophy of value" represented by Nietzsche, Rudolf Eucken, and William James. For the 1913 edition, translated into English in 1915, Bergson was given a separate section on his own based on a series of lectures given by the author. Of course, this is one particular if revealing perspective on the changing philosophical scene. If one looks at Isaac Benrubi's *Contemporary Thought of France*, one finds a much wider range of authors and developments covered, but yet again prominence is given to Bergson with sections not only on him but also on "Bergsonians" (Edouard Le Roy, Georges Sorel) and "anti-Bergsonians" (Julien Benda, Jacques Maritain). Observing a great variety of currents and tendencies in the philosophical activity of his day, Benrubi identified three main tendencies of modern thought: empiric positivism, critico-epistemological idealism, and metaphysico-spiritual positivism. He also notes the closely interwoven character of contemporary French and German thought. We can also note certain developments in science that have an enormous impact on the philosophy being done in this period. Bergson, for example, was inspired by electromagnetism in his *Matter and Memory* of 1896, and he cites the likes of Michael Faraday and Maxwell in the text. For Bergson, it is the new science that is showing that "modifications, perturbations, changes of tension or of energy and nothing else”

pervade extensity. As one commentator has noted, electromagnetic physics confirms the intuition that a material point is a simple view of the mind by showing that solid bodies are not primary because “matter is first waves and light, indivisible energy and continuous flow.”

In the 1920s, a serious waning of Bergson’s influence on the philosophical scene was in evidence and various reasons have been offered to account for this: he did not create a school, after the end of the Second World War no Bergson archive was established, and the philosophy of life was eclipsed by existentialism and phenomenology. But a dissident philosophical voice was evolving in the 1950s in the work of Gilles Deleuze and in which Bergson’s texts and ideas play a vitally important role in the articulation of an innovative philosophy of difference.

The different trajectories and schools of thought that characterize this period are closely allied in that they offer a rich set of responses to a mid-nineteenth-century inheritance of positivism and scientism that sought to challenge and overturn philosophy’s independence. Some, such as Bergson, sought liberation from a mechanistic paradigm represented by, but not restricted to, the work of Herbert Spencer, who was a major player on the world stage of philosophy in the second half of the nineteenth century. According to one commentator, “A whole generation had grown up under the Spencerian dispensation but had been made restive by a liberal and scientific progressive faith that had gone sour.” At the turn of the century, however, the world changed and the sense of a new consciousness and new reality was in the air. The feeling was that reality was permanently new, forever making itself afresh: “The new reality meant that reality was by its very nature continually new, that one now lived in a world of immanence, a world of incessant and unforeseeable change and possibility, a world always about to be.”

William James, for example, was convinced that a kind of new dawn was breaking in philosophy in the early years of the new century. Reflecting on “The Present Dilemma in Philosophy” (1907), James describes philosophy as at once the most sublime and the most trivial of pursuits: “It works in the minutest crannies and it opens out the widest vistas.” Although it “bakes no bread,” it

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17. Ibid.
emits “far-flashing beams of light … over the world’s perspectives.” Bergsonism enjoyed an intellectual and social significance in what has been called the “Progressive Era.” As Tom Quirk notes, “the Bergsonian universe is a universe of immanence, not transcendence.” At the Fourth International Congress in Philosophy held in Bologna in April 1911, Bergson gave one of the key lectures along with Hans Driesch, Paul Langevin, and Henri Poincaré. By the time of the Congress he had become the most celebrated thinker of the day and in his lecture he seeks to identify how philosophy relates to both science and art, something that also preoccupied the likes of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, and that has been made central in our own time in Deleuze’s consideration of the question “What is philosophy?” For Bergson the future of philosophy resides in it finding its own sources of knowledge, not merely imitating developments in the method of science, and in this respect the activity of the philosopher is akin to that of the artist.

Bergson is also keen on occasion to tackle science head on in its claim to deal with facts and gain its superiority from this attachment to them. He pursues what we can call a “superior” positivism by conceiving metaphysics – the field of informed vision and speculation – as a mode of knowledge that can advance by the gradual accumulation of obtained results. In other words, metaphysics does not have to be “a take-it-or-leave-it system” that is forever in dispute and doomed to start afresh, thinking abstractly and vainly without the support of empirical science. Not only is it the case for Bergson that metaphysics can be a true empiricism, but it can also work with science in an intellectual effort to advance our knowledge of the various sources, tendencies, and directions of life. Bergson outlines his “superior positivism” in his Huxley lecture of 1911 on “Life and Consciousness”: “it seems to me that in different regions of experience there are different groups of facts … we possess now a certain number of lines of facts, which do not go as far as we want, but which we can prolong hypothetically.” This is taken up again in the Two Sources of Morality and Religion of 1932, where he states that the different lines of fact indicate for us the direction of truth but none go far enough; the attainment of truth can take place only when the lines are prolonged to the point where they intersect.

19. Ibid.
20. Quirk, Bergson and American Culture, 11.
21. Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?
However, it is misleading, as is now customary, to simply label Bergson’s project as standing for the renewal of spiritualism. This only reinstates the antinomies of modern thought, notably freedom and determinism, he was so keen to reconfigure and in a way that would significantly alter our appreciation of the problem. As one commentator has noted, his work reflects a life-long interest in both the physical and mental realms and he was not an enemy of the inquiries of rational, physical science. Moreover, like most intellectuals in the post-Darwinian era he felt compelled to confront the radical discoveries of natural science. In *Creative Evolution*, he holds that “transformism,” as he calls the new science, “forces itself now upon all philosophy, as the dogmatic affirmation of transformism forces itself upon science.” Thus, to suggest that Bergson is the successor to French spiritualism who framed spiritualist ideas in terms that were appealing to a twentieth-century audience disillusioned with the rationalist and determinist society of the Third Republic is to present an oversimplified and distorting account of his work (it also ignores the fact that his academic training was in mathematics and physics; the same is also true of the founding figures of the analytic and continental traditions, Frege and Husserl). In insisting on a difference between the positive sciences and philosophy, Bergson is concerned with the purification of science from scientism, that is, a metaphysics that masquerades as positive scientific knowledge. Bergson’s stance is one, of course, that would be met with widespread favor among philosophers of different persuasions today.

The reputation Bergson enjoyed at the time of the Fourth International Congress, and more generally in the intellectual life of the time, derived from him being able to offer fresh solutions to philosophical problems that were perceived at the time to resonate with social and global changes. In essence, he offered a philosophy of life to replace the philosophy of the closed system and predictable certainty, and the phenomenon of Bergsonism served as the main catalyst for the transformation of sensibility and appropriation of the new reality. However, it was not alone in providing new methods and concepts to alter our understanding of, and participation in, the world.

Although today neo-Kantianism is unduly neglected, in this period it was one of the major philosophical forces in both France and Germany. As one commentator has noted, the view that it had reduced philosophy to the theory of

knowledge is unfair and was rejected by a number of neo-Kantians themselves.27 Their achievements included: developing philological research that helped establish Kant’s monumental role in the history of modern European philosophy, a role taken as a matter of course today; establishing important trajectories in epistemology and the philosophy of science; and developing Kantian thought in diverse areas such as the theory of value, ethics, and social and political philosophy. Taken together, these developments represent an attempt to restore the integrity of Kant’s transcendental project against the nineteenth-century reduction of philosophy to a handmaiden of science as a result of the immature claims of positivism and scientism.

As Suzanne Guerlac notes, in the mid-nineteenth-century context, positivism was a progressive force that held out the promise of a radical secularization of knowledge, countering the fog of metaphysical dogmatism on the one hand and religion on the other.28 The term “positivism” was first used by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) to denote a philosophy based on the positive facts of experience and that avoided metaphysical hypotheses. As Gary Gutting notes, it was applied to any view that privileged the empirical sciences over metaphysical thought.29 In its classical expression in the work of Comte, positivism seemed to offer a grand narrative of human development from a theological phase (the age of gods or of God) through a metaphysical phase (the age of metaphysical abstractions) to that of positive scientific knowledge in which human maturity is reached with the abandonment of ultimate explanatory causes. With the arrival of positivism, the human mind contents itself with focusing on observed facts that it subsumes under general descriptive laws such as the law of gravitation. Our knowledge is relative, not absolute, and we relinquish the concern with ultimate causes insofar as we do not know the whole universe but only the universe as it appears to us. Recent studies have encouraged us to appreciate Comte as a much more subtle and delicate – even “continental” – thinker than is widely supposed. In his Comte after Positivism, for example, Robert Scharff seeks to show that Comte, while holding scientific philosophy to be the final stage of intellectual development, did not simply reject theology and metaphysics; rather, he has a historico-critical appreciation of the situation in which philosophy’s past is relevant to its future practice, and this involves a critical appropriation of the theologico-metaphysical legacy.30 Comte emerges, then, as a historically minded reflective thinker about

scientific practice in which “positive philosophy” is to be practiced not in a “post-”metaphysical world but under transitional circumstances.

In the period this volume covers, one important development in French philosophy advances in the direction of what has been called a “spiritual positivism,” notably in the work of Bergson’s immediate precursor, Émile Boutroux (1845–1921), who exerted a major influence as a teacher of the history of philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure and at the Sorbonne. Indeed, Boutroux dominated the academic philosophy of the Third Republic through the First World War. Like other neo-Kantian philosophers of the period, Boutroux is wrestling with Kantian problems, especially freedom and determinism, and is dissatisfied with the Kantian solution, which places freedom and hence ethics in a sphere that is inaccessible to human consciousness. If we are to justify the claim that we are free, then it is necessary to establish that the phenomenal world as described by science is indeterministic. In two of his most important books, his 1874 doctoral dissertation, *De la contingence des lois de la nature* (*The Contingency of the Laws of Nature*), and *Idée de loi naturelle dans la science et la philosophie contemporaines* (*Natural Law in Science and Philosophy*; 1895), Boutroux seeks to show that freedom is the fundamental element of reality and that science does not necessitate rigid determinism. Whatever happens, according to Boutroux, does so neither necessarily nor accidentally but contingently, and is the expression of a world consciousness conceived as an eternally creative activity. For science the law of causation is a practical principle; it is unable to explain the general interaction and interpenetration of things. Thus, in respect to quality, cause and effect are disproportionate to one another: the effect is different in nature from the cause and if nothing new were contained in the effect, then cause and effect would not vary from each other. This means for Boutroux that the laws of nature have no absolute existence and iron necessity but are to be regarded as the artificial picture of a model that is essentially a living and moving reality.

Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944) was the leading figure in the development of French idealism in this period who, as a professor at the Sorbonne from 1900 to 1939, exercised a tremendous influence, with all aspiring French philosophers of the time, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, having to come to terms with his thought. He was the author of important studies of

31. For Scharff’s deft handling of Comte’s “three-stage law” – theology, metaphysics, science – see *ibid.*, 73–91.
Pascal and Spinoza, and one of his major texts was on the modality of judgment. He formulates a critical idealism in the spirit of Kant as an alternative to positivism on the one hand and Hegelian rationalism on the other. Genuine knowledge consists for Brunschvicg not in the judgment of crude experience but in an independent interpretation by the mind of the data provided by observation and through the means of the analytical and synthetical forms of knowledge that are peculiar to it: reality is part of the mind's own development and self-realization. This is a view he called “mathematical intellectualism.” He rejects completely Kant’s notion of the thing-in-itself since we can have no knowledge of something that exists independently of a relation to knowledge: a thing outside of knowledge would be equivalent to nothing. However, this does not lead him, qua his idealism, to reject external, material reality in favor of an inner spiritual reality since this would be to replace one thing-in-itself with another: “A consistent idealism must see all beings as the objects of a thought that is itself a function or act of thinking, not an independently existing thing.” The difference between science and philosophy is that whereas the former is concerned with objects of thought, the latter is concerned with thought itself in which thinking is identical with judging. As in the case of Boutroux, there is not an outright rejection of positivism. His project has been interpreted as a union of positivism and idealism: we know the truth through the experience of the historical progress of science and this history is the record of the mind's constitution of ever more successful frameworks for our interpretation of experience. Like Boutroux he accords privilege to freedom and creativity over determinism and inertia: “consciousness is the creator of moral values, as it is of scientific values and of aesthetic values.” Speaking like Nietzsche, who appeals to philosophical legislators, and echoing Bergson in the Two Sources of Morality and Religion, Brunschvicg champions those heroes of spiritual life who “cast ahead of themselves lines of intelligence and truth” that are destined to create a new universe.

Key figures in the history of sociology, such as Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, sought to assess the legacy of positivism (Comte and Émile Littré) and neo-Kantianism in France by reconfiguring the relation between philosophy and the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology. Both preferred to be called rationalists rather than positivists. In political theory, they rejected Comte’s “positive polity” and Marxian communism, as well as the political forms of the Third Republic. Against these developments, they sought to outline a theory of socialism in which political liberty and individualism could flourish.

37. Gutting, French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, 40.
38. Ibid., 43.
39. Ibid., 47.
40. Ibid.
Their position was generally consistent with the development in the Third Republic of the laic state, the basis of which they argued would be civic secular ritual, institutional reforms underpinned by a new kind of moral and social scientific education. Their work influenced the theory of symbolic exchange developed by Georges Bataille and Jean Baudrillard, as well as the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Mention should be made here of Mauss’s “Essay on the Gift,” which revolutionized the field of ethnology and, together with the aforementioned figures, has exerted a powerful influence on the reflections of Jacques Derrida on the economy of time and giving. Mauss’s text is not about religion but about economics and politics: “the theory of the gift is a theory of human solidarity.”

Before the First World War, the open enemy of French political philosophy was Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism and liberalism, which was typically subjected to three criticisms: (i) that it was based on an impoverished concept of the person construed as an independent atom instead of a social being implicated in communities of exchange; (ii) that it neglected how social relations change with changes in the mode of production; (iii) that its concept of liberty was a negative one in which little role was given to the ethical importance of political participation. In the conclusion to his essay, Mauss stresses two aspects of his analysis: first, that the kind of analysis into gift exchange he has embarked on, in which the gift is conceived as a public drama, can lead to a “science of customs” in which the facts studied and observed are held to be “total social facts” involving the totality of society and its institutions, and, second, that it leads to a set of “moral conclusions” or, as he says, to adopt an old world “civility” or “civics.” What is at stake in such a sociological inquiry is ultimately reflection on the nature and ends of “common life,” “the conscious direction of which is the supreme art, Politics, in the Socratic sense of the word.”

In Germany, neo-Kantianism developed out of an academic context but also, as Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères point out in their essay in this volume, out of sociopolitical discourses that responded to industrialization and the workers’ question. The other relevant background, of course, as in France, is the progress of the natural sciences in an era of positivism. Hermann Cohen, one of the leading neo-Kantian figures in Germany, who promoted an ethical socialism, was dismissive of the rise of “Nietzschean” philosophy, seeing it as a withdrawal from scientific and scholastic rigor since it promoted a form of


cultural emancipation that could not be reconciled with the discipline of philosophy.\textsuperscript{44} This did not stop, however, more intellectually independent figures, on the margins of academic philosophy and the neo-Kantian movement, from attempting a synthesis of Kant and Nietzsche, with the work of Simmel being the best-known example. It is usual to focus on two main schools of German neo-Kantianism: the southwest school based in the universities of Heidelberg and Freiburg, which includes figures such as Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, and the Marburg School located further north at the university there, which includes leading academic figures such as Cohen and Paul Natorp. At the risk of overgeneralization, it can be said that the southwest school tended to focus on questions of culture and value, with members of the Marburg School focusing more on issues of logic and epistemology.\textsuperscript{45} Associated with the work of the southwest school, centered around its journal \textit{Logos}, were major intellectual figures such as Weber, Simmel, and, interestingly, Husserl. What united the schools, in spite of their differences and quarrels, was their subscription to the battle cry of “Back to Kant” which came from Otto Liebmann’s \textit{Kant und die Epigonen} of 1865. This involved determining what Kant actually taught and said, or Kant philology. Cohen produced commentaries on each of Kant’s three Critiques, while the edition of the Royal Prussian Academy, begun in 1900 under the general editorship of Wilhelm Dilthey, aimed to provide scholars with a definitive edition of Kant’s writings. On the other hand, it also involved setting out what Kant should have said. While aiming to adhere to the spirit and letter of Kant’s writings, “the neo-Kantians wished to return to Kant in order to use his principles and methodologies to answer both old and new philosophical problems.”\textsuperscript{46} A key concern and development was to extend the Kantian appreciation of what constituted universal and necessary knowledge. For Kant, such knowledge is exemplified by mathematics and the natural sciences; for the neo-Kantians, this could be extended to new sciences of man such as sociology and history. In refining and developing Kant in this way, Windelband argued that the aim was, in fact, to understand Kant by going beyond him.

In contrast to the case of Bergson, the legacies of Frege and Husserl were quite different, being both immediate and long-lasting. Frege, who taught mathematics at Jena University for the whole of his philosophical career, and who is today held to be, in the words of Michael Friedman and Thomas Ryckman, the “patriarch” of the analytic tradition, establishes modern mathematical logic

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}, 30.
as both a technical subject and a foundational subject for philosophy. Frege took stock of the developments that had taken place in mathematics since Kant, including the construction of non-Euclidean geometries by figures such as János Bolyai and Bernhard Riemann, and advances made by analysis and algebra in axiomatization. Under the influence of Rudolf Hermann Lotze, also read by Husserl, he arrived at the view that the propositions of arithmetic could not be synthetic a priori judgments but were instead analytic ones whose demonstration required no recourse to intuition. To show this, Frege aimed to free arithmetic from the bonds that tied it to natural languages and the way to do this was axiomatically, employing a system of conventional signs, namely, logic. In his now famous article of 1892 entitled “Sense and Reference,” Frege also formulated distinctions that were to prove invaluable not only for logical analysis but for linguistic analysis as well.

Husserl, the “patriarch” of the continental tradition, establishes the new method of transcendental phenomenology and seeks to constitute philosophy on new grounds as a rigorous “scientific” discipline. Although he did not invent the word “phenomenology” and was by no means the first to use it, the work he did under this title proved so influential that as a school of twentieth-century European philosophy, “phenomenology” became synonymous with his pioneering project. Husserl is one of the key philosophical figures of this period and his work undergoes a remarkable development, from Philosophy of Arithmetic of 1889 to The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology of the mid-1930s. Against the imperial claims of a science that degenerates into scientism, Husserl is keen to show the necessity and validity of the human agent and person who belongs to a thematic world of intentional life. “Subjects cannot be dissolved into nature,” Husserl maintains, “for in that case what gives nature its sense would be missing.” On the basis of this kind of claim, he seeks to show the necessity of moving from the “naturalistic attitude” to the “personalistic world,” in which the researcher exists in a “surrounding world” of sense-bestowal. The other important aspect of Husserl’s project of phenomenology is its attack, which it shares with the work of Frege, on the psychologism that reigned in philosophy from the middle of the nineteenth century until well into the twentieth century. This is the view that the structure and principles of logic are derived from the organization of the human psyche. There is a variant to this, which is the claim that psychology is the basis of the human

48. Ibid.
sciences including philosophy, a version of which Nietzsche promotes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and is a feature of the work of Wundt, Dilthey, and Simmel. The attempt to defeat psychologism and its influence, along with other philosophical reductions such as biologism, is what unites the work of Husserl, Scheler, and Heidegger. In short, phenomenology is an attempt to rehabilitate philosophy as a science with a special domain: as a rigorous science (*strenge Wissenschaft*), the attempt is made to describe phenomena as they are given and, through the famous *epochē*, refrain from “assumptions and affirmations of existence with regard to what it investigates in introspection … in this way, a vast field of enquiry, belonging only to ‘phenomenological research,’ is to be opened up.”

The phenomenological circles that flourished in the early part of the twentieth century – in Munich, Göttingen, Freiburg, and Vienna – served to extend the inquiries of phenomenology into the realms of aesthetics (Roman Ingarden), ethics (Max Scheler), social and political thought (Alfred Schutz and José Ortega y Gasset), and pushed it beyond its potentially narrow theoretical and geographical provincialism. The work of Scheler provides a good example of this. He was one of Husserl’s most important associates but, in contrast to Husserl, his focus was not on founding a new scientific philosophy but rather on what he perceived to be the moral crisis of his time, “in which the values of a calculating and egotistic bourgeois capitalism replaced those of Christianity.” He set himself the task of reconstructing Christian ethics after Nietzsche’s polemical attack on morality and showing that it was not the ethics of *resentiment* Nietzsche claimed. To this end, he employed the resources of phenomenology, publishing in 1913 a phenomenological study of sympathy (and love and hate) and a work on ethics in which he sought to counter the tendency in philosophy of producing a formal ethics.

Heidegger published his epoch-making text *Being and Time* in 1927 and today it stands as perhaps the single most influential work of twentieth-century European philosophy, seeking to show why time is the phenomenon that can unlock the question of the meaning of being. As Herbert Schnädelbach astutely observes, it is a work that brings together a number of discussions that were at the time scattered and endeavors to resolve them all at once by posing the question at a more radical level. This consists in offering a fundamental ontological theory of “understanding,” showing that the phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutics in the original sense of the word, referring to the “business of exposition.” Heidegger’s contention is that this hermeneutics is the elaboration

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of the conditions of the possibility of all ontological inquiry in which Dasein enjoys ontological priority over all beings: “Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, starting from the hermeneutics of Dasein, which, as an analytic of existence, has secured the end of the guiding thread of all philosophical questioning at the point from which it originates and to which it returns.”

In effect, this means that “understanding” belongs to the fundamental structure of the human being (Dasein) and is a problem in the theory of science only at a secondary level. Heidegger insists that Dasein is a Being that cannot be understood as like all other beings since it is distinguished by the fact that in its very Being that Being is an issue for it: “Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.” In this definition, Heidegger has carried out a major transformation of Husserl’s project: while agreeing with Husserl that ontology is possible only as phenomenology, he uses phenomenology as a methodological concept and no longer as a definition of a field of objects. As Heidegger says, the word “phenomenology” primarily informs us about “the ‘how’ with which what is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled.” Phenomenology has become the science of the Being of beings, that is, of the manner in which things show themselves. Dasein is not to be approached in an objectivist fashion but as a special kind of “subject” of knowledge: it is distinguished by its “existential” mode of being and conditions of existence, and of course the claim that the essence of Dasein lies in its existence is what gives rise to existentialism, even though Heidegger was keen to disassociate his own position from it in his well-known Letter on Humanism.

On the one hand, this development in European thought of a philosophy of existence with Heidegger and Jaspers represents another attack on positivism and scientism; on the other hand, it also supersedes the philosophy of life in an equally deeper and more radicalized manner. It did this by seeking an integration in the concept of “existence” of the antithesis of life and understanding, or the irrational and rationality, especially in the work of Jaspers. Like Heidegger, Jaspers proposes that we need to think about the question of Being in a radically new way by asking what it means for us in our temporal existence. Truth for the human being under temporal conditions is a matter of historicity and active realization, being a matter of responsiveness to challenges and limit situations that confront us with the radical confines of our temporal existence. On

55. Ibid., 32.
56. Schnädelbach, Philosophy in Germany 1831–1933, 206.
57. Heidegger, Being and Time, 59.
the one hand, Jaspers follows life philosophies, such as we find in Dilthey, in holding that the cognitivist concept of the subject is seriously deficient and that it is through existential lived experience – and not simply through discursive understanding or science – that truth discloses itself to us. On the other hand, however, such an illumination of existence through existential means should not lead to a devaluation of understanding, reason, and science. Rather, Jaspers advises, the philosophy of existence needs to make use of all material knowledge.

Freud is highly relevant to the European philosophical tradition because he too places temporality and embodiment at the center of an understanding of human subjectivity. Although Freud himself was averse to relying on philosophers in the course of his psychoanalytic labors (finding it excessively speculative), from the vantage point of Jacques Lacan’s return to Freud it is possible to discern important precursors of psychoanalysis in the modern era of the history of philosophy (Lacan takes great care to situate Freud in relation to the likes of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel), as well as appreciate the considerable impact Freud has had, and continues to have, on philosophy from his time through to the present. As Adrian Johnston notes in this volume, the topics Freud analyzes, such as temporality, subjectivity and intersubjectivity, embodiment, and affectivity are ones that are central to both the history of continental philosophy and its contemporary practice. A vulgar biological materialist would be of little interest to continental philosophers. But, as Johnston shows, for Freud the body with which psychical apparatus is in rapport is not construed along the lines of a piece of mechanistic matter moved by efficient causes. Thus, the picture of Freud as engaged in a reductive project shared by the likes of Heidegger and Sartre is fundamentally mistaken. As Johnston shows, Freud, like Husserl, has a debt to the work of Franz Brentano, which sought to show that the mental cannot be collapsed into the physical on account of the “intentional” quality and aspect of the mental. Where Freud’s psychoanalysis does part company with Husserl’s phenomenology, of course, is on the question of the unconscious. But with his all-important concept of the drive, Freud depicts the human subject as taking shape at the complex and tangled intersection of body and mind, nature, and nurture.

Wittgenstein’s influence on linguistic philosophy is well known and has been well documented. Less well known perhaps is the relation of his philosophical therapeutics, which sets out to dissolve philosophical problems by showing them to be false problems, to both previous figures in modern thought who have played a seminal role in the development of continental philosophy (e.g. Nietzsche), and to major twentieth-century developments in continental philosophy (e.g. the work of Bergson, Derrida, and Lyotard). Although he is not doing either natural science or natural history, Wittgenstein’s orientation is ultimately naturalistic: the conception of the “ordinary” is tightly woven with
the general “facts of nature” in which propositions function in the context of concrete forms of human life and language games. Like Bergson, but for different reasons, Wittgenstein can be seen as suggesting that philosophy is more like an art than a science: “It has turned back from the quest for some more general and inclusive system, and the sense of wonder now finds its object and its satisfaction in the nuances of the particular case.”

Like several other thinkers whose work is treated in this volume, Wittgenstein occupies an important place in the development of a “superior” or “subtle” positivism. As one commentator has noted, “It is clear that Wittgenstein was not a destructive positivist. He did not reject all discourse but factual discourse. On the contrary, one of his reasons for plotting the limit of factual discourse was that he wanted to prevent it from encroaching on the others.” The “truths” of religion and morality cannot be defended in the way Kant sought, and although they lack factual sense this does not mean they are unintelligible or insignificant. When Wittgenstein famously says in the preface to the Tractatus that there is nothing outside the limit of language, he meant that there is nothing factual outside the limit of factual language, and in stating this he allows that there are things that cannot be said in factual language but that can still be “shown.” Far from being an intolerant positivist, then, Wittgenstein shows in his approach to the phenomena of ethics, aesthetics, and religion that he is a “subtle” positivist. On this model of knowledge, although the natural sciences disclose what can be said about the world and have no use for philosophy, the empirical sciences are to be regarded as providing not an explanation but only a simple description of the world. Wittgenstein rejected the pseudo-scientific treatment of nonfactual modes of thought and defended their claim to independence. For example, a religious tenet is not a factual hypothesis but something that influences our thoughts and actions in a different way: “the meaning of a religious proposition is not a function of what would have to be the case if it were true but a function of the difference that it makes to the lives of those who maintain it.” Even when it appears that an “antiphilosophy” has been introduced into intellectual life, as in the cases of Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, it may be that such vexation is in fact, as one commentator has noted, a search for a new way of philosophizing.

Indeed, it could be said that what emerges in philosophy in this decidedly modernist period of invention is, above all, a remarkable set of resources,

59. Ibid., 169.
60. See ibid., 104, 172–4.
61. Delacampagne, A History of Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, 47.
63. Delacampagne, A History of Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, 60.
involving new methods, new concepts, and even new beings such as Dasein, that show the importance of philosophical subtlety, dexterity, and complexity, and these are vital instruments in combating the dogmatic self-assuredness of intellectual positivism and scientism. The thinkers of this period rediscover philosophy and invent it afresh, and they do so in many seminal ways that continue to exert a lively felt presence on its contemporary modes of practice.
For reasons too numerous to list here fully – many of them unrelated to what is normally called philosophy – Bergson’s place in the history of continental philosophy is one that has always had to be contested.¹ By “continental philosophy” I understand the anglophone reception of the past hundred years of mainly French and German philosophy, a field in which one is as likely to come across Bergson’s name as not at all. He appears as a central figure in one or two studies (in Eric Matthews’s history, for example, all twentieth-century French philosophy is dubbed a “series of footnotes to Bergson”²) but he is mostly neglected in others. This is not always a product of laziness or ignorance; despite much recent work done by Bergson scholars in the US, Britain, and France on the centrality of Bergson to the French reception of phenomenology – or to the philosophy of time (or the body, or life, or difference) – Bergson still remains a blind spot, a repressed element that needs to be defended, resurrected, or rehabilitated time and time again. Of all the moderns named in Gilles Deleuze’s famous counter-canon of philosophy – Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Nietzsche, and Bergson – it

¹. Henri-Louis Bergson (October 18, 1859–January 3, 1941; born and died in Paris, France) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1878–81) and took his doctorate at the University of Paris (1888). His influences included Boutroux, Kant, Lachelier, Ravaisson, and Spencer. He held appointments at the lycée in Angers (1881–82), Lycée Blaise-Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand (1882–88), and Lycée Henri-IV, Paris (1888–97), and was appointed maître de conférences at the École Normale Supérieure (1897–1900), Chair of Ancient Philosophy at the Collège de France (1900–1904), and Chair of Modern Philosophy at the Collège de France (1904–12, 1914–20). He was elected to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in 1901 and the Académie Française in 1914, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928.

is really only the last mentioned who has not been canonized anywhere. The others have their long lists of disciples, societies, journals, schools, and recognized methods. Bergson has few or none, and remains an orphan within philosophical history, despite numerous efforts to reverse this; he appears as the perpetual outsider, uncategorizable, and anomalous in his place in the history of philosophy. It does not help, of course, that Bergson’s complex theoretical positions make him resistant to assimilation within other movements: he has phenomenological aspects to his thought, and yet was not a phenomenologist; he was a naturalistic philosopher, but his was a far from standard naturalism; his work valorizes difference, but not through the structures of language. One is tempted to define Bergson in terms of his own concept of the “indefinite”: as that which is always “on the move” and so incapable of being positioned.

It is not so surprising, therefore, that it has often fallen to the lot of the “Bergsonian” today to undo history’s “damnation of Bergson,” to make recompense for this unfair neglect, to show how he preempted Heidegger, influenced Merleau-Ponty, or shaped Deleuze’s thinking (the strategy of tethering his name to more lustrous figures is a well-worn one). Yet anyone who has tried in vain to reverse this neglect over the past decade, and who has seen others attempt the same with little success over many decades, could be forgiven for growing weary of the cause. The pressure of historical entropy seems to win out, its inertia irreversible: despite much evidence in favor of a Bergsonian dimension to their subject, most scholars (with a few of notable exceptions) of Merleau-Ponty or Deleuze (or Sartre, Henry, Levinas …) rarely read Bergson. Not that this is surprising any longer, however, for it was rare for any of the major postwar French philosophers themselves to acknowledge an influence from Bergson, and without that clear expression of lineage it must be difficult to pursue lines of inquiry outside the authorized version of intellectual history. Apart from Deleuze (who did write extensively on Bergson), only Levinas takes time to credit Bergson with any sustained significance for him, but even then does so only in interviews rather than primary works.


5. See the interview with Levinas in Richard Kearney (ed.), Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 49. Levinas does give something like a sustained philosophical treatment of Bergson in Richard A. Cohen’s translated edition of Levinas’s Time and the Other (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), but this still amounts to only one small part of a lesser work.
And yet for nearly twenty years Bergson was at the center of Western philosophy; for half of that time, from 1907 to 1917, he was the philosopher of Europe, with an influence spreading beyond philosophy and into the arts, sociology, psychology, history, and politics. Although that influence had been severely diminished by the end of the First World War, all the same Bergson must have remained an important presence for the French philosophers born at the turn of the century. Whatever their reasons for not wishing to acknowledge that presence directly, there may be traces of it left in their work. One way to discover such traces is through the language used in their writing. And when one looks at Bergson’s own vocabulary – the one he invented – one does have a sense of déjà vu. One discovers that the language that has been in use over the past hundred years of continental philosophy has an obvious Bergonian provenance despite his own work’s reversal of fortune. This is not direct enough to be a specific philosophical influence nor, alternatively, coherent enough to warrant it being called the Weltanschauung in which French thought conducted itself. But there is a range of words and terminological strategies that stands out because it is only after Bergson that this kind of language became de rigueur in French continental thought.

Alternatively, one all too visible trace of Bergson’s presence that does not need any detection is what we should call “comic-book Bergsonism”: in its pages we find the comical picture of a dualism that opposed all forms of space to time, a vitalism that argued for a special form of living energy determining the direction of evolution, and a monism that denied the existence and appearance of substance in favor of everything being in motion. All of these stereotypes of Bergson were and are straw men: implausible positions set up mostly in order to cast a favorable light on whatever supposedly stark alternative to Bergson was being forwarded at the time – a new phenomenology, logical positivism, structuralism, and so on. Yet Bergson would have found these views no less incredible, for he never opposed all space to time, did not think of the élan vital as a special kind of energy, did not think that evolution was heading in any direction, and did not deny the existence and appearance of substance (but only showed what substance was – a complexity of movement).

It is the task of what follows, then, to replace this comical image with a serious one: the image of a thinker whose influence on philosophy’s language has been immense, yet rarely acknowledged by other philosophers. More often than not, of course, what philosophers say is at variance with what they do, and in the case at hand it will be the language of French philosophy that expresses a latent

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Bergsonism “acting itself out,” so to speak. With this in mind, I shall set out a number of categories (not all of them explicitly used by Bergson – e.g. “holism”) that tie together Bergson’s terminology, while also linking them to his texts, to other philosophers, and to recent themes in continental philosophy. Although the terms will often overlap in usage, I shall try to separate them according to a number of linguistic practices:

- some of them methodological – the language of holism (vagueness, abstraction as immobilization, interpenetrating images, antibinarism, metaphoricity, thick descriptions that restore singular novelty, the concrete); the language of intuition (metaphysical perception, knowledge and sympathy, immanent thought as becoming the thing); the language of immanence (antitranscendence and the antitranscendental); the language of pluralism (multiplicity, levels, dissociation, qualitative difference and differentiation); and the language of nonphilosophy (philosophy in art, in mysticism);
- some of them metaphysical – the language of the Real (radical empiricism as metaphysics, the rejection of negativity, the critique of possibility); the language of time (novelty, becoming, change, process, movement, heterogeneity); and the language that goes beyond subject and object (refraction, endosmosis, mixture);
- some more naturalistic – the language of Consciousness (the unconscious, fractured ego, memory, the virtual); the language of the body (affectivity, motility, habit), and the language of nature (the animal, biology, evolution);
- and some more normative – the language of Life; the language of ethics (alterity, attention, sympathy, the Open and the Closed); the language of anti-reductionism (antimechanism, antiscientism); and the language of freedom (the given fact of liberty, the free act that dissolves aporia).

The philosophical origins of a term such as “multiplicity” are not exclusive to Bergson, of course (Husserl would also have to be brought into that account): no one can own a concept uniquely. But there is a critical mass attained by a large array of Bergson’s favored terms that, only after him, became widespread and publicly owned, evolving by mutation in the hands of others. Nor is this Bergsonian inheritance operating in isolation; it coexists with the language of Greek philosophy, Cartesianism, and Kantianism that can be found in every Western philosophy. But it is the layers of Bergsonisms that especially characterize French thought this past hundred years, layers that might also reduce the gap between Matthews’s comment on French philosophy as a “footnote” to Bergson, and the lack of actual footnotes to Bergson in its pages.
I. METHODOLOGIES

Holism

The mutation of Bergson’s language also occurs in his own hands, for concepts such as “duration” or “space” do not hold the same meaning across his works. They evolve or, rather, they co-evolve in the presence of other concepts in other contexts (the duration of consciousness in Time and Free Will is somewhat different from the duration of life in Creative Evolution). This co-evolution is indicative of a Bergsonian principle that is now a commonplace: the holism of the Real. Bergson is a holist such that the analysis of ideas and of things never reveals their genuine inner reality, but only a set of immobile parts. Analysis does not reveal truth, but only our material intervention upon reality; it breaks things up, killing the Real while vivisecting it. And this very notion of holism is itself holistic, having different meanings when taken in the context of logical abstraction, psychological intuition, or the decomposition of movement. With regard to abstraction, the emphasis lies on the spatiality subtending it. According to Creative Evolution, our abstract logic is physical in its origins: “our logic,” Bergson writes, “is, pre-eminently, the logic of solids.” The binaries of this or that, here or there, are all variations of an all-or-nothing bivalent logic modeled on a kind of space, to be precise the space of solid, impenetrable bodies, where no two objects can simultaneously occupy the same location.7 Other forms of logic – fuzzier, vaguer, more fluid – are no less possible; but, because we do not normally perceive how things do interpenetrate, how they do coexist in the same spaces, we separate everything into isolated, separable objects. Things are thrown apart – ob-jectified: “concepts, in fact, are outside each other, like objects in space; and they have the same stability as such objects.”8 It is for reasons of survival that our perception is keen enough only to see things in isolation. Were we to attempt to transcend our normal perception, we would see things much more fluidly, as movements that coexist, as indivisible continuities, shading into each other imperceptibly.9 But then we would not be able to grasp them, hold them, and kill them.

9. Bruno Paradis has written about the vague or fuzzy nature of Bergson’s concepts. He also points to an indetermination of conceptuality or “inexactitude” in Bergson’s work (“Indétermination et mouvements de bifurcation chez Bergson,” Philosophie 32 [1991], 19). A technical discussion here of the logic of vagueness would bring us far off the point, but the fact remains that Bergson clearly uses the notion of the indefinable and the indefinite, not in an attempt to perpetuate mystery, but to point to a genuine feature of the world.
These movements must be seen as individual, not as a movement in general or abstract, but in person. For Bergson, the individuality of movement is its metaphysical status. When seen normally, habitually, however, this movement has each of its various dynamic properties “extracted” as an abstract concept, leaving a putatively formless and static object behind. Abstraction is always extraction. Hence, the process of abstraction is a form of inattention to concrete specificity, whereby the individuating context (what makes a movement this movement) is extracted and immobilized to become a container for the content-object left behind by the very same process.¹⁰

Bergson’s own language of vagueness and vague language, his use of metaphors across all his works (which was used by many critics against him), is, according to him, absolutely essential to expressing duration. Infamously, Bergson is said to condemn language as inadequate to “thinking in duration.” But the truth is that he argues for new languages of thought, for the constant invention of metaphor, simile, and adjective, in order to provide the thick descriptions that will restore to the Real the novelty and concrete specificity extracted by the immobilizing general concept. In his seminal essay of 1903, An Introduction to Metaphysics, Bergson argues for a metaphysics that “frees itself from rigid and ready-made concepts in order to create a kind very different from those which we habitually use; I mean supple, mobile and almost fluid representations.”¹¹ That is why Bergson demands that we “use metaphors seriously,” because the transversal meanings of metaphor are the literal truth of a process reality.¹² This language of anti-abstraction, of the concrete, of antibinarism, the inseparability of dimensions and the ineliminability of context, is part of the atmosphere in which much poststructuralist thought breathes, and without it a good deal of what Jacques Derrida, or Luce Irigaray, or Deleuze write would make a good deal less sense. It gained its first prominence in French continental thought with Bergson, whether for good or (as Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont argue¹³) for ill.

Intuition

Attached to the excessive interference of analysis is the excess of the intellect, which Bergson opposes to the noninterference of intuition. Clearly, intuition

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¹⁰ For more on this, see my Bergson and Philosophy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 175–7.
¹³ See Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, Impostures intellectuelles (Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1997).
has a modern pedigree going back long before Bergson (be it to the rationalists on the one hand, or the Romantics on the other), so what is noteworthy about it in Bergsonism is a usage that is neither fully rationalist nor fully Romantic but accommodates aspects of both. With respect to the latter, intuition is taken as a sympathy with, or attention to, the object that approaches an immediate consciousness; with respect to the former, it is described as “supra-intellectual” or “ultra-intellectual,” the immediacy with the object not being an easy achievement but something requiring “painful” effort.\textsuperscript{14} Intuition is the painful exertion required to transcend our normal perception, to reverse the workings of the mind – for which analysis is not merely an intellectual habit but a vital necessity. By turning itself backwards in intuition, the mind attempts to reintegrate itself with the Real.

There is no “simple and geometrical definition of intuition,” however. To be in sympathy with something requires “views of it that are multiple, complementary and not at all equivalent.”\textsuperscript{15} Intuition is this faculty of multiple perspectives. It is the power by which one subject is able to adjust itself to the alterity of the object (a changing process) by re-creating its movement within itself. But this re-creation is not a representation. Intuition is in fact antirepresentational: it is a thinking that is a part of the Real rather than a point of view that represents the Real. This is possible because intuition and the Real are both processes, and as such can participate with each other without representation. That is why Bergson made the claim that metaphysics is a form of knowledge without symbols. By symbol he meant representation. Hence, intuition dispenses with symbols in favor of a kind of presence (over re-presence), a material, processual, partial coincidence with the object (although it is never a perfect, complete coincidence).

The “metaphysical investigation” of the singularity of the concrete object is another name for Bergsonian intuition. In the effort to experience the object in itself, to sympathize with or attend to its movement, we differentiate between a generic image of it and a multitude of forms. And in doing so we have also, at one and the same time, integrated our movement into its own: we have participated in its becoming. This integration, though, is always dynamic, being the attempt to enter into the flux of another\textit{ durée} rather than to discover an eternal supersensory essence. Indeed, Bergson is adamant that his notion of intuition is non-Platonic and anti-Kantian, for he states clearly that “in order to reach


\textsuperscript{15} Bergson, The Creative Mind, 34, in Œuvres, 1274.
intuition it is not necessary to transport ourselves outside the domain of the senses.” Intuition exists as the “perception of metaphysical reality.” It is a form of attentive perception. Most philosophers since Plato have wished to “rise above” perception, Bergson claims, and some have seen intuition as their means to do it (Descartes and Spinoza being the two most obvious examples). Conversely, traditional skeptics of metaphysical intuition (such as Kant) have been no less unworldly in their positing of intuition: if it exists, then it will be “radically” different “from consciousness as well as from the senses” (which, for Kant, would be an impossibility). Bergson, by contrast, sees no need to escape perception, but instead argues for its promotion and primacy in a manner presaging Merleau-Ponty. Intuition is not the faculty for producing ever newer genera, but a superior empiricism that illuminates every “detail of the real” by “deepening,” “widening,” and “expanding” our perception.16

**Immanence**

This is not a valorization of human, anthropocentric, perception, however: it is the primacy of *inhuman* perception and the sensing body. Perception must be worked over, made attentive, given new forms. Despite the Romantic overtones of ecstatic empiricism in Bergsonian intuition (which raised the same levels of doubt and enthusiasm then as it does today), what really carries across from Bergson is the emphasis on transcending the *norms* of human perception, especially by means of *nonrepresentational* knowledge. It would be this kind of knowledge as sympathy, knowledge that attempts to go beyond power, that Levinas would later characterize as an ethical relation. Conversely, by locating this transcendent power in nature, by rendering metaphysics immanent, in other words, Bergson received Deleuze’s approval. Indeed, reversing the effects of Platonism by annulling its unworldly view of metaphysics is perhaps Bergson’s greatest contribution to twentieth-century philosophy. The idea that the “true empiricism” is the “true metaphysics” is central here. Yet it goes even further than many think, for Bergson was also the “adversary of Kant,” as well as of Plato, inasmuch as he regarded the Critical Philosophy as simply another form of Platonism, only now applied to the human mind. There is no valid distinction between the “transcendent” and the “transcendental” (as Kantians claim), for the latter is simply the Platonization of deductive logic, making a certain kind of conceptual (and spatial) thought normative. But to make it normative, to make it the unconditioned condition of *all* experience is to render it transcendent to its immanent, mutable conditions. As we shall see, those conditions are multiple; *indeed they*

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are multiplicity or novelty itself, inasmuch as, for a process philosophy, there can be no condition of the new save for itself: the new comes out of no-thing – not substance, nor form, nor logic – nothing except itself, de novo. Its condition is to be unconditioned.

**Pluralism**

When speaking of method and multiplicity in Bergson, one must mention what has been called his “method of multiplicity,” a method of proliferation in the face of philosophical paradox.\(^\text{17}\) Indeed, intuition is another name for the method of multiplicity. This is quite the opposite of William of Ockham’s principle – *entia non multiplicanda sunt praeter necessitatem* – which seeks the best explanation in parsimonious simplicity. The Bergsonian principle sees false problems and paradoxes arising *whenever we simplify too much*. Abstract intellect, of course, “loves simplicity,” but that is because abstraction *is* simplicity itself, an extraction from and diminution of the Real. By contrast, intuition is the acknowledgment of or attention to the messy nuances of reality, because the Real is always *de trop*, whatever is in excess of our intelligence: it is the “more than is necessary – too much of this, too much of that, too much of everything.”\(^\text{18}\) Consequently, Bergson’s axiom is one of disunity in the face of simplicity, be it a dis-uniting of space, of the ego, of memory, of order, of cause, of knowing, of religion, of morality. In each case, where we habitually see one kind of thing we can always be assured that a closer look will reveal many others, many kinds, or many levels. This is even true of multiplicity itself (it has two kinds, quantitative and qualitative) and Being as such (of which there are an indefinite number of levels). To break out of a false problematic or paradox, therefore, we must first multiply the number of variables at work within it: the problem of being (“why is there something rather than nothing?”), for example, emerges if one posits only one kind of ultimate being – “Being as such” – with an attendant non-being nipping at its heels. For Bergson, there is no one Being, but numerous, actual, levels or kinds of being, a proliferation of beings with no need for a ground in the One. As one commentator writes, Bergson’s is a true “metaphysics of degrees of reality, on condition, however, that one specifies that it is not a question of the ‘same’ reality, but of different realities.”\(^\text{19}\) The multiple – another name for novelty, for process, for duration – is its own ground. Similarly, Zeno’s paradoxes of movement only arise if one posits just one kind of space, homogeneous quantifiable

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space, instead of the other, numerous qualitative spaces wherein we walk, run, and commonly move with consummate ease.

It would be a mistake, however, to see Bergson’s predilection for the multiple as gratuitous or unnecessary: it is immanent to or axiomatic of his method, given that intuition just is a sensitivity towards difference; it is not an intellectual decision, but an affective vision. There are many synonyms for multiplicity in Bergson’s work: “dissociation,” “dichotomy,” “disharmony,” “differentiation,” “divergence.” Picking just three from this list, the nineteenth-century psychopathological term of “dissociation,” for instance, is transformed into a metaphysical principle: the étan vital itself is one example of dissociation, proceeding “by dissociation and division.”20 A living being is not a static composition or association of cells but an ongoing process that “has made the cells by means of [a] dissociation” of itself.21 Because life proceeds by dissociation, the differences between species are more fundamental than the similarities. Likewise, knowledge and understanding are the “effect of a sudden dissociation,” understanding being described as “a certain faculty of dissociating.”22 In The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, dissociation appears in the form of the “Law of Dichotomy,” by which Bergson understands a natural tendency whereby every conceptual unity is actually only provisional, being destined to bifurcate indefinitely.23 This constant dichotomization is not be confused with the Hegelian dialectic (or at least a stereotype of it), however, because this constant ramification proceeds without any subsequent synthesis. Indeed, Bergson’s methodology is wholly different from Hegel’s, being genealogical rather than teleological, dissociative rather than associative (or synthetic), and differential rather than negative. In fact, by contrast with the dialectical logic of Hegel, we might say that Bergson’s pluralism posits itself in multiple logics: psycho-logic, bio-logic, epistemo-logic, socio-logic. Logic itself is multiple. Perhaps the nearest Bergson comes to an “orthodox” (abstract) logic of the multiple is in its mathematical implementation in the infinitesimal calculus, whose methods of differentiation and integration Bergson adopted as his own: “the object of metaphysics is to perform qualitative differentiations and integrations.”24

Although Bergson is commonly regarded as a dualist (of life and matter, space and time), or even sometimes a monist (of Life), rather than a pluralist,

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the closest examinations of his work agree that his thought embraces a “dynamic monism” allowing for “qualitative diversity”; he is neither a monist nor a dualist in the substantialist sense of these terms: the “infrastructure” of his philosophy is at once “dualist and unitary.” Unity is that which always splits or dissociates, being itself only a pragmatic, temporary unity, an impression of unity that must eventually bifurcate along with its object. At the origins of life, knowledge, the problems of philosophy, and even Being itself, there are always false unities, the fragmentation of which being the driving force that leads to other actual entities (with putative unified identities) that will in their turn disintegrate and differentiate. There are always divergent tendencies in Bergson’s analyses, and a tendency is the movement between provisional, pragmatic states of the One or the Two or the Many. Movement is neither in a state of one, nor indeed in a state of many either, but is the transition between a kind of one and a new kind of many, the multiplicity of the multiple. His pluralism is a metapluralism, a plurality of pluralities. Although the provenance of the French philosophies of difference in the 1960s is clearly complex – Hegelian dialectic (or Alexandre Kojève’s version of it in the 1930s), Heideggerian difference, Saussurean differentialism, even Husserl’s own earlier use of “multiplicity” are all part of that story – the early and widespread use of pluralistic language throughout Bergson’s work must still be regarded as a vital part of the confluence of ideas that made “difference” such a central term in their vocabulary.

Nonphilosophy

A final element of Bergson’s methodological language concerns the sources of philosophy itself, for in taking metaphysics to be the indefinable intuition of the indefinite, the experience of a concrete multiplicity (which is immanent to or a part of the whole), philosophy itself can no longer be regarded as a predefined, autonomous inquiry. Philosophy becomes a self-fulfilling creative practice, and so that which one names “philosophy” only after the fact. It is a “bottom up,” extensional characterization, one that is empirically based on the actuality of experiences that nominate themselves “philosophical” only a posteriori. Metaphysics is a thinking in duration, and although Bergson vacillated on whether science could or could not itself think (about) movement (in 1903 he thought that it could – with mathematical calculus being exemplary


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in this regard – but in 1907 he restricted its role to the study of spatialized matter alone), Bergson is clear that both art and religion do have access to the metaphysical. Bergson’s theory of art, best expressed in his study of humor in *Laughter* (1900), allows the artist the natural faculty to perceive difference, while *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* sees the mystic as an individual endowed with “creation emotion” – a new name for intuition – that enables him or her to feel difference. In both cases, they have access to, or rather become a part of, the mobile Real, forming a triad, along with philosophy, of kinds of participation in the Absolute, which is change itself. Along with philosophy, they are forms of “attention to Life” or the Real. But what will count as Real – be it perceived, felt, or thought – always remains indefinite and indefinable. Bergson was adamant that even his own concepts of *durée* and qualitative multiplicity, for example, must not be seen as eternal names of the Real, but as conceptual placeholders that must eventually be surpassed: philosophy is not about discovering an eternal expression to represent reality perfectly; rather, it is the practice of continually creating new concepts that participate in the fluidity of the Real. The absolute is not comprehended “by giving it a name,” but by creating a new expression.26 And this creation can have its sources in nonphilosophy (art and religion) too. This tempering of the scope and sovereignty of philosophy, which nonetheless does not deny philosophy an ongoing role, makes Bergson appear particularly contemporary, for it avoids the postmodern clichés of philosophy being at its end (again), while also showing a maturity regarding philosophy’s empirical basis and the extent to which it can maintain its autonomy from other disciplines. Philosophy is indeed conditioned (it is not exhaustive in its access to the Absolute but only partial), yet this conditioning is a mark of its Reality, of it being a part of the enduring, moving, whole.

**II. METAPHYSICS**

*The Real*

Moving from the language of method to the overlapping language of metaphysics itself, we are first reminded of Bergson’s anti-Platonism as regards sensibility and anti-Kantianism as regards possibility. Bringing metaphysics down to earth from its Platonic heights renders it, in Bergson’s views, a remedial procedure for our perception. In “An Introduction to Metaphysics,” Bergson describes the percept as a “metaphysical object” and then continues: “a true empiricism is that which proposes to get as near to the original itself as possible, to search

Henri Bergson deeply into its life, and so, by a kind of intellectual auscultation, to feel the throbings of its soul; and this true empiricism is the true metaphysics.\textsuperscript{27}

This is a radical empiricism, one practiced by Bergson even before William James had coined the term. Like James after him (and even more like Deleuze later again), Bergson argues that a true, metaphysical empiricism is not a contradictory mixture of supersensory abstraction and everyday experience, but the painful effort to create new realms of experiences, to expand perception such that we attend to the singularity of the concrete individual, the individual that can only be sensed rather than intellectualized. By this means, “metaphysics will then become experience itself,” and concepts will be created to match each object rather than the other way around (in Procrustean fashion).\textsuperscript{28} Metaphysics is not the contemplation of an alternative reality, therefore, but the heightened perception of reality, a perception Bergson also calls “intuition.” There is also a link between Bergson and phenomenology in all of this: Time and Free Will’s resort to “immediate data,” its proposal that we come “face to face with the sensations themselves,” or Matter and Memory’s attempt to transcend “theory” in favor of “the presence of images,” both appear to approximate a Husserlian epoché of sorts.\textsuperscript{29} Nonetheless, although Bergson’s proto-phenomenology must have helped to prepare the French soil for the implantation of German ideas, Bergsonism itself was never centered on a human representation (reworked or otherwise) of the Ding an Sich but something much more metaphysical, something transcending human representation: it is still experience, but experience before its human “turning,” the Ding itself, the “very life of things” coming into thought.\textsuperscript{30}

As already mentioned, the painful effort of intuition requires a reversal of the normal way in which we think, which goes from the particular to the general, extracting abstractions. Two particular abstractions are most culpable in this, according to Bergson: nothingness and possibility. Deleuze rightly states that in Bergsonism “there are differences in being and yet nothing negative.”\textsuperscript{31} To embrace the multitude of actual beings is far too fatiguing for the mind; indeed, it is contrary to what the mind is, to wit, the very extraction and simplification of this multitude. The positing of Being or Nothingness as the source from which the multitude supposedly come simply is the immanent process of mentation: it is not done by the mind, but just is one symptom of having a mind – it

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 22, in Œuvres, 1408.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 18, in Œuvres, 1259.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 184–5, in Œuvres, 321; \textit{An Introduction to Metaphysics}, 43, in Œuvres, 1424.
is the mind as performance, as process rather than substance, the process of extraction–abstraction. The symptoms of Being and Nothingness extend back as far as Parmenides and travel down through Plato and the Neoplatonists to Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre, Lacan, and Badiou today. In contrast to this, Bergson stands, alongside Nietzsche, at the head of a modern tradition of metaphysical positivism, or antinihilism, that has worked its way through to Deleuze in the contemporary era. The Real does not lack anything; it is its own full plenitude in all positivity. There is finitude and negation in Bergsonism, of course (Gaston Bachelard, for one, was wrong to think otherwise), but they are not primary; they are not the ground of our actuality; the nought is a derivative produced by either memory or expectation (Creative Evolution), that is, from a creative desire that produces its own supposed lack. But we can only realize this, we can only see it, if we reverse the way the mind works and interprets its own creativity.

The idea of possibility as a containment of the Real is another indication of this normal working of the mind. What we call the possibility of the Real is, in fact, engendered retrospectively by the Real, wherein “there is perpetual creation of possibility and not only of reality.”32 According to Bergson, it is extremely hard for the intellect to acknowledge that each present is really something radically new, that is, to attend to the actuality of the new. French nineteenth-century Romanticism, for example, was supposedly made possible because of the foregoing circumstances created by French Classicism. But Bergson argues instead that it was the Romanticism of Chateaubriand, Vigny, and Hugo that retroactively created the impression of a nascent Romanticism in the earlier classical writers. Romanticism, by its very coming into existence, created its own prefiguration in the past and, by that, a putative explanation of its emergence. This retroactive logic – what Foucault would later call (with self-critical awareness) the “history of the present” – also leads to a number of philosophical illusions. Our normal logic of retrospection perpetually recreates the actual present with elements of the past: meaning is reconstituted from words that are already meaningful (Matter and Memory), for example, or life is reconstructed from matter (a prebiotic soup) that is already vital (Creative Evolution), or consciousness is composed from brain cells that are already sentient (“Brain and Thought,” in Mind-Energy), and so on. In each case, we reverse-engineer a generalized notion of the present phenomenon with a reductive mechanism as its supposed causal past. And we can do this only by extracting the novelty and singularity of the actual phenomenon in order to make it fit into (or reduce down to) our explanatory substratum. But duration is both the mark of reality and the agency behind our illusions concerning what makes any one reality possible. Because it is prior rather than subsequent to the possible, duration actually creates the

latter retrospectively. And this is also true of novelty itself, which is its own real condition and has no “transcendental” conditions of possibility. Bergson’s anti-Kantianism will not allow room for any form of abstract logic to act as the basis, the principle of sufficient reason, to understand time as duration. Duration does not need possibility, because it makes possibility.

Time

It must be admitted that what we described earlier as the comic-book Bergson, that of durée and the élan vital (time versus space and life versus matter), has nevertheless left to the French tradition an important set of terms for its vocabulary. Although there were important philosophers of time in France immediately preceding Bergson (Jean-Marie Guyau, Émile Boutroux), and he had a number of influential contemporaries outside France (Samuel Alexander and J. M. E. McTaggart especially), it was doubtless Bergson who made time and a whole family of associated terms – novelty, becoming, change, movement, process, and heterogeneity – an essential part of the intellectual milieu for the next century. Clearly, his was a dynamist theory of time, what McTaggart called an “A-Theory,” emphasizing the perspectival determinants of flux, change, and unpredictability in the past, present, and future. The language of movement, of process, of change (along with that of freedom and creativity, as we shall see) is fundamental to Bergson’s conception of time. Durée is “the uninterrupted up-surge of novelty,” “radical novelty,” “the radically new,” or “complete novelty.” In contrast, clock-time is spatialized time, time understood in terms of eternal relations (of being before, simultaneous with, or after): this is the false time of Kant, of science, and of most contemporary thought. Indeed, this is another source of Bergson’s anti-Kantianism. Far from being the first modern philosopher to liberate time from space (as some, like Deleuze, have argued), according to Bergson, Kant merely inverted the old binary opposition of time and space by making measured (spatially quantified) movement subordinate to the measure of (spatially quantified) time. Bergson’s own thesis is not about the binary of space (movement) and time at all, but one concerning measure and immeasure, or quantity and quality. Kant simply internalized space and called it time. Bergson instead wants time to be understood as qualitative movement, that is, to have its qualitative actuality restored.

Bergson actually encompasses two approaches to temporality in his work, however, the one emphasizing the subjective experience of durée (in Time and Free Will), the other looking to the objective data of the contemporary sciences, physics and biology in particular (Matter and Memory and Creative Evolution),

33. Ibid., 18, 99, 35, in Œuvres, 1259, 1339, 1276; Creative Evolution, 106, in Œuvres, 634.
and so extending the idea of continual, qualitative variation beyond human psychology and into the material universe. The idea that Bergson never goes beyond an implausible and old-fashioned dualism of psychological time (duration) versus static, homogeneous space, rests wholly on a (selective) reading of *Time and Free Will*.\(^{34}\) By the time of *Matter and Memory*, it is homogeneity in equally spatial and temporal forms that is at issue. Homogeneous space and time are both the effects that we introduce into the “moving continuity of the real” in order to fix it, to control it, and to kill it (so that we can survive). They are the “diagrammatic design of our eventual action upon matter,” not the other pole in an improbable Manichean system.\(^{35}\) The *homogenizing* of space and time stems from our vital need to ignore their indigenous alterity, to reduce difference to sameness.\(^{36}\) Real spatiality and real things, on the contrary, are not empty forms, but have depth and life all their own, in what Bergson calls “the extensive,” which is “intermediate between divided extension and pure inextension.”\(^{37}\) It is only when we attend to their heterogeneity (in art, in mysticism, in metaphysical empiricism) that we see and feel and think the very life of things, that we see duration everywhere: in short, that we notice the constant upsurge of novelty or becoming, without any need for static space, or being, or nothingness, or even logic to support it. When we look elsewhere, when we abstract and extract – as we must to live – then it is we who immobilize, spatialize, or homogenize the Real.

Although it was a caricature of his thought that allowed Bergson’s most obvious contribution – his theory of time – to be sidelined by the next generation of French philosophy, the fact remains that the philosophy of the new was a Bergsonian innovation, irrespective of its location (in the mind or in things), and it is one that remains a live issue today. For Badiou or Deleuze, for Lyotard or Derrida, for François Laruelle or Michel Henry, the problem of the new, of change, of the “Event,” be it in politics, in philosophy, in “theory,” in phenomenology, in art, or in literature, is obvious, and it is one that specifically marks out French continental thinking.\(^{38}\)

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34. Even *Time and Free Will* can be ambivalent about space, going so far as to say that “we shall not lay too much stress on the question of the absolute reality of space: perhaps we might as well ask whether space is or is not in space” (Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 91, in Œuvres, 62).
38. Indeed, even the term “Event” has a Bergsonian remit, *The Two Sources* arguing that the very notion of an event is already a spatialization of process, albeit in the special guise of what he calls “fabulation,” which functions to collect (extract) numerous processes together under the singular name of “event” (sometimes even to give it a proto-personality – as an “earthquake,” a “collision,” a “hurricane,” a bit of luck, my death, and so on). See *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, ch. 2 and my “Life, Movement, and the Fabulation of the Event,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 24(6) (2007), 53–70.
Beyond subject and object

The importance of understanding Bergson’s purported dualism as actually processual, as a *dualization*, is critical. Alongside immanent intuition, Bergson also uses the language of mixture, “refraction,” and “interpenetration” to move his philosophical thought even further beyond the dualism of subject and object. After the admittedly Cartesian propensity of *Time and Free Will, Matter and Memory*, for example, begins by thinking of perception without reference to self and world (in what could be taken as an *epoché* of sorts). But this is just one instance. Bergson’s work is strewn with the language of contraction, “endosmosis,” “interval,” or “balance” understood as the condensation of opposed forces or movements, with seemingly subjective facets on one side and objective ones on the other. Impurity reigns everywhere, whereas purity is always only in theory, as a *hypothesis*, whether born from philosophy (like Nothingness) or the need to live (in homogeneous space). But what is real is the interval, the in between; what is unreal, or ideal, is the “extreme.”

Admittedly, there are various subjectivist extremes put to work in Bergson’s own thought – pure memory, *élan vital*, even pure duration – but they are ideal limits, entities with an “as if” (“*comme si*”) existence, a “virtual” reality. In actuality, neither duration nor the *élan* are ever pure, but contain contradictions within themselves (duration is always spatialized, life is always found in embodied, material beings). And these are not contingent facts: life would not *be* life, that is, dissociative, unless it existed in biological form. These are not the poles of a dualism but the interpenetrating tendencies in a movement of dualization: the enduring mind *really can* become spatialized, and matter *really can* become vitalized (that is precisely what a living body is) because space and life are actually processes (spatialization and vitalization). These interpenetrating tendencies are seen most intensely in the optical metaphor of refraction found throughout Bergson’s works, from the first to the last: space and time refract each other, free will and mechanism refract each other, open and closed morality refract each other, static and dynamic religion refract each other. Refraction as such is not tied to any privileged domain; it is seen in the psychological, social, and physical realms and so is relational rather than substantive. It is a form of movement. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* even ends with a prognosis for life on our “refractory planet” that must nonetheless be the means by which life evolves further.39 To a lesser extent, Bergson also uses the language of interpenetration, or osmosis and endosmosis, always with the purpose of exemplifying the mixed nature of the Real. Without these ideas of mixture, Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmic ontology of reversibility and subject–object

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intermingling would not have been written with the same facility or received with the same enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{40}

And here is where metaphysics and methodology refract as well, for Bergsonism can also be seen as an attempt to move “beyond objectivism and relativism.” According to \textit{Matter and Memory}, when we try to transcend realism and idealism, all we are given are images, but these images are not representations; they are the universe set out in inhuman, nonrepresentational imagery. Objectivity can obviously be identified easily enough with a certain homogeneous physical reality. But Bergson sees this as merely the cancelling out of all perspectival differences, of all imagery whatsoever, “where everything balances and compensates and neutralizes everything else.”\textsuperscript{41} If everything is already a (nonrepresented) image, one could say that one purpose of Bergson’s project is to relativize relativity. In \textit{Duration and Simultaneity}, Bergson even forwards the idea of “full-relativity” as a relativism that actually reinstates a new kind of absolute, that of the Other’s perspective, the perspective of otherness that continually frames or relativizes my own (relative) conceptual and perceptual frames of others.

Indeed, there is a connection between relativism and absolutism for Bergson or, rather, between relativism and absolutism of a certain kind. He regards the motive behind Kant’s (relativizing) Copernican Revolution as itself a symptom of an absolutist intellect having failed in its attempt to totalize or subsume the world and that turns instead to a humble relativism that now dismisses the possibility of finding any absolutes whatsoever. If Kant banished metaphysics and with it the absolute, Bergson sees it as his task to reinstate them both, only now in a newly redeemed understanding rather than in the form to which Kant submitted them. Bergson’s new absolute is not lost or found through the rigid concepts of Being, Nothingness, Space, the Transcendental, Logic, or Objectivity, but is grounded on the recognition of our selectivist, extractionist, tendency to centralize our own point of view by making everything else move relative to it, to be private absolutists. To say that everything exists (realism) is the same as to say that nothing exists save as an image \textit{for me} (idealism). Relativism, or what Bergson says should more properly be called “half-relativism,” always disguises

\textsuperscript{40} The “fundamental likeness” between Merleau-Ponty’s project and Bergson’s philosophy has struck a number of commentators, for example Ben-Ami Scharfstein, “Bergson and Merleau-Ponty: A Preliminary Comparison,” \textit{Journal of Philosophy} 52 (1955), 385. Edward Casey has noted that “Bergson is often the most effective escort into Merleau-Pontian reflection on many subjects” (“Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty,” \textit{Man and World} 17 [1984], 283), and Eugene Kaelin went so far as to describe \textit{La Phénoménologie de la perception} as a testament to the Bergsonian influence on Merleau-Ponty (\textit{An Existentialist Aesthetic: The Theories of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty} [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962], 339).

\textsuperscript{41} Bergson, \textit{Matter and Memory}, 219, in \textit{Œuvres}, 353.
a dogmatic absolutism. In contradistinction to both, Bergson’s pluralism is also an absolute: an affirmation of the multiplicity of perspectives (images) that is nevertheless not an endorsement of the more customary representational form of relativism (because they are images for themselves). In place of relative knowledge Bergson puts partial knowledge, for while the relative implies a lost absolute, the part opens itself up immanently to the whole.\footnote{See Bergson, \textit{Mélanges}, 774.}

III. NATURALISM

Consciousness

As regards the conscious subject (of supposed representation), Bergson’s language also lent itself well to the project of decentering the self that became fundamental to French postmodernism. But it did so in a complex manner that involved Bergson’s work in nonreductive naturalization. On the one hand, Bergson does everything he can to dismantle the integrity of the ego. From the very start, \textit{Time and Free Will} split it into “superficial” and “profound” states: a state that is already a spatialized self – with sensations quantified on the model of social space – and another of continuous heterogeneous \textit{durée} lying beneath the sameness of the public self. This “\textit{moi profond}” was Bergson’s own theory of the unconscious, quite separate from Freud’s, although influenced by the psychologist Pierre Janet and as such closer to a theory of selective \textit{inattention} than one of the unconscious \textit{simpliciter}: Bergson does not divorce any one part of the personality from the other; the deeper self goes “not unperceived, but rather unnoticed.”\footnote{See Bergson, \textit{Time and Free Will}, 169, in \textit{Œuvres}, 112; See also \textit{Mélanges}, 810, for a rejection of an unconsciousness that is opaque to and inaccessibly cut off from consciousness.}

\textit{Matter and Memory} and the subsequent works proliferated this dyadic model into numerous levels of stratified duration, dropping the language of “surface” and “depth” in favor of different rhythms of time.\footnote{See A. D. Lindsay, \textit{The Philosophy of Bergson} (London: Dent, 1911), 5, 91–2, 156–7, 168–9, who makes a good deal of this development.} In both versions, however, the idea of a self-identical ego was always an illusion for Bergson, there being neither “a series of distinct psychological states, each one invariable, which would produce the variations of the ego by their very succession … [nor] an ego, no less invariable, which would serve as support for them.”\footnote{Bergson, \textit{The Creative Mind}, 148–9, in \textit{Œuvres}, 1383.} Bergson once went so far as to liken the self to the pathology of multiple personality and even to a series of spiritual possessions in preference over any
sovereign, autonomous agent. As Simon Clarke observes regarding Bergson on this matter: “The ‘death of the subject’ … has roots that go back deep into French philosophy.”

On the other hand, though, Bergson extends the notion of consciousness or psyche to cosmic levels as well as devolving it to micro-selves. Here we see Bergson’s nonreductive and even inflationary naturalism at work. In Creative Evolution, anything that is alive is regarded as conscious, although even matter at times is also treated as a kind of consciousness, albeit one that is turned in the opposite direction to life, physics being a “reversed psychology” or “psychics inverted.” Here is where Bergson approaches a Whiteheadian organicism. He never quite gets there, however, for the vital is not organic, but that which resists organization even as it must (provisionally) accommodate itself to it at any specific moment. Life, or consciousness, is not some subtle substance or vital energy, but a resistance movement. While Bergsonism is indeed a philosophy of consciousness, this consciousness or psyche is only a synonym for universal movement, cosmological rather than anthropological.

This other approach to decentering the (anthropomorphic) self, one that replaces it with the cosmos, has been adopted by Deleuze and his followers to huge acclaim. This is especially true with respect to Matter and Memory and its language of the “virtual” (or unrepresented memory). In Deleuze’s reading, the virtual becomes ontological rather than psychological (although Bergson would not have opposed these terms as Deleuze does) and takes on the role of gathering all forms of difference together on to the same plane of immanence. All the same, the virtual remains alive, sentient, and moving – all Bergsonian characteristics – while also trying to rid itself of any human psychologism.

The body

Two other sites of Bergsonian naturalism are the body and nature itself. Following in the tradition of Maine de Biran (1766–1824) and Félix Ravaisson (1813–1900) – while also modernizing them – the body is fundamental for philosophy in Bergson’s view. It is the affective center of each individual; even further, it is the means by which our own sense of individuality is engendered. Through movement and affect, one image stands out among all other images: that of the body. Or rather, the image of the body is the image of mineness, of

46. Bergson, Mélanges, 858.
49. This tradition is discussed in the essay by F. C. T. Moore in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
my body. It is “a privileged image, perceived in its depths and no longer on the surface … it is this particular image which I adopt as the center of my universe and as the physical basis of my personality.”50 “Mineness” is the product of an individuating movement-image, an act of nature rather than of an autonomous subject. The body has even more than this passive function, however, for it is also a center of action, of indeterminacy and choice. The “I” is given a “horizon” of possible interests that is constituted through the spatial relationship that other images have with my body: “the objects which surround my body reflect its possible action upon them.”51 The body continues in importance in Bergson’s work, from Matter and Memory, as the basis of recollection (through habit memory, a crucial discovery for 1896), all the way to The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, and its idea of a “logic of the body” as “extension of desire.”52 Time and again this lived body, based on movement, affect, and action, is contrasted with an objective, geometrical body, the body seen from the outside. The first, Bergsonian body is a true body-subject with its own consciousness, Bergson writing explicitly of an “intelligence of the body” and a “logic of the body” as well as “bodily memory,” and both Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray are especially in his debt here.53 In some quarters, Bergson has been acknowledged as the first thinker to see “the genuine significance and peculiarity of the body,” as well as the earliest modern philosopher fully to realize “the body’s pivotal position … as a continual ‘center of action.’”54

Nature

Ironically, it was precisely for such naturalism, however, that the early Merleau-Ponty actually criticized Bergson, sharing the opinion of Sartre and most of the next generation of French philosophers.55 Naturalizing the human, emphasizing the continuity between culture and nature, attending to the animal and to biology as important sources of philosophy – these ideas were anathema to those like Sartre who thought that man was “the being whose appearance brings the world into existence,” and so who “wanted man to be the measure of

51. Ibid., 21, in Œuvres, 172.
53. Bergson, Matter and Memory, 111, 139, 152, in Œuvres, 256, 257, 293.
55. Merleau-Ponty would later return to Bergson at the same time that he discovered the attraction of creating his own philosophy of nature; see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Elogie de la philosophie et autres essais (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).
everything.” Yet Bergson was also rebuked by philosophical naturalists at the time for what they saw as his residual subjectivism. What so dissatisfied both sides is the fact that Bergson’s is a nonreductive naturalism: although he does want to “give to the word biology the very wide meaning it should have, and will perhaps have one day,” this is not to reduce everything to one, worthless essence, because biology, as Bergson understands it, is what breaks all essences. Bergson’s is a process naturalism, and this is what gives it an irreducible value – the value of change. With regard to the sociobiology in The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, for example, there is no intent to deflate culture to the “merely” animal or biological; rather, in virtue of his antireductionist views in biology, his is an inflationary discourse – biology is a realm of value, not devaluation, and this value is the value of change. In process philosophy, norms and nature interpenetrate, refract each other and are only extracted as separate essences by the intellect (which is the faculty of separation, or spatialization).

IV. NORMATIVITY

Life

As already mentioned, the élan vital is a principle of change, and does not represent an alternative type of (living) substance (which would only beg the question of biological origins, anyway). It is a type of time, open and unpredictable. The values built into Bergson’s philosophy of time are ones of openness, of open-ended creativity, of attention to otherness, to Life. These values are immanent within life, for the mark of the living is simply to continue evolving rather than to stay fixed in one form of species. “Attention to life,” we recall, was always described in terms of an openness to the alterity, the singularity, of the other. Indeed, attention to life can appear in Creative Evolution as life’s sole (immanent) imperative, for the only hierarchy found in life is not one based on complexity or rationality (although these may be attendant phenomena), but one that is created immanently within life when each species falls into self-absorption and a disregard for “almost all the rest of life.” There is a fundamental antifinalism in Bergson’s thought that, for various reasons, has been obscured in the reception of his ideas. Against both Lamarck and the neo-Darwinians, Bergson argues

for a nonteleological, dissociative life, and the élan is simply a principle of this endlessness, this constant dichotomization without synthesis, this continual creativity. The élan has no end, or, if you prefer, its only end is to creatively end all ends, to break all molds of speciation, to keep moving. To think of it as “stuff” is ridiculously unBergsonian, given that his is a meticulously processesualist philosophy. Life is movement, a resistance movement, resisting whatever does not allow it to move, and that is its immanent value. No less than for Nietzsche before him or Deleuze (and Michel Henry) after him, creative Life is the supreme, self-positing or axiomatic value, once it is understood as that which remains open, moving, or, in Bergson’s most renowned term, “creative” (which made Bergson a favored philosopher among artists).

Ethics

This normative dimension was always implicit in Bergson’s work until The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, which at long last interprets the élan vital explicitly as an élan d’amour, a love or “open morality” forwarded as the end of life, that is, as the open-endedness of indefinite creativity (what Bergson calls “creative emotion”). This is embodied in the mystic or open soul, whose form of “dynamic” faith indicates a truly universal regard: it is not intentional – it has no particular end or object – for it is only disposed towards otherness as such:

The other attitude is that of the open soul. What, in that case, is allowed in? Suppose we say that it embraces all humanity: we should not be going too far, we should hardly be going far enough, since its love may extend to animals, to plants, to all nature. And yet no one of these things which would thus fill it would suffice to define the attitude taken by the soul, for it could, strictly speaking, do without all of them. Its form is not dependent on its content. We have just filled it; we could as easily empty it again. “Charity” would persist in him who possesses “charity,” though there be no other living creature on earth.59

The contrasting “closed morality” is not an affective regard toward alterity per se, but a set of rules, pressures, and obligations bearing down on the individual, homogenizing him or her as part of a group, a “closed society” of the same. Such a society tends to have an equally homogenizing form of faith, “static religion,” a highly institutionalized religiosity that expresses the interests of the

group through rules and obligations. What is fundamental to such bounded groups is that, no matter how large and inclusive they may come to be, they must remain closed to some form of outsider: “their essential characteristic is nonetheless to include at any moment a certain number of individuals, and exclude others.” Every in-group requires an out-group. Whatever feelings we have for the group, writes Bergson, “imply a choice, therefore an exclusion; they may act as incentives to strife, they do not exclude hatred.” Such closure, such hatred or disregard, indicates a differently oriented soul, centripetal rather than centrifugal. That is why closed morality cannot be transformed gradually (by steps of increasing enfranchisement) into open morality; there must be a leap from the one quality of closure to another of openness.

The oppositions in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* between open and closed (morality and society), dynamic and static (faith), are simply new implementations of the mobile–immobile dyad pervading Bergson’s work. The “creative emotion” linked to open morality is only another name for intuition, which was always both ethical and epistemological (as well as metaphysical), a sympathy with the object (that is also a partial coincidence with it). This language of the “open” and openness – overtly adopted for political ends by Karl Popper, covertly appropriated by Heidegger for ontological ends – is simultaneously ethical and naturalistic, ethical in its regard for alterity (an idea taken up later by Levinas), naturalistic in its attention to singularity (subsequently given an ethico-metaphysical treatment by Deleuze using Spinoza). Indeed, it is arguable that the separated thought of Levinas and Deleuze is simply the dissociation of tendencies that remain fused in Bergson.

**Antireductionism**

If one could summarize the philosophical effects of the Bergsonian value system, both implicit and explicit, it would have to be in terms of antireductionism. Be it the critique of psychophysics in *Time and Free Will*, mind–brain localization in *Matter and Memory*, or neo-Darwinian gradualism in *Creative Evolution*, Bergson’s intent was always to highlight the ineliminable remainder that refuses to be reduced (be it through a purported identity or a cause) to some nominated substratum, most often a mechanistic one. Such a reduction is a reduction, a diminution, because the substratum is always deemed to be less, to be merely mechanical, dumb, and inert. Bergsonism is a philosophy of levels of reality

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60. Ibid., 39, 205–7, in Œuvres, 1007, 1150–51.
61. Ibid., 32, 18–19, 30, 31, in Œuvres, 1001, 989–90, 1000, 1001, 1002.
62. Ibid., 36, in Œuvres, 1005.
63. Ibid., 46, 64, in Œuvres, 1014, 1029.
that each have their own life and integrity. The “esprit de système” found in so much science (and philosophy), Bergson wrote, vainly tries to “embrace the totality of things in simple formulas.”64 A contrario, metaphysics for him must be the respect for, or sympathy with, the specificity of those levels of reality, for the complexity and excesses of nature. And with that respect comes a negative moment, namely the refusal to accommodate the intellect’s systematic desire to simplify, to extract, to reduce the many to the one. Crucially, however, Bergson pursues this cause not against science, but against scientism and mechanism. As an empiricist, he strongly believes that science and philosophy must cooperate, and Bergson was undoubtedly a philosopher of science in every sense of the term, some commentators even going so far as to describe him as a positivist.65

Ironically, however, this desire to cooperate with science, to attend to its data for its own singularities and nuances, has been taken by others as a sign of Bergson’s antirationalism. Significantly, where the English translation of Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont’s Impostures Intellectuelles focuses exclusively on contemporary figures such as Lacan and Baudrillard in an attempt to expose the alleged scientific charlatanry of French postmodernism, the original French text has an additional chapter on Bergson, as he represents for them the historical source for the turn to irrationalism and anti-science in French twentieth-century thought.66 Contemporary French philosophy has indeed been a series of footnotes to Bergson, but according to Sokal and Bricmont they have been detrimental ones. But Sokal and Bricmont’s reading of Bergson is hugely weakened by falling for the usual, shallow stereotypes of his philosophy. Bergson’s extensive, long-term studies in psychology and biology are a testament to his respect for the methods and findings of the sciences. Of course, he never thought that philosophy itself could be reduced to science, but nor did he think that science could be reduced to philosophy (or language, or culture, or power). Philosophy is simply the space where we can, and have the duty to, interpret, or re-view, the underdetermined findings of science with new (metaphysical) ideas (rather than the lazy, mechanistic interpretations they usually acquire). The role of the philosopher is to engage with these scientific materials and provide them with the metaphysics – the vision of singularity – that they require.

64. Bergson, The Creative Mind, 207–8, in Œuvres, 1439. When Bergson proclaims “Je n’ai pas de système,” there is no tone of apology in his voice (Mélanges, 362, 940).
66. See Sokal and Bricmont, Impostures intellectuelles, ch. 11.
Philosophy has its freedoms, just as science has, but it is philosophy’s peculiar function to take the indeterminacy of the object as its object. Moreover, that indeterminacy is not the object of philosophy’s representation but, rather, philosophy simply is the indeterminacy immanent within the object. Freedom, indeterminacy, the underdetermined – these are only other names for the singularity and alterity that always attract Bergsonian thought, that are the indefinite end of its immanent regard (attention, sympathy, intuition). Freedom was the topic of Bergson’s first work, Time and Free Will, which argued against free will being spatialized as a decision between possible choices, for real freedom creates the illusion of preexisting choices retrospectively; freedom was also the core idea of Bergson’s most famous work, Creative Evolution, life being itself the freedom to create new forms of life; and freedom was also the final word of his most difficult work, Matter and Memory, which showed how freedom is always “intimately organized” with necessity and has its roots deep within it. Freedom is a given fact for Bergson: the core immediate datum that is named and renamed in his works, but that remains the abiding value throughout. It is equally the value at the heart of his method and of his metaphysics. It is the free act that is able to “break the circle” of intellectual aporia by multiplying (by seeing) the number of variables creating the paradox.}

Perhaps this freedom, then, also provides a solution to the paradox of Bergson himself, whose influence seems all the more pronounced just as it is refused (or it refuses) a clear place in history. It is possible that there was never a need to reverse history’s “damnation of Bergson,” for history’s neglect is perfectly adequate to the cause: Bergsonism = Freedom. Freedom does not exist in a vacuum: like its synonyms, Life, the Real, or duration, we must understand freedom to mean that which resists homogeneous space, that which resists static placement, that which resists historical identity. Durée itself is the freedom to resist. Consequently, Bergsonism is not the name of a philosophy, but the name of what resists (any one) naming. In this respect, Bergson’s place is a non-place, invisible as an influence, although all the more influential nevertheless on account of that invisibility. If this means that Bergson cannot be given a place in history, cannot be spatialized with clear lines of influence streaming from his work down to his theoretical progeny, then perhaps this is something that we ourselves should not try to resist either. Rather than a history of Bergson, we might look for a Bergsonian history instead.

68. See Bergson, Creative Evolution, 124, in Œuvres, 659–60.
HENRI BERGSON

MAJOR WORKS


I. NEO-KANTIANISM IN GERMANY

“Neo-Kantianism” is the name for a broad philosophical movement that sought to revive Kant’s philosophy in a radically changed philosophical and, more broadly, cultural landscape. It flourished especially in Germany, but also in France and, to a lesser extent, in Italy and a few other European countries (including Eastern Europe). It reached its apex between 1880 and 1920. In Germany, it grew out of a decidedly academic context – as opposed to “renegade” writers such as Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, who disdained academic philosophy – although its origins lie, in part, in sociopolitical discourses stemming from the societal problems posed by the Industrial Revolution and the worker question (Arbeiterfrage). The other background is the challenge posed to philosophy by the impressively and quickly progressing natural sciences in the era of positivism. Both of these tendencies arose around the middle of the nineteenth century, in a time when, as was often noted, Hegel’s system had “collapsed.” In both cases, to be elucidated below, the call was issued, “Back to Kant!”

1. Sebastian Luft is primarily responsible for the sections dealing with neo-Kantianism in Germany, while Fabien Capeillères is the primary author of the sections dealing with neo-Kantianism in France.
The term “neo-Kantianism” was not used until the late 1880s, and then in a polemical fashion by its critics. The neo-Kantian movement, however, was (with the possible exception of the Marburg School), far from unitary and cohesive, as evidenced by the alternative names for this movement: (neo-)Criticism and neo-Fichteanism, among others. But around 1900, “neo-Kantianism” stuck. The demarcations concerning who belongs to this movement and who does not are to this day contested. Although it was a very broad movement, thinkers who might well be counted among its members – Nicolai Hartmann, Wilhelm Dilthey, or Edmund Husserl, for instance – are rarely included. In Germany, the neo-Kantian movement crystallized around the two “power centers”: the “Marburg School” in Marburg, a small university town in the state of Hessa north of Frankfurt, and the “Southwest School” at the universities of Freiburg and Heidelberg.

Given its academic location – all the neo-Kantians were university professors or professional academics – the neo-Kantian movement is also a history of successful university politics: neo-Kantianism in Germany soon exerted its power over nearly all German-speaking universities (including Switzerland and Austria), and its representatives were heavily involved in shaping hiring policies and academic curricula. Around the turn of nineteenth century, neo-Kantianism had attained what Jürgen Habermas once called an “imperial stance” that lasted until its near collapse after the First World War and its total disintegration in Nazi Germany as of 1933. But its dissolution was in itself part of the legacy of neo-Kantianism: many of the leading neo-Kantians were Jews and, not surprisingly, prosecuted by Hitler’s fascist regime. The removal of the main neo-Kantian philosophers from academia and from German culture – most of them were left-wing liberals anchoring the Weimar Republic in the values of the Enlightenment – was a consequence that reflected more than just official anti-Semitic policies. To many contemporaries, and Heidegger is here a good example of this attitude, the neo-Kantians represented not only a dated model of philosophy; in addition, their liberal politics, also diffusely associated with “Jewishness,” reflected a politics whose time had passed. When Heidegger, in a letter from 1929, railed against the “jewification of the German spirit” (Verjudung des deutschen Geistes),

(Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1978). Brief overviews of the neo-Kantian movement can be found in Hans-Ludwig Ollig, Der Neukantianismus (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), and Manfred Pascher, Einführung in den Neukantianismus (Munich: UTB, 1997). A full-scale account of the neo-Kantian movement does not exist to this day, although certain thinkers or schools have been covered in greater detail. For work on the Marburg School, for example, cf. the important works by Holzhey (see bibliography), and for an historical account, cf. Ulrich Sieg, Aufstieg und Niedergang des Marburger Neukantianismus: Die Geschichte einer philosophischen Schulgemeinschaft (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994). The account here is indebted to and draws from all of these sources.
we see that “to be Jewish” was more than a creed; it was a philosophical as well as a political “lifestyle.”

Due to their dominant position between 1890 and 1914, the neo-Kantians were harshly attacked by nearly all the other philosophical movements that emerged after the First World War, including phenomenology, Lebensphilosophie, existentialism (Jaspers, the early Heidegger), and logical positivism. This critique of what was perceived as the dominant philosophical school in Germany became so much a part of the self-definition of these new tendencies that many, if not most, new philosophical movements and ideas cannot be understood without at least a basic knowledge of the neo-Kantian paradigms and theories that they argued against. Defining one’s own project vis-à-vis the neo-Kantians became almost the modus operandi in many a philosopher’s work, and we see this in Husserl’s transcendental–eidetic phenomenology, Scheler’s value ethics, Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity, and Carnap’s and the Vienna School’s attempt at a “truly” scientific philosophy.

In short, the history of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century philosophy cannot be adequately assessed without knowledge of neo-Kantianism. It is curious, then, to note that for over forty years (essentially after the Second World War), neo-Kantianism has been largely ignored by scholarship. As of the 1980s, however, increasing attention in Europe has been directed toward the work of the neo-Kantians and the importance of neo-Kantianism has also been brought to the fore by some scholars in North America. It is to be anticipated that neo-Kantianism will also become a widely discussed field of research in the next decade in North America for scholars working in the history of philosophy, history and philosophy of science, philosophy of culture, and “continental philosophy,” broadly construed. This revival is evidenced by a good number of international conferences held in the past decade not only in Germany, France, and Italy, but also in the United States.

Despite the important role of neo-Kantianism in the philosophical landscape of the time, it is, ironically, hard to point to any seminal works by any of the major figures. Of these major figures, Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, Wilhelm Windelband, and Heinrich Rickert were the most famous, along with Ernst Cassirer, whose writings were widely received and translated. This is not to say that the literary output was not most impressive: all of these philosophers wrote books at the rate at which most academics today write articles. Nevertheless, some of the systematic approaches of the neo-Kantians have to be pieced together through a synopsis of several works. This dearth of “seminal works” also has philosophical reasons; it has to do with the nature of the neo-Kantian movement itself.

and the type of work that it did and promoted – despite all differences of outlook and emphasis. Hence, to understand the distinct character of the neo-Kantian movement, let us return to its origins in the then-contemporary political thought and natural science.

Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–75) and Otto Liebmann (1840–1912) might both be considered “fathers” of neo-Kantianism. Lange published two works in 1865, which became defining works for the nascent movement, *Die Arbeiterfrage* (The worker question) and *Geschichte des Materialismus* (History of Materialism), while Liebmann’s *Kant und die Epigonen* (1865) was very popular at the time. Both of Lange’s books tackle the issue of the modern *conditio humana* and the problems arising from humankind’s situation in the industrial age, which posed many new and hitherto unknown challenges (mass society, the problem of the working class, etc.). Lange also participated in the Vereinstag Deutscher Arbeitervereine, the German Workers’ Association, an ancestor of the German Social Democratic Party (the SPD). However, as the title *Geschichte des Materialismus* indicates, Lange attempted to place these concrete problems into a larger philosophical context. The problem was, in his opinion, “materialism” and its disdain of human spirit and “idealistic” values in a broadly conceived sense of the term, along with materialism’s tendency to reduce humans to functioning wheels in the machinery of modern industrial society. Hence, a decidedly political sense of “idealism” runs through neo-Kantianism. This tendency led to interesting and – judging from political debate among social democrats worldwide – still valid social-democratic ideas, which took hold especially in the Marburg School. Both Hermann Cohen and Natorp, for example, promoted what they called “social idealism” as an explicit rejection of a socialism stemming from the Marxist tradition. Thus, in reconstructing the origins of neo-Kantianism, one needs to keep in mind this political background and the societal context that the neo-Kantians attempted to address in a Kantian vein, while Marxist ideas were developing in elsewhere in Germany, England, and Russia.

The other origin, which connects more directly to Kant and hence constitutes the general alliance with the Sage of Königsberg and “Kantianism” in a broader sense, came, interestingly enough, from within the natural sciences. Here scientists confronted the problems that arose once natural science became “scientific” in the modern sense of the term, and the speculative Naturphilosophie of the German Idealists and the Romantics, especially Schelling, became an object of ridicule. It was in fact a scientist – Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–94) – who, in his physical and optical experiments, discovered the influence of the observer on that which was being observed. In his famous speech *Über das

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*4. For a discussion of Schelling, see the essay by Joseph P. Lawrence in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*.
Sehen des Menschen (On man’s seeing, 1855), he attempted to formulate these ideas in Kantian terms, claiming that “all cognition of reality must be derived from experience.” In this manner, he thought that his study of the physiology of the senses had confirmed in a scientific manner Kant’s “organization of the mind,” namely “that the manner of our perceptions is equally determined by the nature of our senses as through external objects.” Hence, experimental natural science seemed to confirm Kant’s transcendental turn, without, however, the idealist baggage that burdened both Kant and his idealist aftermath. Early neo-Kantian philosophers such as Cohen soon took up this challenge and placed Helmholtz’s ideas on a firmer philosophical foundation. While they welcomed the fact that an experimental scientist had made the way “back to Kant,” they felt that this move took place in the (problematic) spirit of naturalism. As a result, the scientists’ return to Kant received an enthusiastic reception on the part of philosophers of the Kantian stripe, but the neo-Kantians also felt that this scientific return to Kant needed to be monitored carefully. The close connections to the sciences became one of the trademarks of neo-Kantianism. In an unfavorable reading, which, however, became popular (and which one still finds quoted today), neo-Kantianism was criticized in this vein for reducing philosophy to the “handmaiden of the sciences.” While this description is, as we shall see, unfair, it is true that the proximity to scientific endeavors and a reflection on the status and nature of the sciences – both the natural and the human sciences – became a dominant characteristic that defined and popularized neo-Kantian ideas.

Helmholtz’s work exemplifies the rehabilitation of Kantian philosophy that emerged from discussions within the sciences and the philosophy of science. The call to return to Kant was soon taken up by philosophers or those – such as Cohen, who started out as an experimental psychologist – who turned to philosophy under this influence. Yet, once Kant had become re-established as an eminent philosophical figure with whom to approach epistemological questions in the sciences, another field of activity emerged that also helped to strengthen the overall stance of the neo-Kantian movement within Germany, namely Kant philology and Kant scholarship. With the development of rigorous philology in the nineteenth century and new editorial techniques arose the inauguration of critical Kant editions that adhered to these new standards. “Complete Works” editions had up to then either not existed or were, for example, in the notorious case of Hegel, not philologically sound in the light of contemporary editorial practices. Under the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey, the Kant edition initiated by the Berlin Academy of the Sciences, begun in 1900 and staffed by philosophers in the neo-Kantian vicinity – Erich Adickes, Benno Erdmann, and others – stands (for the

most part) the test of modern editorial philology. The importance of this editorial work for the dissemination of Kant’s philosophy cannot be overemphasized.

In addition to the Berlin edition, the late nineteenth century saw an impressive proliferation of commentaries on Kant’s works. Some of the classical Kant scholarship produced then – commentaries by Cassirer, Cohen, Hans Vaihinger, and others – are to this day classics of Kant research. These basic readings defined the main avenues in which Kant would subsequently be read. In other words, what the neo-Kantians achieved, actively and conscientiously, was a canonization of Kant as he is perceived today: as the towering figure in modern philosophy. This is not to say that this status is not due to Kant’s philosophy itself; however, a writer needs a functioning “transmission belt” that conveys one’s thoughts to the readers. This is what the neo-Kantians achieved in an exemplary manner. While this might seem tangential to the actual philosophical importance of neo-Kantianism, it is indeed not to be dismissed, as it established both Kant in the position seen today and, in turn, the neo-Kantians as the “true” heirs of this seminal figure in the history of Western philosophy.

Since the neo-Kantian movement is anything but a unified school, we shall now turn to the Marburg School and the Southwestern School, respectively, to discuss their mutual contributions to modern philosophy. This short historical overview will have to confine itself to these two main groups.6

The Marburg School: Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, Ernst Cassirer

The Marburg School is the most “compact” group within neo-Kantianism, judging from its self-understanding and outward projection. This unity is due to the method that its founder, Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), developed out of his Kant interpretation. This method is called the Transcendental Method, in recognition of Kant’s method, although the term is itself not to be found in Kant’s oeuvre. This focus on method has led some to accuse the Marburg School of a “methodological fanaticism,” although we shall see that the method itself plays a crucial role in the Marburg School’s epistemological paradigm. Surrounded by a very

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6. As mentioned, most philosophy departments in Germany and Austria were dominated by neo-Kantians and to do justice to this movement as a whole one would have to discuss figures whose names can merely be listed here: the largely independent Richard Hönsigwald (1875–1947) in Breslau (Gadamer’s first teacher there), later Munich; the critical realist Alois Riehl in Graz (1844–1924); the philosopher of law Leonard Nelson (1882–1927); Jonas Cohn (1869–1947) in Freiburg; Bruno Bauch (1877–1942), the editor of Kant Studien; and for the youngest generation of neo-Kantians after the Second World War, sometimes referred to as “neo-neo-Kantians” (a somewhat excessive title), Richard Zocher (1887–1976), Hans Wagner (1917–2000), and Wolfgang Cramer (1901–74), father of Konrad Cramer (1933–).

wide, national as well as international, circle of pupils and adherents, the main figures of this group are Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp (1854–1924) and Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945). Cassirer is sometimes not counted as belonging to the Marburg School, although he is acknowledged to be one of the most significant philosophers who emerged from the neo-Kantian tradition as a whole. Unlike Cohen and Natorp, who were professorial colleagues at the University of Marburg and formed a unique coalition of great influence both within and outside the university, Cassirer was a generation younger and never actually taught in Marburg. The offspring of a rich Jewish family with relatives in Berlin, Munich, and Vienna, Cassirer rather disliked small-town life such as that of Marburg, a city with a population of some 30,000 at the time. Still, for reasons to be discussed, he deserves to be counted among the Marburg School and its method.

Cohen was by all accounts the dominant figure of this school; being also a charismatic and irritable character, he was the main attraction for students who, after his arrival in Marburg in 1873, soon flocked around him. His ally Natorp was initially one of them, but soon secured his own position at the university, first as a librarian, then later, with Cohen’s mentorship, as a professor. Cohen taught in Marburg until his retirement in 1912. He spent his last years living in Berlin teaching at the Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Academy for the Science of Judaism), where he taught mainly on Judaism and the philosophy of religion and was influential on a newer generation of thinkers such as Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber.

Cohen first made a name for himself through his influential commentaries on Kant’s three Critiques. The commentary on the First Critique, entitled Kants Theorie der Erfahrung (Kant’s theory of experience), became especially influential for Kant scholarship as well as for the popularization of the “Marburg Method.” Once these three voluminous commentaries were completed (1912), Cohen turned to composing his own “System of Philosophy” in three volumes analogous to Kant’s Critiques – Logik der Reinen Erkenntnis (Logic of pure

8. As will become evident below in the treatment of Cohen’s closest collaborator, Natorp, they seemed to have, as eyewitnesses report, polar opposite characters. Whereas Natorp was generally perceived as solid and reliable, Cohen seemed to have a choleric temper, which he did not even attempt to keep under wraps and which was directed at different people and peoples. To give just one example, Cohen, who discovered his Jewish roots after the Dreyfus affair, despised assimilated Jews and did not hold back judgment. One person whom he vilified in this way was, for instance, Husserl; see quotations from Cohen’s correspondence with Natorp in Sebastian Luft, “Reconstruction and Reduction: Natorp and Husserl on Method and the Question of Subjectivity,” in Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy, Sebastian Luft and Rudolf Makkreel (eds) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 84–5 n.3.

cognition), *Ethik des Reinen Willens* (Ethics of pure willing), and *Ästhetik des Reinen Gefühls* (Aesthetic of pure sentiment) – which appeared between 1902 and 1912. A transitional work, but from a developmental standpoint crucial, since it allowed Cohen to explicitly formulate his “transcendental method” (the centerpiece of the Marburg School), was the small study *Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte* (The principle of the infinitesimal method and its history). Cohen’s system was supposed to be rounded off by a fourth part, a psychology explicating the “unity of cultural consciousness,” but Cohen passed away before beginning it. Shortly before his death, Cohen completed his late manuscript on religion, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Religion of reason out of the sources of Judaism), which was published posthumously and recently has attracted considerable attention in the philosophy of religion and Jewish studies.

To understand Cohen’s original approach culminating in the “transcendental method,” one must first assess his Kant interpretation. The thesis that Cohen boldly puts forth claims that with his Copernican turn Kant founded nothing less than a new concept of *experience*. Experience is not mere perception or intuition, but establishes *laws* about that which is experienced. In other words, according to Cohen, the experience Kant is talking about is that of the *scientist*. Cohen famously declares that Kant conceived his revolutionary Copernican turn as he meditated on Newton’s *Principia Mathematica*. “Not the stars in the heavens,” he writes, “are the phenomena, but the astronomical data that the scientist establishes, these are the contents of experience.”

10. The experience of the scientist, in establishing laws of nature, thereby *constructs* nature as a mathematical universe. For Kant, Newtonian physics exists and, because of its mathematical method, is able to give rise to synthetic judgments *a priori*. In Cohen’s interpretation, Kant’s question concerning the transcendental condition of the possibility of *a priori* cognition is really concerned with the question of how those *a priori* truths established in natural (physical) science become possible and how they can be justified. The accepted cornerstone – which Kant called the *factum* – that philosophy has to clarify is the “factum of the sciences” (*das Faktum der Wissenschaften*) in which reality is constructed. Taking cues from the analytic method Kant pursues in the *Prolegomena*, this entails that philosophy’s job is to *reconstruct* the conditions of possibility through which this *factum* comes about.

The manner in which Cohen recasts Kant’s transcendental turn is, essentially, by rejecting the two stems doctrine (concepts and intuitions). His solution is Hegelian, as he grounds all knowledge and experience of reality in *a priori* concepts. Reality as experienced is *constructed* through and through, and

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this construction occurs through the use of concepts that are applied to what is experienced. Cohen grounds this premise on the discovery of the infinitesimal in mathematics, according to which all entities are constructed in thought on the basis of the category of the infinitesimally small. Since these concepts are a priori (Cohen prefers the word “pure”), reality as we encounter it is constructed in pure thought. The task of philosophy is to lay the foundations of objective knowledge in pure thought, but the laying of these foundations is modified by scientific progress. That is, scientific progress makes new concepts necessary, and since all scientific cognition is in principle falsifiable, the foundations themselves are subject to constant re-evaluation and scrutiny. Philosophy is no longer a science of ultimate foundations (Grundlagenwissenschaft) – the traditional task of metaphysics prior to Kant’s transcendental turn – but is a science of laying foundations (Grundlegungswissenschaft) in “pure thought.”

Cohen’s transcendental method grounds all knowledge of the world in pure thought. But Cohen’s restatement of Kant’s transcendental idealism operates on the basis of an unacknowledged Hegelian influence. This influence consists in the notion that the system of categories is not a “static” table of concepts, established once and for all, but something that evolves over time. This evolution, now departing from Hegelian idealism, is not that of absolute spirit but of scientific progress “on the ground.” Theoretical philosophy becomes a logic of categories that have their origin in pure thought, and epistemology is recast as a “logic of origin” (Ursprungslogik), in which self-generated categories in thought (as their origin) become constituted as functional (not substantial) categories, forming a web of relations as a matrix for orientation in thought. This is to say that what Cassirer later formulated in his reconstruction of the shift from ancient to modern science – the move from a substance to a functional ontology – in effect already takes place in Cohen’s logic. Cohen’s late philosophy in his logic of origin differs from Hegel’s, accordingly, in that thought categories lay the foundations for scientific thought. This logic is not, in other words, a “self-constructing path,” as Hegel calls his method, but an a priori foundation of scientific thinking in an a priori category system that is itself dynamic and ever-evolving. For Cohen, philosophy is the justification of the factum that is already established (the mathematical sciences) and reconstructs their constructive activity, thereby justifying the knowledge claims of the scientist.

This abbreviated discussion of Cohen’s philosophical system – his ethics, aesthetics, and political philosophy have been passed over – has focused on

the transcendental method that forms the nodal point around which the other two significant thinkers of the Marburg School constructed their systems. The principle of human beings’ construction of reality provides the crucial element for understanding this school. Reality, insofar as it is entirely constructed by the activities of the human spirit, of which scientific thought is merely one, albeit its most dignified, application, is the reality of humanity’s cultural activities. The Marburg School is in this sense unified as outlining an encompassing transcendental philosophy of culture.13 In the Marburg reading, to quote Cassirer, Kant’s critique of reason is recast as a “critique of culture.”

Natorp, after wavering between pursuing a career as a classical philologist, musician, or philosopher, finally came to focus on philosophy and moved to Marburg to study under Cohen. Cohen soon incorporated him into his growing group of collaborators. An avid student of the natural sciences and mathematics, Natorp was probably the most erudite member of this school. He wrote on ancient philosophy, ancient and modern science, social and political philosophy, and, last but not least – since his Chair was also dedicated to pedagogy – pedagogical philosophy, especially that of Heinrich Pestalozzi. A more agreeable character14 and also a lucid writer – Cohen’s writings were considered dense and difficult – Natorp helped the Marburg School gain a broader acceptance and popularity than Cohen himself would have been able to achieve. Given the openly anti-Semitic sentiment in large parts of German society and especially German academia, it is likely that, without Natorp on his side, Cohen, clearly the most innovative neo-Kantian, would have remained isolated and far less influential in the academic landscape of his time. The Marburg School must be seen as constituted by both individuals: Cohen, sometimes referred to as “minister of the exterior,” and Natorp, dubbed “minister of the interior.” Together they formed a powerful alliance and a functioning collaboration that lasted more than a quarter century.15

In addition to his writings on figures in the history of philosophy – most notably Plato – and on special problems in the philosophy of science, Natorp

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14. Cf. footnote 8 above for an illustration of Cohen’s character. For an example of Natorp’s greater effect on the scientific community of his day, one can point out that nearly all statements of the Marburg School that were received in the philosophical and wider public stemmed from Natorp’s pen; for the logical method of the Marburg School, for example his Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaften (actually Cohen’s domain), and for a general, and popular, expression of the Marburg School as a whole, one should note that Natorp’s Philosophie: Ihr Problem und ihre Probleme (discussed in the main text above), was first published in 1911 and was re-edited four times during Natorp’s lifetime.
was also the only notable neo-Kantian who was able to write an unusually brief (150 pages) and bestselling treatise: Philosophie: Ihr Problem und Ihre Probleme (Philosophy: its problem and its problems). This text, which is a lucid “mission statement” of Marburg neo-Kantianism, has perhaps rightfully been considered the Programmschrift of the entire neo-Kantian movement. Yet Natorp’s initial fame was based on his influential 1903 work on Plato: Platos Ideenlehre: Eine Einführung in den Idealismus (Plato’s theory of ideas: an introduction to idealism). As the title indicates, Natorp’s peculiar interpretation concerning Plato’s theory of the Forms is that it is really an epistemological position – idealism – rather than a metaphysical one. More specifically, Natorp claims, Plato’s ideas are nothing but natural laws that govern physical entities. Laws are that which make things what they are, what is “valid” about them. Soon after its publication, this bold thesis was harshly criticized, since it seems to read Newtonian physics and Kant’s transcendental turn back into Plato’s premodern thought; but given the close alliance with modern science, this reading is perhaps less surprising stemming from a Marburger than it first appears. In this sense, Natorp’s Plato is less a work of Plato exegesis than a restatement of the type of idealism professed in the Marburg School.16

Natorp’s most substantial philosophical contribution to the Marburg School was his psychology and concomitant theory of subjectivity. Dismissed by Cohen – although not openly – Natorp’s idea of a philosophical psychology started out as a side project when he published in 1888 his short Einleitung in die Psychologie nach Kritischer Methode (Introduction to psychology according to critical method). This later turned into a full-fledged, yet ultimately abandoned, project when he published the “second edition” Allgemeine Psychologie nach Kritischer Methode (General psychology according to critical method), which had grown to 350 pages, more than three times its original size. In 1887, he published the influential article “Ueber Objective und Subjective Begründung der Erkenntniss” (On objective and subjective grounding of cognition), where he systematically laid out his idea of a philosophical – not experimental, as in the Brentano and Wundt Schools – psychology.

Natorp’s psychology grew directly out of problems that he saw with the transcendental method. If the latter is about constructing reality, all that this method accounts for philosophically are the finished “products” such as scientific theories; these are the “outcome” of humanity’s creative activity. In other words, all

that philosophy was to do was justify after the fact what the sciences were “always already” doing. What was missing was an account of the creative, subjective life that creates these cultural products. This should be, Natorp asserted, the task of a critical psychology. Its purpose was, more precisely, to recover this creative, subjective life by going in the opposite direction of the transcendental, constructive method. That is to say, it should proceed reconstructively from the finished products back to the creative life that was involved in their constructive processes. Metaphorically, Natorp described the psychological, reconstructive method as a “minus” vis-à-vis a “plus” direction on one and the same line. What was to be regained would be this active, dynamic life that had come to a standstill once cultural products had been formed. This method should remain faithful to the essentially dynamic life of consciousness. All other psychological approaches treated consciousness with objectifying methods; when reading accounts of consciousness, Natorp complains, he feels as though he is walking through a morgue instead of studying bodies filled with life. The reconstructive method was the method to finally overcome this problem. At the same time, given the metaphor of the plus and minus directions, it is clear that the reconstructive method is entirely dependent on the transcendental method; Natorp calls it its “inverse” application. That is, the reconstructive method of psychology serves a transcendental–philosophical function within the overall Marburg Method that was to account for subjectivity in all of its dimensions – in its cultural products and in its dynamic status nascendi – hence, psychology “according to critical method.” Natorp’s intention was not that this should replace or be in competition with experimental psychologies, but that it was intended to add a piece within the overall transcendental epistemology that the Marburg School had taken over from Kant, but which would remain incomplete unless this “subjective” part was supplied.

The subjective life, once it had been discovered through reconstruction, Natorp frames in terms of what he calls “conscious-ity” (Bewusstheit). Through this neologism he attempted to capture the very fact of “being conscious” of conscious life, with its conscious contents. Moreover, his reconstructive method would proceed genetically, that is, it would provide not static laws (of objectifying science), but genetic accounts of the dynamic life of consciousness, going down to the origins of consciousness where one cannot even speak of “consciousness” any longer. In his late work, Natorp simply calls it “life.” Other than these principal philosophical insights, however, the actual results of Natorp’s psychology were meager and Natorp himself abandoned the opposition between objective

17. Paul Natorp, Allgemeine Psychologie nach Kritischer Methode (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1912), 16, 31. As Natorp explains there, an example of such “objectivist” treatment is the application of the mechanistic model of natural causality to the sphere of the psyche.
and subjective methods in favor of a more deeply grounded “all-method” that synthesized both subjectivist and objectivist methods. In his somewhat idiosyncratic late philosophical system, Natorp was seen to have departed from his Marburg roots (as some critics, clearly under the influence of Heidegger, have remarked), and given this verdict, Natorp’s late system has been vastly underappreciated. Challenging the fundamental assumptions of Kant’s philosophy as well as that of the Marburg School as a whole, the question as to how one should ultimately interpret this school turns on the issue of whether it represents the final fulfillment of Kant’s intentions if one spells out the implications of transcendental philosophy, or whether it is a radical departure from the Kantian paradigms. At any rate, his psychological method and his account of subjectivity have had significant impact on other theories, including Husserl’s phenomenology and Heidegger’s fundamental ontology of Dasein.

Cohen and Natorp formed such a close alliance that differences between them tended to remain subdued and unarticulated (either in public or even between them). When Cohen left Marburg for Berlin in 1912, Natorp, who remained in Marburg until his death in 1924, experienced something of a renaissance. In his lectures he developed his original philosophical system, which he worked on until his last days. In his late thought he wanted to form an all-encompassing method, incorporating mystical elements into a totalizing philosophical system. The manuscript, which was prepared for publication by Natorp himself, remained unpublished until 1954. There has been some speculation that the publication was discouraged at the time by Heidegger, who was professor in Marburg as of 1921 and who was familiar with Natorp’s latest developments. In fact, Natorp’s last intuitions, which focused on the simple and original fact of being simply being – the basic factum of the “es gibt” – bear some resemblance to Heidegger’s Seinsfrage.

The most important and also most influential individual for twentieth-century philosophy stemming from the Marburg School was undoubtedly Ernst Cassirer. He ingeniously picked up the main lines from his teachers Cohen and Natorp, weaving them into his own philosophical system, while incorporating

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18. Cf., for example, Christoph Von Wolzogen, *Die Autonome Relation: Zum Problem der Beziehung im Spätwerk Paul Natorps; Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theorien der Relation* (Würzburg and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), who also lists examples of such readings (von Wolzogen himself reads Natorp in this Heideggerian manner as well).
20. Cf. von Wolzogen, *Die Autonome Relation*, who lists some quotations from Heidegger’s correspondence in support of this hypothesis. It would be, ironically, Gadamer, pupil of both Natorp and Heidegger, who later favored the publication of this text, as witnessed by his laudatory introduction “Paul Natorp,” in Natorp, *Philosophische Systematik*, xi–xviii.
influences from such diverse fields as linguistics, anthropology, and other (“hard”) sciences, such as contemporary physics. He was the most original and also most prolific offspring of the Marburg School. Coming from a wealthy family, he neither aspired to be a university professor, nor were his chances as a Jew ever very good in German academia at the time. Nevertheless, he was considered one of the strongest of his generation, earning his first recognition as a historian of philosophy through his studies on Leibniz and Renaissance and early modern thought. He was also involved in new editions of the works of Leibniz and Kant. His monograph, *Kant’s Leben und Lehre (Kant’s Life and Thought)*, originally intended as the introductory essay to the Kant edition but not published until after the First World War, has become a classic in Kant scholarship, while his four-volume *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit* (The problem of knowledge in modern philosophy and science) is an excellent example of neo-Kantian Problemgeschichte.\(^{21}\) One would, however, not do justice to his philosophical originality – which unfortunately has sometimes been the case – were he to be restricted to his early work on the history of philosophy.

After the First World War, Cassirer did receive a call as professor (*Ordinarius*) to the newly founded university of Hamburg, where he became Rektor (president) in 1929–30, the highest academic position that any Jew ever occupied in Germany. Quickly reading the signs of the times, he and his extended family left Nazi Germany in 1933. Cassirer emigrated first to England, then to Sweden, where he fled from the Nazis anew as they invaded that country in 1941. He was then invited to a visiting professorship at Yale, where he stayed for three years. In 1944, he assumed another visiting appointment at Columbia. Already in failing health and highly distressed by the war reports, he died of a heart attack on the streets of New York in 1945, shortly before the end of the Second World War. It has been speculated that his influence, especially in the US, would have been considerably stronger had he lived to see his original work, published in German and only slowly becoming translated, come to fruition in the New World.\(^{22}\)

Sometimes referred to as a watershed event in twentieth-century philosophy, the famous encounter between Cassirer and Heidegger in the Swiss town of Davos in 1929 must be mentioned.\(^{23}\) During the annually held *Hochschultage*

\(^{21}\) See the section on *Problemgeschichte* below.


\(^{23}\) There is a smattering of literature on this event, beginning – at least in recent scholarship – with Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2000) Cf. also the recent article by Gordon, “Neo-Kantianism and the Politics of Enlightenment.”
devoted to intellectual topics – in 1929, Kant’s philosophy and its interpretation – Heidegger and Cassirer conducted a well-attended dispute regarding their different interpretations of Kant’s philosophy. In truth, it amounted to a showdown between the two most prominent philosophers of the time: Heidegger, who had just published his groundbreaking *Being and Time* (1927); and Cassirer, who had just published the third volume of his philosophical system, the voluminous *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. While formally centering on the interpretation of Kant, the dispute was really about what, according to each, ought be considered the main purpose and intention of philosophy at large: for Cassirer, liberating the human being from his confinement in primitive and un-enlightened existence; for Heidegger, bringing human Dasein back into the “harshness and harshness of fate.” Given the events that would ensue in Germany in 1933, Heidegger’s role in them, and the fascist ideology the German people came to embrace – the country of the *Dichter und Denker* – it is not hard to see the wider and more profound implications of this encounter. This is not to say that these implications were clear at the time to those in the audience. However, in hindsight, this encounter bears an almost eerie premonition of what was to come. The reasons why contemporaries believed that Cassirer had been so thoroughly bested by Heidegger cannot be spelled out straightforwardly either, but can perhaps best be described as “atmospherical.” While the participants of the conference spent all day indoors debating, and dressed formally for the evening reception, Heidegger spent the days (presumably when he was not part of the program) skiing and showed up at the reception in his ski overalls, in total disregard of social etiquette. The “hardness of being” of the young and energetic Heidegger clashed against the bourgeois Cassirer, who seemed to be “in agreement with everything,” implying weak compromises reminiscent of the politics of the Weimar Republic, which compromised itself out of existence.

Regarding Cassirer’s character, it has been described as conciliatory and “Olympian,” which extends to his writings. These display a remarkable lucidity and, at the same time, philosophical modesty. At times the philosophical core of his argument can be lost in the wealth of historical erudition that accompanies

24. This dispute is published as “Davos Disputation Between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger,” in Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Richard Taft (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997). For important essays on this encounter, see Dominic Kaegi and Enno Rudolph (eds), *Cassirer–Heidegger: 70 Jahre Davoser Disputation* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2000). Among those who travelled to Davos to witness this encounter were Rudolf Carnap, Eugen Fink, Herbert Marcuse, Joachim Ritter, Leo Strauss, Leon Brunschvicg, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean Cavaillé, and Maurice de Gandillac.  
25. In a telling anecdote, reported in Gordon, “Neo-Kantianism and the Politics of Enlightenment,” 223ff., students put on a mock debate between Heidegger and Cassirer one evening. Cassirer was played by the young Levinas, who supposedly let flour (= dust) trickle out of his sleeves, repeating the phrase “Ich bin mit allem einverstanden” (I agree with everything).
his accounts. Most of his writings focus on other thinkers and their theories, and he is content to raise philosophical issues in those contexts. Cassirer’s first original contribution to critical philosophy, which came fairly late in this young shooting star’s career, was his *Substanz- und Funktionsbegriff* (*Substance and Function*),\(^{26}\) which appears to discuss a seemingly remote problem in scientific concept formation, but in fact raises an issue that will be the cornerstone of his philosophical systematic: the distinction between a substantial and functional ontology and its epistemological implications. This basic insight, stemming from the groundwork laid by Cohen, was cashed out in his three-volume *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. In addition to these substantial tomes, Cassirer wrote the four-volume study *The Problem of Knowledge in Modern Philosophy* and a wide array of articles and smaller studies on mythology, linguistics, modern physics, and intellectual history. Once in the United States, he summarized his system in the popular book *An Essay on Man* (written in English). His last work, *The Myth of the State*, offers a penetrating critique of modern fascism based on his interpretation of the role of myth in the hierarchy of cultural achievements and its relation to modern totalitarianism.

Returning to his first systematic work, *Substance and Function*, Cassirer, taking his cue from Cohen’s paradigm of *construction*, traced the constructive activity of the human mind in the distinction between substantive and functional concepts in scientific nomenclature. Opposed to a substantial paradigm in which, following Aristotle’s substance ontology, concepts mirror things as substances, a new type of concept formation has taken hold in modernity: that of functional concepts. Functional concepts place the objects that they mirror into a *function*, as in mathematical functions (*f(x)*). What functional concepts mirror, then, are not substantial things, but functions, that is relations. Being a function means that the functional concept formation actually *constructs* the object of a particular scientific endeavor. Hence, Cassirer discovered Cohen’s constructive principle at the heart of scientific concept formation itself.

Relativitätstheorie (1920; published in English as “On Einstein’s Theory of Relativity: Considered from the Epistemological Standpoint” as a supplement to Substance and Function) identified the postulate of general covariance – that the laws of physics are the same in all reference frames, hence that the objects of fundamental physics must be represented as tensor expressions, valid in all coordinate systems – as a novel principle of objectifying unity, a significant further step away from anthropomorphic thing concepts toward an abstract and purely geometrical concept of object. Cassirer’s epistemological examination of quantum mechanics, Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics, written while in exile in Sweden in 1936, points to Heisenberg’s uncertainty relations and quantum statistics as even more striking transformations of the concept of object, where the old classical notions of physical state and individual identity are transformed, acquiring functional form. The thrust of each of these two works is an insistence that the concept of object in physics is subordinate to that of physical law, and accordingly that “objectivity or objective reality, is attained only because and insofar as there is conformity to law – not vice versa.”

But this was only Cassirer’s first step. For, Cassirer asserted, such a constructive activity is not present just in scientific concept formation – an activity of the human spirit, to be sure – but in all cultural activities. Construction is, in other words, a form of interpretation of something that could be completely different depending on the manner in which it is constructed. The sine curve (Cassirer’s example) in the mathematical context is, in an artistic manner of seeing, an ornament, and may represent any number of other contexts. Prior to such an interpretation – any interpretation – the thing is simply nothing for us. What a thing is depends on its context, and the context is something constructed through the human mind. Cassirer calls the agent of this activity spirit. That which is constructed, or the medium of construction, he calls, nodding to Kant’s “Transcendental Aesthetic,” a form. There is no simple object given (as a substance or substratum) that then receives a supervening interpretation, but there are only objects-in-contexts. There is no “raw” datum. The term for such an object within a form Cassirer takes over from his favorite author, Goethe, in calling it a symbol. Cassirer therefore calls his system that of symbolic forms. They are the forms of manifestation into which human spirit’s activity becomes

27. Ernst Cassirer, Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics: Historical and Systematic Studies of the Problem of Causality, O. Theodor Benfey (trans.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, [1936] 1956), 132. By showing that there is continuous progress toward pure signification in the process of objectification in physics, this book also rebuked the Nazis’ characterization of relativity and quantum physics as “Jewish” and “degenerate” science. The authors would like to thank Thomas Ryckman for his suggestions on how to treat this issue. Interested readers should consult Ryckman’s The Reign of Relativity: Philosophy in Physics 1915–1925 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
filled. Indeed, we live in a plurality of meaningful “contexts.” The three symbolic forms that Cassirer discusses in his *magnum opus* are language, myth, and scientific cognition. They are products of human spirit’s productive–constructive activity. His adaptation of the transcendental method traces the manner of construction in each form, respectively, while breaking with Cohen’s exclusively scientific–logistic paradigm. The modes of construction in each form are more freely described as different “logics” inhering in them. Cassirer’s system can also be described as a methodology of symbolic formation; thus, he is decidedly a methodological pluralist. But his methodological pluralism is incomprehensible without the fundamental constructive paradigm that is the signature of the “Marburg Method.”

Owing to his systematizing work in describing symbolic formation in different cultural contexts, his writings have become influential for several sciences, both human (anthropology, linguistics, aesthetics) and natural (such as physics). Before leaving Cassirer, a brief comment on his interpretation of fascism is in order. *The Myth of the State* rivals other classical texts dealing with fascism in the twentieth century. In his interpretation of the rise of fascism in the twentieth century, he argues that the phenomenon of fascism is the result of political propaganda that has allowed myth to re-enter the political arena, making porous the borders between responsible, rational action and mythical power. Myth, once overcome by Greek enlightenment, raises its ugly head once political discourse has become corrupted in a manner that allows mythical elements – Hitler, the “divine Führer,” the myth of the superior “Aryan Race,” and so on – to dominate political, democratic discourse.

**The Southwest School: Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert, Emil Lask**

The Southwest School is much less cohesive than the Marburg School; even the name “Southwest” indicates that this “movement” (to speak of a school is perhaps exaggerated) was localized in different university towns – Heidelberg and Freiburg im Breisgau, respectively. The main representatives were Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915) and his pupil Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936). An important member of this movement was Emil Lask (1875–1915), arguably the most interesting but also most difficult philosopher of this group and of significant influence for, among others, the young Heidegger. He died prematurely, however, in the trenches during the First World War. His “logic of philosophy” is a metaphilosophical category system for philosophy itself that, while highly

28. The Southwest School is sometimes also referred to as the “Baden School” after the state of Baden, part of the German Empire; the state was incorporated after the Second World War and is now called “Baden-Württemberg.”
original, is arguably a departure from neo-Kantianism in its Southwest mode and will not receive further discussion here.29

The Southwesterners were quite successful at their respective universities and shaped several generations of students. Windelband, for instance, was professor in Zurich, Freiburg, and Strasbourg (then German territory), before settling into Heidelberg, where he lived from 1903 until his death. Rickert became professor in Freiburg in 1896 before receiving a call to Heidelberg in 1916 to succeed Windelband, who had died the year before. Despite a mental illness that prohibited Rickert from making public appearances (he suffered from agoraphobia), he nevertheless exerted a substantial influence through his – often polemical and piercing – writings.30 While more loosely affiliated than the Marburg School, Rickert and Windelband nevertheless worked with certain core ideas that they shared, while not at all times agreeing in all details. Since their philosophical efforts displayed less of a systematic progression than the work of the members of the Marburg School, we shall be presenting the Southwest School in terms of their shared core ideas.31

(i) Writing the history of philosophy as a history of problems (Problemgeschichte)

Windelband, while best known as a historian of philosophy, is unfairly reduced to a historian insofar as he devised a new way of doing the history of philosophy, namely as the history of problems. While this might seem inconsequential today, to understand the history of philosophy as a development of philosophical problems was at the time quite innovative. Windelband’s historiological method took the emphasis away from individual philosophers and a quasi-biographical reconstruction of their work and placed that emphasis instead on the rich historical “horizon” that provided a historical–scientific–philosophical setting in which these philosophers worked. This setting is the process in which “European humanity” exposes its view of world and life (Welt- und Lebensauffassung). It is not a Hegelian scenario, in which history is the process of increasing knowledge of freedom, but rather a process in which thinkers and scientists communicate and interact. In this historical process, there are relevant factors that need to


30. Rickert’s reputation at the time indicates the significance of the acknowledgment given to the phenomenological movement when Husserl received the call to Freiburg in 1916 to succeed Rickert.

31. While the members of the Southwest School were no less respected in German academia than the Marburgers, their philosophical legacy has dwindled to nearly zero insofar as their achievements have become so much a part of the received idea of philosophical work that they can well be considered trivial.
be taken into account: pragmatic, cultural, and individual ones. A **pragmatic** consideration of the history of problems emphasizes that the same philosophical problems re-emerge throughout Western history in changed circumstances. The **cultural** aspect means that culture is the binding continuum that holds together seemingly incoherent scientific or philosophical discussions. And finally, the focus on **individuality** highlights the importance of individual characters in the history of philosophy. While this was the primary focus in earlier philosophical historiography, for the neo-Kantians this consideration now comes at the **end** of this historical reconstruction.\(^3\)\(^2\) This type of philosophical historiography – in conjunction with the meticulous work that neo-Kantian philosophers carried out in their editing of the original sources – has become the standard for any historical writings in philosophy. It has also been the target of attempts to provide alternative ways of doing the history of philosophy, and Heidegger’s “History of Being” and Gadamer’s “History of Effects”\(^3\)\(^3\) – both Heidegger and Gadamer knew this neo-Kantian method intimately – should be seen as direct critiques of the neo-Kantian method of doing history of philosophy.

**(ii) Distinctions in theory of science: idiographic and nomothetic sciences**
Perhaps the most famous legacy of the Southwest School is Windelband’s distinction between idiographic and nomothetic sciences, that is, between a science of the individual and singular and a science of the general and lawlike.\(^3\)\(^4\) Windelband lays out this influential distinction, at the height of his career, in his famous Presidential Address (*Rektoratsrede*) in Strasbourg in 1894.\(^3\)\(^5\) His starting-point is a critique of the traditional distinction between rational and empirical sciences. This distinction is no longer satisfactory; indeed, the development of certain sciences – most notoriously psychology and physics – has shown that the true results of these disciplines are neither purely rational nor purely empirical. An overview of the scientific activities of his day reveals a different distinction that seems to better fit the actual status quo, namely that between sciences of nature (*Naturwissenschaften*) and sciences of the human world (*Geisteswissenschaften*, sometimes also translated as “human” or “spiritual sciences,” or nowadays simply “humanities”). They are both sciences

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\(^3\)\(^3\) This aspect of Gadamer’s work is discussed in the essay by Wayne J. Froman in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.

\(^3\)\(^4\) Rickert expanded on this distinction and added some further details, but he was in general agreement with Windelband’s line of thought. Although one reads time and again that this idiographic–nomothetic distinction was introduced by Rickert, it is Windelband, however, who conceived it.

– Wissenschaften – peculiar to the English ear, meaning, literally translated, “knowledge-dom.” Such a distinction undercuts that of rational and empirical sciences and is indeed an advance over it. But such a distinction, although widely acknowledged in Windelband’s day, rests on ontological assumptions concerning the ontic regions of nature and spirit that present a problem. The science that reveals the problem with this distinction is psychology: what kind of science is one to group it under? As it has the human psyche as its object, one would be inclined to call it a human science. Yet insofar as its goal is experimentally verifiable general results, it has the character of a natural science.

Here Windelband intervenes with an attempt to undercut this distinction. Arguing that all sciences, insofar as they treat objects of experience, are empirical, the only questions are how and as what to interpret these empirically ascertained results. This new distinction between how and as what is not an ontological one, but – in good Kantian fashion – a methodological one. The focal points of cognition are, generally, the individual or the general. Both are, however, not absolute but merely relative terms. Scientific cognition oscillates between these extreme focal points when interpreting its findings. The scientific cognition of something individual Windelband calls idiographic (i.e. describing the individual, singular), that of something general, nomothetic (i.e. positing the general, lawlike). “The latter are sciences of laws [Gesetzeswissenschaften], the former are sciences of events [Ereigniswissenschaften]; the latter teach what is always the case, the former what occurred only once.”

For instance, if one wants to, as a historian, work on the French Revolution, one has to describe the individual characters and individual events that took place, and so on. On the other hand, if one wants to understand, as a chemist, the manner in which certain chemicals react together, one has to find out the general laws by which they function and react – always and in a reliable, repeatable pattern. But neither rests on an ontological premise. Indeed, the nomothetic and idiographic standards can be applied to one and the same ontic field. The classic example for this, according to Windelband, is the science of organic nature:

As systematics, it is of nomothetic character, insofar as it describes the always fixed types of living creatures, which have been experienced within the millennia of human observation as their lawlike form. As developmental history, where it presents the order of earthly organisms as a process of descent and transformation of species [i.e. in evolutionary theory] … there it is an idiographic discipline.

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36. Ibid., 145.
37. Ibid., 146.
This distinction stakes out a new type of science in the wake of the positivistic predicament that was rampant at the end of the nineteenth century, according to which naturalism was the method for all sciences. Contrary to the notion that human “disciplines” cannot be sciences precisely because they yield no general results, Windelband emphasized that the human sciences can indeed have the character of science with no less dignity than natural science if one has a different scientific ideal. The idiographic sciences have no less importance for the understanding of our world; indeed, if by “world” we mean not nature but culture, the idiographic sciences are more important. Windelband’s distinction was, in effect, an assertion of the importance of a genuine “science of culture” over the reduced notion of science as Wissenschaft in the sense of “natural science.”

As plausible as Windelband’s distinction might seem, it was the focus of criticisms from, among others, Dilthey and Husserl, both of whom, albeit for different reasons, rejected this distinction when it came to describing the proper object of the human sciences. For Dilthey, a description of human historical development need not be only idiographic, but instead could posit types of worldviews and typical character forms (i.e. types, not laws), and hence need not have to choose between individual and universal accounts. And Husserl’s attempt at an eidetic science of subjectivity goes even further, asserting the possibility of a “rigorous” (i.e. a priori) science of subjectivity after the transcendental–phenomenological reduction. Finally, Heidegger’s sketch of a hermeneutic of factual Dasein is predicated on a wholesale rejection of the (Platonic) distinction between the individual and the universal that underlies Windelband’s account. Here again we see that the influence of neo-Kantianism on twentieth-century philosophy is ex negativo, as the seminal philosophers mentioned here derive their methodological paradigms from a rejection of this Windelbandian distinction.

(iii) Philosophy as value theory

The idea of an idiographic science as the proper method of accessing the life of spirit or human culture was cashed out especially in Rickert’s work. Radicalizing Windelband, instead of seeing idiographic and nomothetic sciences as equally viable methods for cognition, Rickert privileges the idiographic over the nomothetic sciences. Informed by Rudolf Hermann Lotze’s philosophy of value – Lotze alleges that Plato’s ideas ought properly to be conceived as valid values – Rickert asserts in his influential work Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis (The object


39. Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817–81) was one of the leading German philosophers of the second half of the nineteenth century. A specialist in logic and philosophy of biology (he completed a medical degree along with his philosophy degree at Leipzig in 1838), he taught at Göttingen for almost forty years, beginning in 1844.
of cognition; first published in 1891 and re-edited six times, each time vastly reworked) that all cognition is in essence a form of valuing. Accepting Kant’s thesis of the primacy of practical reason, this primacy asserts itself, according to Rickert, already in the field of cognition insofar as cognizing is not a passive apprehending but a forming of the object of cognition as something to be integrated into culture, that is, the world of values. At stake, for Rickert, is nothing less than a redefinition of the traditional task of epistemology. The object that is represented in cognition is not something independent of its being cognized, but is something that is being formed by the subject. Transcendent reality, which to Kant was always mind-independent, is therefore dependent on the culturally creative subject. This, concomitantly, changes the traditional notion of the cognizing subject as “we must form a different notion of the cognizing subject as only representing consciousness and, consequently, also a different notion of the object and the measure of cognition as that of a transcendent reality.”

Given these two poles of cognition, one can approach the problem from both the subjective and objective sides. The subjective path leads to a transcendental psychology, the objective one to a transcendental logic; both are disciplines within transcendental philosophy. However, the empirical approach to the object of cognition remains valid in the empirical sciences; Rickert thus maps Kant’s idealism–realism distinction onto that of philosophy and the empirical sciences. This dual approach is Rickert’s restatement of Kant’s transcendental idealism.

In his second famous work, *Die Grenzen der Naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (The limits of concept formation in natural science; first published in 1896), Rickert expands on the epistemological foundations while also drawing from Windelband’s idiographic–nomothetic distinction. As the title indicates, concept formation in the natural sciences has limitations. It leads, if pursued to its extreme, into a purely naturalistic worldview. Contrary to Windelband, who considered both idiographic and nomothetic forms of scientific research to be on a relative scale (i.e. their difference was only a matter of degree), Rickert emphasizes the fundamental difference between them and goes on to favor the idiographic method. Nomothetic research winds up in a dangerous abstraction that threatens to cover up or make obsolete the historical life of culture (here anticipating Husserl’s famous critique of the mathematization of science in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*). This is the negative part of this work. The positive is Rickert’s description of the inner functioning of the human or cultural sciences. What makes them distinctly scientific in their own right is that they establish a relation to supra-individual values. Values, to Rickert, are neither physical nor mental, but are

“located” in an altogether different “third realm,” where entities do not exist but hold valid \((gelten)\). This realm is ontologically distinct from either the physical or the mental insofar as they both are forms of being, while the ontological status of values is their validity. Cultural scientific judgments, then, are characterized by making reference to this “world” of values. Hence the peculiarity of cultural scientific work is not primarily that it focuses on the individual – this is, as it were, taken for granted – but instead that in this individual attention it makes a connection to an independently existing realm of values. This realm, moreover, is in itself systematically organized. Correct cultural as well as moral judgments can be discerned in their adequacy to the systematic hierarchy and order of values. Cultural or spiritual sciences are expressions of the ideal order of values. Therefore, the task of philosophy is to draft and describe this ideal system of values. In his later years, Rickert drafted a “system of values” based on the distinction of six different fields of values: logic, aesthetics, mysticism, ethics, the erotic, and philosophy of religion. The true meaning of transcendental philosophy is thus redeemed in this draft of a system of values. Rickert began composing this sketch in his *System der Philosophie* (System of philosophy), of which only volume one appeared, and which has remained – despite Rickert’s reputation in Germany at the time – largely ignored.

II. NEO-KANTIANISM IN FRANCE

French neo-Kantianism emerged as the result of a conjunction of events including the demise of Victor Cousin’s eclecticism under the “authoritarian” first period of the Second Empire (1851–60) and the development of spiritualism under the “liberal” second period of the Empire. As a result of a very dense network of friendships, the extreme centralization of political power, and

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41. Rickert also calls this realm – much earlier than 1933! – *das Dritte Reich*, the “Third Reich.” I just mention this in order to clear up any confusion on the part of a stumped reader. The term was not exclusively used by the neo-Kantians; for instance, it was also used – in the same sense – by Frege.

42. In connecting the individual human being to the universal realm of values, Rickert is close to Cassirer’s cultural anthropology, which defines the human being as a cultural being precisely in its capacity to lift itself out of the realm of nature and to become part of the world of spirit, which is intersubjective and universal.


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influential universities such as the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) and the Sorbonne, neo-Kantianism became the predominant philosophical trend in French academia under Victor Duruy’s tenure as minister of education (1863–69). Charles Renouvier (1815–1903) and Jules Lachelier (1832–1918) initiated this trend, establishing two general and distinct forms that were never unified.\(^{46}\)

Renouvier’s works offer a system divided into the classical divisions of general and formal logic, rational psychology, and principles of nature.\(^{47}\) In his *Essais de critique générale* (Essays in general critique), he writes: “I frankly confess that I follow in Kant’s footsteps.”\(^{48}\) This Kantian program is described in general terms: “the analysis and the coordination of the principles of knowledge in general, and

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46. The best studies of French philosophy between 1850 and 1930 are Isaac Benrubi, *Contemporary Thought of France*, Ernest B. Dicker (trans.) (London: Williams & Norgate, 1926), and Michel Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin: L’Allemagne des philosophes français au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2004). In English, John Alexander Gunn, *Modern French Philosophy: A Study of the Development since Comte* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1922), has some interesting insights but, as Bergson noted, lacks a clear and firm guiding thread. The translation of Benrubi, *Les Sources et les courants de la philosophie contemporaine en France* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1933), seems to be based on a shorter and schematic German version. Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), although interesting, is very partial, uses arguable classifications, and contains many inaccuracies: although different forms of Kantianism are mentioned, there is no analysis of the exchanges with Germany, a conceptually, institutionally, and politically essential point. Renouvier is not a spiritualist, he did not study at the ENS with Ravaisson, but was a student at the École Polytechnique, an important element for his scientific background and his relation to positivism, since this is how he met Comte. Hegel was indeed translated before the middle of the twentieth century: Charles Bénard translated the *Lectures on Aesthetics* in 1855, Augusto Vera’s translation of the *Encyclopaedia* was published from 1859 to 1869, a fact that should be added to the file regarding Cousin’s essential relation to Hegel, as well as Hippolyte Taine’s. In *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), Schrift’s description of how the French system of education functions is fundamental and unique in English. Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) offers a witty picture of the latter trends in French philosophy (structuralisms, essentially), although the subtlety of the analysis as well as its irony may make it a difficult read for the unadvised reader.


of those that the established sciences put at their foundations without making them explicit” (xx). The principles to which Renouvier refers are construed as fundamental *a priori* relations that constitute knowledge. Starting with the concept of representation in a very broad sense, Renouvier untangles its elements and the laws ruling knowledge. He is thereby led to rewrite the Kantian system of categories.

The Kantian inspiration is clear, and the influence of the forewords to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in particular that of the second edition, is obvious. The question of the scientifcity of philosophy is the guiding thread: “It is impossible to reasonably reject the *Critique*. For it is inspired by the spirit of science; it is that very spirit” (xii). For Renouvier, as for Kant, the *Critique* is opposed to traditional metaphysics, which was informed by theology and cosmology. As will soon be the case for the German neo-Kantians, Renouvier sees the *Critique*’s scientific character in its methodological dimension: “If the result of the *Critique* is to formulate a method, to provide a lasting logic, this is indeed very much; it is almost enough for its scientifcicy” (xiii). But a notable difference between Renouvier and the German neo-Kantians, especially the Marburg School, is that for Renouvier it is not so much that the *Critique* as such is the method (as Kant wrote in the B Foreword); rather, the method is the *result* of the *Critique* (namely, the ensuing Kantian methodologies themselves).

Nevertheless, Renouvier is quite critical of Kant. His last book, *Critique de la doctrine de Kant* (Critique of the Kantian doctrine), offers a systematic deconstruction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In Renouvier’s idealism, as, arguably, in the Marburg School’s idealism, the return to Leibniz is nearly as important as the return to Kant. But the very essence of Renouvier’s concept of the transcendental remains deficient and psychological when compared to that found in more elaborate Kant interpretations, as well as in the main German neo-Kantian schools and Husserl’s phenomenology.

Renouvier never taught and was extremely prolific. His influence was felt, however, only after 1867, the year he founded, with his friend François Pillon, the journal *L’Année philosophique* (The philosophical yearbook). At that time

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49. In 1899, Renouvier published his *La Nouvelle monadologie*. A Leibnizian reconstruction of Kant relies on a long history, going back to Salomon Maimon’s interpretation of Kant’s Anticipations of Perception as an unconscious sum of “petites perceptions.” Cohen’s rejection of sensitive intuition relies on a similar conception. It is here important because in French neo-Kantianism, and particularly in the philosophy of mathematics, it will give birth to a strong opposition between the Kantian philosophy of intuition (Boutroux, Poincaré) and the Leibnizian philosophy of the concept (Couturat, Cavaillès).

he started to have followers: François Evellin, the young Victor Brochard, Jean-Jacques Gourd, and his main disciple, Octave Hamelin. If Renouvier’s neo-Kantianism can be described as a neocriticism insofar as it submits Kant himself to critique, Lachelier’s can be described as a late evolution of spiritualism. His teacher, Félix Ravaission (1813–1900), established an intellectual and institutional strain that would develop into Bergson’s spiritualism as well as Émile Boutroux’s neo-Kantianism. Ravaission favored Schelling over Hegel, a preference that meant, in the French context, leaping over Cousin to return to Maine de Biran. True idealism is a spiritualism grounded in the will. Lachelier depicted, quite accurately, the intellectual situation framed by Ravaission’s Report (1868). As he writes in a letter to Paul Janet, on December 8, 1891:

It is Ravaission, I believe, who taught us all to conceive being not as objective forms of substances or phenomena, but as the subjective form of spiritual action, this action being – in its last resort – thought or will. I think you could find this idea in Bergson, in Ribot even, as well as in Boutroux and myself. It is perhaps the only trait that is common to all of us and that makes for the unity of the philosophical movement of the last twenty years.

With such a common ground, how can one account for the fragmentation of spiritualism into Christian philosophy, Bergsonism, and neo-Kantianism?

51. Victor Brochard’s (1848–1907) doctoral dissertation, De l’erreur (Paris, 1879), claims the influence of Kant and Renouvier. This is also the case for François Evellin’s (1835–1910) dissertation: Infini et quantité (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1880). Jean-Jacques Gourd (1850–1909) was one of Renouvier’s followers in Switzerland (see his Le Phénomène [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1888]). Octave Hamelin (1856–1907), the most prominent of Renouvier’s followers, first exerted his influence by teaching at the University of Bordeaux (1884–1903), at the ÉNS (1903–7), and at the Sorbonne (1905–7). His acclaimed book, Essai sur les éléments principaux de la représentation (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907; doctoral thesis), as well as his translation and commentary of Aristotle Physics II (complementary dissertation) were published the year of his death. Léon Robin, his student and another of the Sorbonne’s major figures, published two thick volumes of Hamelin’s lectures: Le Système de Descartes (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911; with a foreword by Hamelin’s friend Émile Durkheim), and Le Système d’Aristote (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1920; lectures given at the ÉNS in 1904–5). Indicative of his importance, other courses were later published, including Le Système de Renouvier (Sorbonne, 1906–7), Les Philosophes présocratiques (Strasbourg: Association des publications de l’université de Strasbourg, 1978; lectures 1905–6), and Fichte (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1988; lectures 1887).

In 1861, Lachelier dissociated himself from Biran and hence from Ravaisson as well.\textsuperscript{53} His courses on logic and on psychology demonstrate that he had already taken a Kantian position when he began teaching at the ÉNS. He exerted his remarkable influence through his lectures rather than through his – relatively few – publications.

The lectures on logic present a general elucidation of the theoretical principles of knowledge. From the very first lesson, the method is imbued with Kantian elements. “Let me explain: in any science one can differentiate what man knows and the way he knows, in other words, matter and form.”\textsuperscript{54} Both in his Lectures on Logic and in the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant had already made use of this conceptual distinction between logic in general (which is purely formal) and transcendental logic, which is both formal and material. Lachelier’s lecture course then pursues a Kantian path. To circumscribe science, Lachelier takes a detour: “instead of saying in a few words what science is, it might be better to review the necessary conditions of science, the degrees spirit covers to reach science.”\textsuperscript{55} This path is very significant, for he borrows the conditions for science from the Critique of Pure Reason. The first condition for science is that an object is given. Lachelier takes an indirect path to introduce both forms of pure intuition, space and time: “the internal world of the successive states in time, the outside world of the simultaneous objects in space and also the successive states of these same objects in time.”\textsuperscript{56} Lachelier notes that space is integrated in time and, when dissociating the internal world from the external, he also intends to make room for that internal world that differs from the internalization of the external. A place is therefore reserved for feeling, desire, faith, and so on, opening the possibility for the fields of morality and religion, while avoiding a reductionist reading of Kant.

Sensation alone does not explain the possibility of science, since it is reduced to an indefinite number of atomistic elements: “impression, in itself, is reduced to an infinity of elementary impressions that is tied together by nothing and in which it vanishes.”\textsuperscript{57} Knowledge is constituted by a synthetic act of spirit, an intellectual synthesis that consists in the positing of pure relations. In addition to space and time, pure functions of synthesis are acknowledged as transcendental conditions of science. And when, in the middle of the chapter on induction, Lachelier intends to ground the determinism expressed by scientific law

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 16.
and experimental method such as Claude Bernard\textsuperscript{58} conceives it, he again refers to Kant, correcting the subjectivistic interpretation of the idealism:

And, although it is attributed to Kant to have reduced the principles of understanding to a purely subjective value, it is to him that we owe the justification of the principle of determinism. We cannot know a priori things in themselves, but we can assert a priori that the phenomena of nature, which compose the weft of our thoughts, are possible to be thought. And the consciousness of our personal identity is the condition of any thought.\textsuperscript{59}

Moving from the syntheses to individual unity, Lachelier again combines the original synthetic unity of apperception, the empirical unity of consciousness, and the paralogism of substantiality into one single thought.

The general method of his reflection, as well as the logical progression within these lectures, produce what one can call a transcendental idealism. They sketch an outline concerning induction that Lachelier’s 1871 dissertation, *Du fondement de l’induction* (On the foundation of induction), will further develop; regarding determinism, they draw a frame Boutroux will fill, with a few gaps, in his dissertation, *De la contingence des lois de la nature* (On the contingency of the laws of nature).

Neo-Kantianism reached a preeminent position in French philosophy through Lachelier’s teaching for the following reasons: he was a very charismatic professor; he taught at the ÉNS from 1864 to 1875; his lectures were copied and studied by at least twenty promotions of students,\textsuperscript{60} some of whom in turn became the most influential professors of their time – Boutroux, Liard, Paul and Jules Tannery, Janet, Séailles, Brunschvicg.\textsuperscript{61} And in addition to his teaching, Lachelier held important official positions such as the presidency of the Agrégation, a nationwide competitive examination one needed to take in order to teach in higher education, and the general inspector of public education.

In 1876, not even ten years after Ravaisson’s *Rapport*, Désiré Nolen (1838–1904), in his Inaugural Lecture at the University of Montpellier succeeding

\textsuperscript{58} Claude Bernard (1813–78) was a French physiologist. His *Introduction à l’étude de la médecine expérimentale* (1865) was universally considered as a classic discourse on the scientific method, comparable only to the works of Newton. A professor at the Collège de France from 1847 to 1878, when he died he was given a public funeral, the first man of science to be awarded that honor in France.

\textsuperscript{59} *Ibid.*, 51; see also 122.

\textsuperscript{60} Entering classes in the École Normale are referred to as “promotions.”

Boutroux (another important figure of French neo-Kantianism), remarked that “over the last ten years, it seems that Kant’s Critique has become the constant and common study of philosophical minds.”62 This, he continued, sets the stage for a truly European philosophy.63 Boutroux, in his lectures on Kant delivered from 1894 to 1897 and 1900 to 1901 at the Sorbonne, writes:

Moreover, we, the French, have today a closer relationship with Kant’s philosophy than we had fifty years ago. … These studies contributed to the awakening of the metaphysical sense in our country …. Hence, to go back to Kant is not only to act as a scholar, as a historian, as a dilettante; it is to draw useful knowledge and forces us to face the problems imposed on us [today].64

Meanwhile Louis Liard (1846–1917),65 a noteworthy neo-Kantian, student of Lachelier and friend of Boutroux, had become the director of the Enseignement Supérieur, France’s university educational system between 1884 and 1902. Finally, almost half a century after Lachelier started teaching, Brunschvicg, the last great neo-Kantian of that period, concluded: “From 1870 on, a philosophical University has been built in France that should bear the name of Lachelier, just like the Old University bears the name of Victor Cousin.”66 The main neo-Kantian figures of this new “philosophical university” are Émile Boutroux, Émile Meyerson,67 Léon Brunschvicg, and Octave Hamelin.

After Lachelier, Boutroux is the key figure in the development of French neo-Kantianism.68 He is at the center of the intellectual and the institutional network

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63. He neglected to mention the important contributions from Italian neo-Kantianism.
64. Émile Boutroux, *La Philosophie de Kant: Cours de M. Émile Boutroux (Sorbonne 1896–1897)* (Paris: Vrin, 1926), 12.
67. Émile Meyerson (1859–1933), a Polish chemist who emigrated to Germany, then to France, exerted a strong influence on French philosophy, although, like Renouvier, he was never completely part of the system. His antipositivism, his Kantian and neocritical background as well as his discussion of contemporary science and his participation in discussions with Poincaré, Brunschvicg, and Langevin make him a noteworthy figure worthy of the renewed interest he is attracting.

constitutive of the French higher education system. His work can be understood as an attempt to carry on the spiritualism of his masters, Ravaisson and Lachelier, in a Kantian guise. The problem around which his thought revolves is the reconciliation of the universal validity of scientific laws (which seems to involve an ontological necessity and therefore determinism), human freedom (the condition for morality), and religion.

This problem is precisely what he calls “Kant's problem”: “How is science possible? How is morality possible? How is the reconciliation of science and morality possible?”⁶⁹ And later he states: “Kant's problem is ours. His writings talk about us: nostra res agitur.”⁷⁰ Despite several themes that can be considered Kantian, Boutroux's solution to the problem is not Kantian, and one cannot but assert that his understanding of the a priori and of the transcendental that he rejects is rather weak. One of the main interests is his treatment of science, which is both metaphysical and epistemological, and he is closely related to major scientists of the period such as his own son, Pierre Boutroux, and his brother-in-law, Henri Poincaré.⁷¹ Boutroux's Kantianism has also been considered an influence on Poincaré's contributions to the problem of hypotheses, as well as on his conventionalism.⁷² Within this constellation, the Tannery brothers were also of major importance.

Brunschvicg constitutes the apex of French neo-Kantianism, a status also claimed by Renouvier's heir, Hamelin.⁷³ Brunschvicg's achievement was a strictly methodological understanding of what he calls “the idea of critique.” His achievement is deployed via a “wider and richer” use of “the truth of the transcendental method.”⁷⁴ The general movement is similar to the “historization” and the “dynamization” of the transcendental operating in German neo-Kantianism, in particular, the Marburg School.

What will be left of the theory of transcendental consciousness, once one recognizes that algebra and geometry, mechanics and physics do not resign themselves to this docile immobility that Kant expected? And what will one

⁶⁹. Boutroux, La Philosophie de Kant, 9; see also 266.
⁷⁰. Ibid., 11–12. This is a reference to Horace's "Nam tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet" (it becomes your concern when your neighbor's wall is on fire).
⁷³. This is a perspective held for instance by Dominique Parodi; see La Philosophie contemporaine en France (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1919). Brunschvicg answers in “L'Orientatio du rationalisme” (Écrits Philosophiques, vol. 2, 25): “we do not find any trace of critical thought in neo-criticism.”
make of the fact that, during the nineteenth century, they broke the limits that the “Transcendental Aesthetic,” the “Transcendental Analytic,” and the First Metaphysical Principles of the Science of Nature had commanded them to respect as the final layout?\textsuperscript{75}

The answer is somewhat brutal: “we should leave to some neo-Kantians and to Kant himself the postulate of this solidarity between the idea of critique and the table of the forms or the categories, since we know today that this solidarity expresses the most superficial and fragile aspect of the doctrine.”\textsuperscript{76} Brunschvicg then proceeds to point to a cleavage in the transcendental method: “The method put to work by the transcendental deduction is a reflexive analysis; it starts from science considered as a fact, and goes back to the a priori forms of intuitions and pure concepts of the understanding.”\textsuperscript{77} This first moment, reminiscent of Cohen, is legitimate in Brunschvicg’s eyes, especially since it reverts to the unity of transcendental apperception, an important element for someone who also wants to claim the spiritualist inheritance. However, when a philosopher considers the system of categories as fixed once and for all, and limits deduction to that of the principles of a determined moment of physics (Newton, for instance), then the progressive synthesis that leads to all the dimensions of spirit will be lacking.

Brunschvicg’s understanding of the “idea of critique” will be exercised as “reflexive analysis” on all fields of human knowledge: science, morality, religion, art, and history, in order to produce the system of critical idealism that presents the life of the spirit in all its directions as well as in its unity.

Brunschvicg’s enormous influence was at its peak in the 1920s. Setting aside his impressive intellectual stature, we see that he exerted his influence through all dimensions of the French system: he held a key teaching position at the Sorbonne (for thirty years, beginning in 1909), was president of the Agrégation (1936–38), for many years was part of the academic–political network that oversaw the philosophy curriculum and the awarding of positions and grants, and was founder of the journal Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale (with Xavier Léon in 1893) and of the Société Française de Philosophie (1901, with Léon and André Lalande).

At the end of the nineteenth century, neo-Kantianism was not only the preeminent philosophy in France, but had also become the philosophie officielle. But soon Boutroux left center stage in favor of his most famous student and the true heir of spiritualism, Henri Bergson; Bachelard overshadowed Meyerson; Brunschvicg became the embodiment of the mandarin, confronted by young

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 153.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
materialists such as Georges Politzer\textsuperscript{78} and Marxists such as Paul Nizan\textsuperscript{79} or by philosophers such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. These thinkers found their inspirations in new figures in German philosophy – the early Husserl, Heidegger – and subscribed to their criticisms of Kant.

To take a look at the influence of neo-Kantianism on post-Second World War French intellectual life, one of the most interesting developments of French neo-Kantianism is the role it played in the rise of structuralism. Martial Guéroult’s (1891–1976) reflections on the Kantian concept of architectonics, his familiarity with the neo-Kantian “quarrel of the system,”\textsuperscript{80} and his reading of Karl Mannheim’s Die Strukturanalyse der Erkenntnistheorie (The structural analysis of epistemology, 1922), resulted in his highly interesting structural methodology concerning the history of philosophy. Considering all genetic, chronological, and biographical studies merely preliminary steps, he argued that the analysis should proceed to an internal reconstruction of the philosophical work considered as a monument constructed by layers and successions of proofs. The more original rational conditions of the system consist in its transcendental conditions, just as, in Kant, the structure of the idea of pure reason forms a transcendental condition of a system. Victor Goldschmidt followed this path in his work in the history of philosophy.\textsuperscript{81} But more important is the affiliation with Jules Vuillemin (1920–2001),\textsuperscript{82} in which the meaning of the concept of structure shifted. It originally

\textsuperscript{80} The quarrel of the system was a fierce debate regarding two issues: (i) Could philosophy fulfill its claim to be a science only through the form of a system? And, given a positive answer to this first question: (ii) What kind of system should it be? Regarding the first claim, Hermann Cohen writes: “The philosophy reaches its concept only as system” (Logik der reinen Erkenntniss, 3rd ed. [Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922], 601). Concerning the second claim, Natorp (like Cassirer) has a preference for the concept of a systematic: “Systematic, not system” (in Philosophische Systematik [Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1958], 1). Rickert is also quite clear: “Unsystematic thought means unphilosophical thought” (in Allgemeine Grundlegung der Philosophie [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921], 11; see also Grundprobleme der Philosophie [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1934], 1–25). He develops the concept of an “open system.” What is here at stake is to be systematic without being dogmatic (or Hegelian!). See Christian Krijnen, Philosophie als System: Prinzipiethetoretische Untersuchungen zum Systemgedanken bei Hegel, im Neukantianismus und in der Gegenwartsphilosophie (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008).
\textsuperscript{81} Victor Goldschmidt (1914–81) was well known for his application of a structuralist method of reading, inaugurated by Guéroult, to ancient philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and so on) as well as to Rousseau. For some reservations, see Jacques Brunswig, “Goldschmidt and Guéroult: Some Facts, Some Enigmas,” Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 88 (2006).
referred to a scientificity gained through systematicity, but systematicity was now understood through logic and mathematical axiomatic. Gilles-Gaston Granger (1920– ) played an important role in this transformation. These intellectual affinities (and friendships) resulted in academic appointments: Guéroult, who held the Chair of History and Technology of Philosophical Systems at the Collège de France (1951–62), nominated Vuillemin for a Chair of Philosophy of Knowledge (1962–90). And Vuillemin appointed Foucault to succeed him at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, then at the Collège de France (where he held a Chair of History of Systems of Thought, 1970–84); Granger succeeded Foucault in 1986, renaming the Chair “Comparative Epistemology.”

This logico-mathematical transformation of the concept of structure also impacted the writing of the history of philosophy (as well as history itself), leading, for instance, on the one hand, to the work of Michel Serres and Daniel Parrochia and, on the other, to Althusser’s praxis in his reading of *Capital* and Foucault’s “archeology.” The end of this story is better known, although often in a very confused fashion owing to the omission of the first episodes: to the mathematical paradigm a linguistic one would be added (Saussure, Benveniste) that in turn would lead, by a complete reversal, to neostructuralism or poststructuralism, while a Heideggerian intellectual background (blended with various proportions of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud) would come to replace the Kantian paradigm.

Today, neo-Kantianism is still active in France: in epistemology, philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of physics one might mention the work of Jean Petitot; Michel Bitbol, Jean Seidengart, and Pierre Kerszberg; Alexis Philonenko in the history of philosophy; Alain Renaut in moral and political philosophy as well as education; and a neo-Kantian, Luc Ferry, became minister of education.

### III. CONCLUSION

To summarize, the label “neo-Kantianism” was applied to a variety of tendencies within the philosophical scene in Europe, mainly Germany and France, to a

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83. It is also worth noting that Jacques Bouveresse, who presented his 1995 Collège de France Chair of Philosophy of Language and of Knowledge as “in a way succeeding” those of Vuillemin and Granger, devoted his 2007 and 2008 lectures to a question formulated after a title of Vuillemin’s book: “What are philosophical systems?” The lectures not only dealt explicitly with Vuillemin, but also with the tradition coming from Renouvier, Guéroult, and Hyppolite.

*84. Serres and Foucault are discussed in essays by Derek Robbins and Timothy O’Leary in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.

*85. The work of Jean Petitot is discussed in “The Structuralist Legacy” by Patrice Maniglier in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*. 

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lesser extent Italy and the United Kingdom, at a certain period of time, roughly between 1870 and 1930.\footnote{Regarding Italian neo-Kantianism, see Massimo Ferrari, \textit{Introduzione a il neocriticismo} (Rome: Laterza, 1997) and, more specifically, \textit{I dati dell’esperienza: Il Neokantismo di Felice Tocco nella filosofia Italiana tra ottocento e novecento} (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1990). UK neo-Kantianism is more difficult to characterize since it forms components of another complex philosophical movement: British idealism. Philosophers such as T. H. Green (1836–82), Edward Caird (1835–1908), and R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943) are often identified as neo-Kantians.} While the peak of this movement can be said to have come to an end after the First World War, the Second World War seemingly sent it into oblivion. In the late 1970s, neo-Kantianism’s importance and dominance in its own days began to be rediscovered in scholarship. This led to a philosophical revival, which is now palpable in nearly all fields of philosophical work. For instance, the question of \textit{a priori} knowledge is discussed in contemporary philosophy of mind, epistemology, and philosophy of science. It is also remarkable that this European trend of “continental” philosophy is currently gaining leverage in the US, with the works and the influence of John Rawls in ethics and political philosophy and, for example, Michael Friedman in both philosophy of science and the genesis of analytical philosophy. Today, neo-Kantianism is slowly regaining its status as a major interlocutor with phenomenology and analytical philosophy, a status first exemplified, for instance, by the relations between Husserl and Natorp and its influence on Carnap.

In one sense, then, the term “neo-Kantianism” refers mainly to this period of time. In another sense, the term “neo-Kantian” can be understood in the manner in which philosophers today call themselves “neo-Fregean” or “neo-Pragmatist,” by which they mean an alliance to these philosophers, not in the letter or in correct exegesis of the great thinker’s true intentions, but in the \textit{spirit} of the philosophers in question. It is in \textit{this} sense that the neo-Kantians discussed here perceived themselves as furthering Kant’s true intentions, be it in dismissing some elements in Kant's system for the sake of others or emphasizing those that they perceived to reveal a true kernel in the midst of other problematic intuitions in Kant’s thought. In this effort, they not only brought forth highly original avenues of Kant interpretation that are still essentially pursued today, but also produced a range of interesting new systematic approaches and theories that are far from obsolete and deserve to be studied anew.\footnote{Two recent anthologies will help make neo-Kantianism more accessible for scholarship in the English language: Luft and Makkreel, \textit{Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy}, and Dominic Moran and Sebastian Luft (eds), \textit{The Neo-Kantianism Reader} (London: Routledge, 2010).}

If one were to summarize in the briefest terms its philosophical importance, one could call neo-Kantianism a philosophy of \textit{culture}, whereby culture is itself the problematic philosophical term, the \textit{terminus ad quem}. Philosophy, then,
is placed in the service of human culture in modern society, which values and upholds the fundamental beliefs of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment: reason, equality, freedom. Neo-Kantianism stands, to borrow a phrase from Ursula Renz, for a culture of rationality and the rationality of culture. Whether such an ideal and the consequences following from it will be allowed to survive in the so-called age of postmodernity is another question. Be that as it may, both as a starting-point for understanding the philosophical tendencies that would emerge and define the twentieth century, and as a vast quarry of inspiring ideas and timeless systematic approaches, one will need to reassess the neo-Kantian movement.88

MAJOR WORKS: THE MARBURG SCHOOL

Hermann Cohen

*Kants Begründung der Ethik.* Berlin: Dümmler, 1877.
*Das Prinzip der Infinitesimal-Methode und seine Geschichte.* Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1883.
*Werke.* Edited by the Hermann Cohen Archives at the Philosophical Seminar at the University of Zurich, under the leadership of Helmut Holzhey. Hildesheim/Zurich/New York: Olms, 1987ff.

Paul Natorp


88. Special thanks go to Celeste Harvey for her help with assembling the bibliographical data and for correcting the grammar and style of this piece.

89. A note on the editions of the major works: As was customary in the days of the neo-Kantians, new editions did not get published without extensive authors’ revisions, which not only eliminated typographical errors, but were also intended to capture the new developments the author had made since the first publication of the book in question. For this reason, in cases where there are different editions, we list the last – and presumably the latest and ultimately approved – version, or the critical edition, in the regular bibliography, preceded by the date of the first edition in brackets.


Ernst Cassirer


MAJOR WORKS: THE SOUTHWEST SCHOOL

Emil Lask

Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre. Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1911.

Heinrich Rickert


Wilhelm Windelband


MAJOR WORKS: NEO-KANTIANISM IN FRANCE

Émile Boutroux


Léon Brunschvicg

La Modalité du jugement. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1897.


Jules Lachelier


Émile Meyerson


Charles Renouvier


Durkheim’s formation was in philosophy. After attaining his Agrégation de Philosophie in 1882, he taught philosophy in schools in Sens, Quentin, and Troyes. However, he became dissatisfied with philosophy in its apparent struggle against the sciences, particularly the social sciences, very early on in his career, and in 1887 he accepted a position at the University of Bordeaux to organize courses in social sciences and in pedagogy (he became Professor in 1896). It was from this base that he published the results of his initial researches into sociology and the methodology that he had constructed to carry them out. He established a team of researchers that he, with his nephew Marcel Mauss, organized around the journal *L’Année sociologique* from 1898. Mauss accepted a Chair at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris in 1901 and, in 1902, Durkheim accepted a post in Paris at the Sorbonne, holding the Chair in the “Science of Education” (renamed as a Chair in Science of Education and Sociology in 1913). Durkheim did not promote himself as founder of sociology in France; this accolade came posthumously. He regarded his work as attempting a reorganization...
and correction of the sociology of Auguste Comte. He regarded positivism as the greatest contribution of French thought in the nineteenth century both to philosophy and the social sciences. His appropriation and modification of the positivist tradition took place within the framework of French Kantianism, and particularly the writings of Charles Renouvier, against the background of academic eclectic philosophy dominated by the legacy of Victor Cousin. It was Durkheim rather than Mauss who engaged in a dialogue with philosophy, but, ironically, it has been the work of Mauss that has seemed more to interest philosophers.

I. LOCATING DURKHEIM AND MAUSS

Recent interpretations that suggest Durkheim can be read as a late-modern or even postmodern thinker (Stjepan Meštrović) or as a thinker who imaginatively combined social science with a political and ethical vision derived from the Jewish tradition (Ivan Strenski) are not representative. On the other hand, the view that Durkheim was essentially a conservative who worked with a precritical functionalist method has given way over the past twenty-five years to a view that he was a sophisticated democratic socialist who developed with various degrees of success a sociology based on structural theory and an inventive experimental method. Susan Stedman Jones’s recent writings, for example, develop the view that key subtleties of Durkheim’s philosophy and epistemology are missed if the influence of Renouvier’s neo-Kantianism is not taken into account. Her reconsideration is organized as an attack and refutation of the view that Durkheim was working with a crudely positivistic methodology. Her central thesis is that Durkheim adopts Renouvier’s modification of Kant, which holds that reality is not a simple “thing” outside thought, but can exist only as a representation.

*3. For a discussion of Comte, see the essay by Alan Sica in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
7. Any interpretation that wants Durkheim to depart from Kant risks reading him as positing knowledge as entirely relative to social structure. Thus, Stedman Jones’s Durkheim Reconsidered holds on to the possibility of a priori knowledge through Renouvier’s notion of the “skeleton” of representation. This a priori is “one which accommodates the historical and the relative” (ibid., 70). This interpretation suggests: “Each culture is aware of reality as temporal and spatial, and as changing; of events as brought about or caused to be; of action as a pursuit of some end” (ibid., 71). Relativism is not avoided by this sleight of hand, since
Durkheim’s study of suicide is a crucial test for any interpretation that stresses the methodological impact of Renouvier. For Stedman Jones, the key to interpreting this work involves setting optimism, pessimism, solidarity, and hope in a dialectic of action, for the theory of suicide concerns the representation of psychic life. She holds that Durkheim adopts a kind of vitalist philosophy from Renouvier involving notions of passion, desires, disturbance, and frustration.

Adopting Renouvier’s notion of representation, the individual and the social become aspects of a unified field of causation; since they are one system of forces – relational and representational – the micro and the macro come together. The impact of Renouvier in this account becomes clear: it provides a nonpositivist explanation for those comments in Durkheim that relate to a universal condition of human action.

Watts Miller, on the other hand, has argued that Durkheim should be read as making a key contribution to liberal socialist ethics, to a communitarian defense of individualism within a significant continuation of the Enlightenment project. Miller also separates Durkheim from Comte and the Comtean tradition. His central concern is to show how the problem of the relation between the individual as autonomous and as law governed – how individual freedom can be in harmony with a system of objective values – is not an insoluble problem for sociology. Miller tries to show that a purely rational construction of a scientific system cannot provide the structures for individual development and autonomy that are required by Durkheim’s own conception of the “organic self.” This requires not a mechanical enlightenment – based on the project of realizing a transparent society – but an organic enlightenment that works through the progressive dilemmas of modernity. Durkheim’s real problem is how to secularize the kingdom of ends, or how to insert the reality of individual liberty and autonomy into the democratic frame that is at the same time legitimated through any value, or any knowledge, can always be said to accommodate to the historical. What Durkheim set out to do – to analyze the ways in which representations are intimately bound up with the social – is occluded in this perspective.

8. Watts Willie Miller argues that Durkheim is concerned with the “rational deliberation of ends” and “not only to identify, clarify and rework ideals, but also to adjudicate on them” (Durkheim, Morals and Modernity [London: UCL Press, 1996], 1). The question that emerges concerns precisely the nature of the “ethical judge” (ibid., 172), if this is not the individual, society, or social science. Miller suggests that the judge is the individual as man (ibid., 177–8), but also “man,” for “man is the enlightened republic’s hidden god” (ibid., 249). This view is expressed as a “vision that, in seeing the moral ideal’s development through constant stirrings of new, obscure aspirations, builds in limits to a society with autonomous self-understanding. This in any case depends on the constitution, through collective processes, of a collective body of knowledge and experience … So the human ideal must remain, in various if not very mysterious ways, elusive” (ibid.).
an ethics based on reason. In other words, Durkheim worked via an encounter with Kant toward a viable version of Comte’s “religion of humanity.”

Since the discovery in 1995 of the lectures Durkheim presented at the Lycée at Sens in 1882–84, many of the issues surrounding his relation to Kant and Renouvier have been resolved. These lectures reveal that, far from marking a direct relation between Kant and Renouvier, Durkheim was working very systematically in the framework of Cousin’s eclectic spiritualism. Cousin’s influence dominated the curriculum of philosophy teaching from the 1830s and Durkheim had developed a position under this influence. The peculiarity of the French approach to philosophy, as opposed to the approach in Germany, was that it gave a founding role to psychology that, in Durkheim’s time, was being radically reworked by Pierre Janet (1859–1947) within the eclectic framework of Cousin. Durkheim, like Janet, held that philosophy was a science that had adopted experimental methods (guided by imaginative hypotheses controlled by empirical constraints). Thus in France, unlike in Germany, the philosophical tradition developed an analysis of the Kantian categories based on psychology rather than on logic. Emerging from this tradition, Durkheim sought to replace psychology with sociology as the foundation for philosophy, informed by a philosophical formation and terminology – particularly notions such as mental representation – that came from Cousin and Janet as well as Renouvier.

Durkheim’s sociology was therefore self-consciously embedded in the Kantian rationalism of the French philosophical tradition, a tradition that sidetracked the positivism of Comte almost entirely during the nineteenth century. In order for rationalism to produce its potentially positive effects, Durkheim now argued that the Kantianism – through Cousin’s spiritualist eclecticism – that had dominated the French rationalist tradition produced disastrous consequences – division, individualism, philosophy as art form, and in the end, an “anarchic dilettantism” – that had to be faced.

Durkheim claimed that the political and social problems confronted by France – the particular effects of the Revolution – seen against the advantages

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10. It is worth noting that in French universities, professors of psychology were located in departments of philosophy.


of its intellectual and rationalist heritage, meant that France was in a position to lead the development of the social sciences. This sociology would be theoretical, holistic, fundamentally evolutionist (it did not accept a radical break between anthropology and sociology), and linked in a complex way with the development of socialist ideas (while it rejected communism). It would be based in the relative independence from politics provided by the universities, yet it would certainly not be divorced from the central issues facing modern societies. Sociology would be a sophisticated therapeutic discipline that could work out objective analyses of social pathology. This, of course, had already been attempted by Comte, and indeed it was central to the positivists that the social sciences be aligned with the life sciences and embrace categories of health and illness. Far from prohibiting the definition of values and norms, Durkheim, following Comte, specifically elaborated them. Durkheim’s particular version of Kantian rationalism was, from early on in his career, used critically to reconstruct and reinvigorate positive sociology through an encounter with the major sociologists influenced by Comte, in particular, John Stuart Mill (who was influenced early by Comte and then reacted strongly against him) and Herbert Spencer. Durkheim suggested it was precisely the moment of Saint-Simonian and early Comtean theory in the 1820s that reveals the decisive emergence of the modern notion of the “social” as such, and he provided one of the most notable accounts of this emergence in his lectures on *Socialism and Saint-Simon* (lectures given in 1895–96). His analysis of the French Revolution and the political instability in postrevolutionary France is not well known. Fundamentally it held that the dissolution of the guild-system in the prerevolutionary period initiated a deep-seated power imbalance within French society. He noted that for Henri de Saint-Simon, industry cannot advance without science and that therefore this too would have to be regulated in a new way.\footnote{Durkheim notes that “practice presupposes science but is not to be confused with it. Human conduct is intelligent and enlightened only to the degree it is directed by theory – though theory cannot be productive except on condition of its not being limited to the pursuit of practical ends. In this light, science ceased to be a simple private occupation, a simple matter of individual curiosity. It became a social function…” (*Socialism and Saint-Simon*, Charlotte Sattler [trans.] [New York: Collier, (1928) 1962], 185). From the beginning of the nineteenth century two different issues are very clearly identified: “on the one hand are the ‘political’ and on the other, ‘social’ problems … [and] the more one advances in time, the more public attention turns from the former to the latter … Social questions … are those to which the economic state of modern societies give rise … [and] as Saint-Simon demonstrated, economic relations have become either the unique, or in any case, the principal substance of social life” (ibid., 187–8).}

Recent research has shown that a considerable amount of what was published under Saint-Simon’s name when he was sketching out his vision for the new society was jointly written with Comte, who was his “secretary” for about five decisive years (Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993]). The development
After having examined the Saint-Simonian socialist program and explained why it appeared when it did, Durkheim nonetheless thought its diagnoses were mistaken; indeed, “it seems to us that he was mistaken about what, in the present situation, is the cause of the uneasiness, and in having proposed, as a remedy, an aggravation of the evil.”14 This is also Durkheim’s view of Marxism and any socialism in which the proletariat or class struggle is given the central role in and for such a program. For Durkheim the question was how to define whether the social state of revolutionary and postrevolutionary France was normal or abnormal. He concluded that it indeed had abnormal features. This abnormality did not lie within the sphere of political structures (as in liberal theory), or as a structurally inherent antagonism of the economic structure (as in Marxist theory), but in the insufficiency and imbalance of institutions in society as a whole.

Although some observers have found the term useful for defining the orientation of the Durkheim School, Durkheim himself clearly rejected the conception of the “positive polity” in Comte’s sense. For Comte, popular sovereignty and democratic institutions were forms of the “metaphysical polity” linked structurally to egoistic individualism and, as such, were essentially unstable. Durkheim thought that Comte had not grasped the importance of the role of the democratic state in liberating the individual from bondage either to the family, or to secondary intermediary institutions. Nor had Comte grasped the way in which the social sciences could form the basis of a new curriculum in the schools and universities; for Comte education was to be controlled in detail by the sociocratic clergy. The key relationship was to be that between the state and secondary institutions remodeled as professions. Durkheim’s ideal seems to have been a kind of liberal corporate socialism, or a “socialism of institutions,” which would liberate a new individualism.

Thus Durkheim saw himself “following the path opened up” by Comte,15 but in the context of a particular philosophical conjuncture dominated by the opposed influences of Renouvier and Spencer (who offered a more complex notion of social structure). Comte’s fundamental three-state law of social evolution (theological, metaphysical, and positive) was rejected. This law did not

produce a valid conception of social types, or as he preferred to call them “social species.” He held that “Comte’s law correctly describes the way modern societies have developed from the tenth to the nineteenth century – but it does not apply to the entire course of human evolution.”\textsuperscript{16} He rejected Comte’s historical method: “the genealogical tree of organized beings, instead of having the form of a geometric line, resembles more nearly a very bushy tree whose branches, issuing haphazardly all along the trunk, shoot out capriciously in all directions.”\textsuperscript{17} He distinguished between a genealogical analysis within a single real continuous society, a comparative analysis within a single society and between societies of the same type, and a more abstract comparative cross-cultural analysis that could form the basis of theoretical evolutionary typologies.

While Durkheim worked toward a critical reconstruction of Comte’s sociology, he claimed that neither Hegel nor Marx had a direct influence on his thought. Certainly he debated with socialists, acknowledging that socialism and sociology were both profoundly indebted to Saint-Simon and Saint-Simonianism. In the mid-1890s, he began a lecture course on Saint-Simonianism that was conceived as the first in a series on socialist and communist ideas. After the initial lectures, however, Durkheim changed direction and began to work on religion; he was never to complete the series. It is clear that the very context of Durkheim’s youth and early political awareness makes it unlikely that events such as the fall of the Second Empire, the Paris Commune, and the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 did not leave their mark. The Third French Republic began under conditions of harsh political censorship. Durkheim passed his \textit{baccalauréats} in 1875 and 1876, when the new political regime was beginning to settle into its republican and parliamentary routines. He came to maturity during the formation of the new regime, as a student at the École Normale Supérieure between 1879 and 1882. Durkheim’s recently discovered (2004) early lectures of 1882–84 can be read as a critique of the limits of pure philosophy as a means for assessing and resolving the problem of social integration in France.\textsuperscript{18} His early sociological publications suggest a change of perspective and that he worked to a position that would avoid the errors of the Commune on the one hand, and individualist liberalism (and anarchism – which took a turn to terrorism in the Third Republic in the years 1892–94) on the other, a position that formed the basis of his famous intervention in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Durkheim, \textit{Socialism and Saint-Simon}, 268.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Émile Durkheim, \textit{Durkheim on Institutional Analysis}, Mark Traugott (ed. and trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 53.
\end{itemize}
the Dreyfus Affair (1894–1906). Many commentators have seen Durkheim's position here as a valuable move beyond the confines of liberal political theory (Talcott Parsons), while others have found that an absence of a theory of political parties constitutes the blind spot of Durkheimian sociology (Steven Lukes). Clearly it is both since although Durkheim does not focus on political parties directly, he introduces a new analysis of state power.

From the mid-1890s Durkheim was working in close association with his nephew, Marcel Mauss. In the division of labor between them, Mauss seems to have been more closely involved in political practice. The phase of Western European socialism that developed after the Commune, particularly from 1876 to 1890, revealed, as Mauss later remarked in his On Bolshevism, a variety of practical developments of a new kind that left the heroic and utopian age of theory (Marx and Proudhon) behind; only from an existing nation, said Mauss, can the transition to socialism be conceived as an internal progression of an organic type. Thus the task for socialists within a nation is not primarily a political and revolutionary one, but a social engagement in building new organizations within and against the existing frame. This frame was not in itself an insuperable obstacle to this engagement, as Marxists claimed; quite the contrary, it alone makes it possible. Mauss was sent by L'Humanité as special envoy to conferences of the cooperative movement in Hamburg, Budapest, Paisley, and on a research mission to Russia in 1906, thus revealing the difference between the political involvement of Mauss and Durkheim reflected in their theorizing.

The primary aim of Durkheim and Mauss's project was not to establish or guide a political movement or party; it was clearly to insure the implantation of sociology within the universities as a reputable discipline with a pivotal role to play in the identification of the normal forms of the emerging institutional

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the emergence of french sociology

structures of modern societies. Durkheim stood at a distance from politics. Mauss said that even:

the social and moral crisis of the Dreyfus Affair in which he played a large part, did not change his attitude. Even during the war, he was among those who put no hope in the so-called internationally organized working class. He therefore remained uncommitted – he “sympathized” … with the socialists, with Jaurès, with socialism. But he never gave himself to it.

Durkheim’s theoretical sociology, however, did not in fact shy away from the issues of the nature of the modern state and political power. Durkheim’s argument suggests social theory is often mistaken in thinking the state is either a purely repressive machine, or that the purely political division of powers can deliver political and social liberty in the fullest sense. For Durkheim, the Spencerian thesis that freedom is freedom from the state ignores the fact that it is the state “that has rescued the child from family tyranny [and] the citizen from feudal groups and later from communal groups.” Indeed Durkheim argued the state must not limit itself to the administration of “prohibitive justice … [but] must deploy energies equal to those for which it has to provide a counter-balance.” Against the political illusion of power, for example as found in Montesquieu, Durkheim in effect tried to show that liberty is based on a particular form of the total social division of power: the state “must even permeate all those secondary groups of family, trade and professional association, Church, regional areas, and so on.”

Mary Ann Lamanna suggests that Durkheim’s analysis of the family reveals how “[t]he tension between spouse and kin as heirs reflects the historic struggle of the conjugal family to emancipate itself from kin dominance.” This historic struggle, central to Durkheim’s “grand narrative” of the movement from societies based on mechanical to those based on organic solidarity, is also the narrative of the modern state.

The legacy of Comte was not easily shaken off, however, for both Durkheim and Mauss, influenced by the Comtean view that war was incompatible with the advancement of industrial society, believed it impossible that there could really be deep-seated causes of war between advanced nations – by which they meant

France, Britain, and Germany. The diplomatic activities of these nations were
democratic, not divorced from popular control. In the run-up to the First World
War, Mauss in particular contrasted the political maturity of these nations with
the autocratic and feudal regimes of Eastern Europe, particularly Russia. His
view was that German ambitions were eastward and the Western nations would
not be drawn in. Close to Jean Jaurès, his position was pacifist.

When the war broke out, Mauss enlisted, immediately abandoning his pacifist
stance. Durkheim again turned to his theory of social abnormalities. The state can
become too strong and develop its own pathological dimensions and capacities:
in his pamphlet “Germany Above All: German Mentality and War” (1915), he
critiqued the ideas of the German political philosopher Heinrich von Treitschke
(1834–96), ideas that he took to be representative of the mentality that brought
war to Europe in 1914. He was careful in fact to say that he was not analyzing
the causes of war, but only examining one of the manifestations of a condition of
social pathology.26 Durkheim contrasted the democratic idea in which there is a
continuity between government and people with Treitschke’s thesis that there is
a radical antagonism between state and civil society. Treitschke called for a state
whose leaders are possessed of enormous ambition, unwavering determination,
with personalities characterized by “something harsh, caustic, and more or less
detestable” about them, a state with power capable of enforcing a mechanical
obedience from its citizens, whose first duty was to obey its dictates.27 These
states flouted international law and conventions, and their idea of war pushed
the development of military technology, which permitted the growth of states
that were almost “exempt from the laws of gravity … [t]hey seem to transport
us into an unreal world, where nothing can any longer resist the will of man.”28
Where there is a shift toward the concentration of power in the state, as occurs
in wartime, the structures protecting individual values are weakened. In wartime
there is to be expected not only an increase in altruistic suicide, most commonly
associated with military discipline,29 but also an increase in civil homicides since
the individual as such is less protected by moral forces.30

After the war, Mauss took up a detailed analysis of the Bolshevik strategy
in the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. The essay on Bolshevism, written
he says as an “assessment” in Comtean style, would “criticize” in the style of

26. Émile Durkheim, “Germany Above All: German Mentality and War (Paris: Armand Colin,
1915), 46.
27. Ibid., 30–34.
28. Ibid., 46.
29. Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, John A. Spaulding and George Simpson
Renouvier. He also suggested: “It would not be difficult here to pastiche Marx, to rewrite vis-à-vis this gigantic Commune his two famous pamphlets on the class struggles in France and on the Paris Commune. If I steer clear of such a parody, I hope I shall be allowed to follow fundamentally his example.” But he emphasized certain links with the Durkheimians. First, the idea of the soviet corresponds to Durkheim’s conception of professional corporations as the basis of property statute; and second, “the establishment of a moral and political law of the group formed out of the economic association of those united in the same production” that is the professional occupation becomes the basis for political representation and social status on the model of the guild or the university. Thus his interest in the Bolsheviks combined both scientific and personal concerns: “it was a socialism which among the options open to it had chosen my own, the professional organization”; indeed “Moscow seemed to many amongst us what it remains for many enlightened people … a kind of sanctuary incubating the very destiny of our ideas.”

All of these discussions are framed against a new evolutionary six-stage model – the elementary horde, simple clan-based tribe, tribal confederation, ancient city-state, medieval society, modern industrial nation – that is underpinned by a simple theory of two fundamental forms of social solidarity: mechanical and organic. Societies that are mechanical add together elements (kinship groups) as “compound” or “doubly compound” compositions in Spencer’s terms; societies that are organized on the basis of an “organic” division of labor and interdependent specialization of function (including medieval society, and the modern nation) have a form of social solidarity that is more and more complex. Whereas Durkheim outlined a theory of social structures, developing notably the distinction between segmental and organic forms of solidarity, Mauss retained the distinction as the basis of a theory of social evolution but introduced the concept of the nation as the key mediating term. Socialism is a modern idea and practice (after 1830), and is possible only as part of the development of the modern national form of organic solidarity; the project for a socialism where this form is absent, for example in Russia, can lead only to quite different results (for the

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32. Ibid., 171.
33. Ibid., 172.
34. Ibid., 173.
social elements are more like heterogeneous segments in an “Imperial sack”). But the way this framework was used by Durkheim and Mauss suggests there was a continuous and productive division of labor between them. Each developed a style of work. Mauss’s very large corpus of writings does not include a single book. Works like the famous essay on the gift were published as journal articles, as was the very long text Mauss wrote with Durkheim on social classification. In fact, a large proportion of Mauss’s output was coauthored, and appears as interventions in ongoing debates. He also favored work on social facts, and was against what he called “the pretentious search for originality.” Mauss, however, claimed that the most important characteristic of his approach was not simply that he was a positivist and thus not interested in “the lofty realms of … metaphysical ideas,” but that he was essentially a member of a school, a team, a workshop – in fact he had been Durkheim’s “recruiting agent.” Theory, not philosophy, remained important and open. For example, although Mauss’s studies were synthesized in Durkheim’s 1912 study The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Mauss admitted in 1930 that Durkheim’s argument about the nature of the sacred remained contested: “we were never sure that he was correct and I still continue to speak of the magico-religious.”

In 1893, Durkheim had referred to a specific group of acts as “gratuitous” and outside morals:

the refinements of worldly urbanity, the ingenuities of politeness … the gifts, affectionate words or caresses between friends or relatives, up to the heroic sacrifices that no duty demands … The father of a family risks his life for a stranger; who would dare to say that was useful?

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39. A key concept in Mauss’s “Essai sur le don”, published in English as The Gift, by “total social fact” he named those social phenomena that involve “the totality of society and its institutions,” that “are at the same time juridical, economic, religious, and even aesthetic and morphological, etc.,” and that must be analyzed in terms of the totality of their connections (The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies, W. D. Halls [trans.] [London: Routledge, 1990], 78–9).
41. Ibid., 140.
42. Ibid., 149.
In a marked departure from this view, Mauss’s “Essai sur le don” clearly shifts from the notion that the gift is of no interest because it is merely a gratuitous act to the decisive discovery that it forms an obligatory form of exchange in all societies, whether or not it is the principle around which a particular society is organized. This is to say, although the gift might appear free and disinterested, it is in fact neither, as Mauss argues that the gift is given in a context in which both its reception and its reciprocal return are obligated, and obligated in terms of well-articulated social rules. Thus, much of The Gift involves analyzing gift-giving practices in an effort to disclose the underlying rules that govern the ongoing circulation of gifts. The essay on The Gift was the basis of a quite new problematic, one that was to be made famous in Mauss's lectures at the Collège de France (1931–40). Mauss wrote an “intellectual self portrait” at the time of his election to the Collège that provides a restatement of his inductivist position: from the facts, he says, he
drew out that at once religious, mythical and contractual idea of the
gift. I also brought out the idea of total prestation between clans, between
generations (usually staggered), between sexes and between
descent groups …: I established the collective nature of archaic forms …
and, above all, this notion of “total facts” which set the entire
economic, moral, religious, aesthetic and mythical … social whole
in motion. Superimposed on reciprocity and conflict, a system of
purely sumptuary, military, athletic, etc., rivalries developed within
these societies … the previous ways of posing questions have been
surpassed and displaced.

In his academic work, Mauss kept strictly to the sphere of those societies that
the Durkheimians called polysegmental. If academic sociology may, for Mauss,

44. “Essai sur le don” was published in the first issue of the second series of the Année sociologique in 1925, and all commentators have agreed that it marks a considerable move away from the problematic of the prewar Année (see Claude Lévi-Strauss, Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss, Felicity Baker [trans.] [London: Routledge, 1987]). Talcott Parsons likened the analysis to Mendel’s discoveries in genetics (in Wilton Dillon, Gifts and Nations [The Hague: Mouton, 1968], 6); others argued that it marks the beginning of the analysis of power (Jean Baudrillard, Symbolic Exchange and Death, Iain Hamilton Grant [trans.] [London: Sage, 1993]), the “foundation of ethnology” (Marcel Fournier, Marcel Mauss [Paris Fayard, 1994], 501ff.), or even the “invention of the symbolic” (Camille Tarot, De Durkheim à Mauss: L’invention du symbolique [Paris: La Découverte, 1999]). For a review see Alain Caillé, Don, intérêt et désintéressement: Bourdieu, Mauss, Platon et quelques autres (Paris: La Découverte, 1994).


even have been a “lost cause,” this was not because Mauss ignored the political and social problems of the advanced nations.

II. FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF METHODOLOGY

Following in Comte’s footsteps, Durkheim attempted to specify the unique domain of sociological phenomena within the division of labor of the sciences. He insisted that rules of method are strictly parallel with other ethical and moral rules: “methodological rules are for science what rules of law and custom are for conduct,” and whereas the natural sciences appear to have formed common ground, the “moral and social sciences” are in a state of anomie: “the jurist, the psychologist, the anthropologist, the economist, the statistician, the linguist, the historian, proceed with their investigations as if the different orders of fact they study constituted so many different worlds.” Rules of method organize and regulate the field, identify the ground for scientific strategies, and legitimate the way these strategies should be assessed. Methodology in the Durkheimian tradition was much more than a set of research techniques. It did not progress, however, without serious difficulties.

The methodological orientation was from the start one that strives for maximal objectivity of investigation: the primary definition of the terrain of sociology itself, the very object of social analysis, Durkheim formulated as “any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint.” On this The Rules of Sociological Method is insistent: all preconceptions must be discarded; never assume the voluntary character of a social institution; and always privilege the study of social phenomena that are detached from individual forms. The fundamental rule for observing social phenomena is “to consider social facts as things.” Durkheim considered the common ideological formation of the sociologist as modern citizen as in a sense, and paradoxically, both a support and a fundamental obstacle to positive research. His critical judgment is that in the absence of rules, “instead of observing, describing and comparing things, we … reflect on our ideas … Instead of a science which deals with realities, we carry out no more than an ideological analysis.”

47. Fournier, Marcel Mauss, 527ff.
49. Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, 368.
51. Ibid., 60.
52. Ibid.
ular text has been read as a revolutionary manifesto in sociology, for it essentially demands that each sociologist reverses habitual and everyday forms of thought.

When Mauss came to discuss the notion of the social fact, he gave it a different interpretation, more empirical and concrete in its emphasis. For example, when he presented socialism as a social fact, he departed from the classic definition of the social fact. Social facts are essentially psychological, and not to be found outside individuals in their social context, he says.\textsuperscript{53} Durkheim's famous methodological definition of social facts as external to individuals appears abstract and formal against Mauss's formulation, which appears more in line with Durkheim's post-1898 position. It is clear, however, that these definitions and rules are also closely bound up with changing and developing political and research priorities; what seems at first to be Durkheim's attempt to produce a definitive text on methodology, \textit{The Rules of Sociological Method}, is more complex than it appears. Durkheim and Mauss seemed able to produce definitive methodological rules that were only to be altered, or even abandoned, as soon as their researches progressed. The first definition of the field of study, for example, was not developed in terms of social facts at all, but rather of moral facts: "moral facts consist in a rule of sanctioned conduct."\textsuperscript{54} Durkheim adopts this definition since the study of moral evolution no longer depends on the study of norms, but norms and sanctions. The terrain thus changes: the development of the "positive science of morality is a branch of sociology, for every sanction is principally a social thing."\textsuperscript{55} When the focus is a moral social fact, Durkheim conceived the field in terms of the \textit{conscience collective}; when the focus changed, from 1898 on, to social knowledge, it is conceived in terms of collective representations.\textsuperscript{56} There is also a new conception toward 1912–14 that develops the conception of the articulation between the individual and society in terms of \textit{homo duplex}.\textsuperscript{57} With this concept Durkheim thought he had resolved the longstanding problem of the body (the basis of the sensation of individuality) and the soul (the reflection of the experience of social transcendence beyond the individual).

The (1893) discussion of method in \textit{The Division of Labor in Society} was clearly the basis for much of what appears in \textit{The Rules of Sociological Method} (published separately as articles in 1894 before appearing in modified book form in 1895). The characteristics of the moral fact are displaced and incorporated into the wider category of the social fact. In the 1894 formulations (that

\textsuperscript{53} Mauss, \textit{Écrits politiques}, 76.

\textsuperscript{54} Durkheim, \textit{The Division of Labor in Society}, 425.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Ibid.}, 428.


is to say, in the first journal appearance of *The Rules of Sociological Method*), it is made clear nonetheless that the sociologist must choose to give primacy to the study of facts from “a viewpoint where they present a sufficient degree of consolidation.” 58 By the time the book version of *The Rules of Sociological Method* was published in 1895, with a large number of revisions, this particular injunction was changed to the rule that the sociologist “must strive to consider [social facts] from a viewpoint where they present themselves in isolation from their individual manifestations.” 59 *The Rules of Sociological Method* specifies a whole new range of ways in which external constraint occurs, from informal sanctions of ridicule and social ostracism to technical and organizational necessities. Moral obligation and sanction form the first domain of objects, but constraint and circumstantial necessity broaden this into the essential characteristics of (externally acting) social facts in general.

Durkheim maintains a continuing interest in moral statistics from the early essay on variations in birth rates through a range of studies of family, divorce, and political statistics. 60 This aspect of his sociology has attracted attention for installing an experimental rationalism as a founding moment in the modern discipline. 61 It seems clear that in 1895 he altered his research and decided to undertake a full-scale study of suicide statistics. He wrote in *The Rules of Sociological Method*: “if suicide depends on more than one cause it is because in reality there are several kinds of suicide.” 62 The very existence of suicide statistics makes it possible for sociologists to study social currents as phenomena that are “independent of their individual manifestations.” Far from fixing a unique definition of the object of sociology, such as social statistics, Durkheim gave himself a number of options. He does not seem to be worried if he does not follow to the letter his own hastily conceived prescriptive rules, as long as he remains consistent with basic principles. 63

But there were important problems with this position in practice. Throughout the methodological writings to this point (1895), Durkheim insisted that the sociologist must start from things not ideas; indeed, the sociologist must start from “a group of phenomena defined beforehand by certain common external

characteristics.” 64 Work must begin from these external features and move toward an understanding of their internal causal relationships. When investigating suicide, the procedure required that he group together those suicides with the same external features (e.g. how suicides were committed), and “would admit as many suicide currents as there were distinct types, then seek to determine their causes.” 65 In the course of the analysis in Suicide, Durkheim says, however, that this procedure could not be used; instead, he proposed “to determine the social types of suicide by classifying them not directly by their preliminarily described characteristics, but by the causes which produce them.” 66 Instead of proceeding from the characteristics in the facts themselves, he says “once the nature of the causes is known we shall try to deduce that nature of the effects … Thus we shall descend from causes to effects and our aetiological classification will be completed by a morphological one.” 67 He admitted that this was a complete reversal of the order of analysis prescribed in The Rules of Sociological Method, which was designed to discover social causes. It comes as something of a surprise to learn that the social causes of suicides (anomic, egoistic, altruistic) are already known. 68

But there were other problems, particularly in defining abnormality in a society that was still in the process of formation. His primary rule here was: if the social fact is general in the average form of the social species under consideration, the fact is to be judged normal. Because there were problems with the very identification of the species French society belonged to, he introduced another much more theoretical consideration, requiring that it be demonstrated how a normal fact shows “that the general character of the phenomenon is related

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64. Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, 75.
65. Durkheim, Suicide, 146.
66. Ibid., 147.
67. Ibid.
68. See my “The Deconstruction of Social Action: The 'Reversal' of Durkheimian Methodology,” in Durkheim's Suicide: A Century of Research and Debate, W. S. F. Pickering and Geoffrey Walford (eds) (London: Routledge, 2000). If the results of Durkheim's analyses have often been challenged from outside the school, they were not immune from challenge from within either. Indeed, many observers have argued that Mauss sought to wrestle with the problems of Durkheim's initial conceptions and analyses to the end of his career (see Allen, Categories and Classifications). Others, such as Adam Kuper, have reviewed the criticisms of The Elementary Forms of Religious Life and concluded that Durkheim's “model of a segmentary structure based on unilineal descent groups is a sociological fantasy” (“Durkheim's Theory of Kinship,” British Journal of Sociology 36[2] [1985]). The paradox therefore is: Why does Durkheim's work remain significant? Kuper suggests the “apparently paradoxical fruitfulness of Durkheim's work, despite its substantive failure, is … due to the power of certain elements of his methodology; to the importance of some of the questions which he set on the agenda of the next generation; and, above all, to the sense which he communicated of the richness, complexity and sociological interest of ethnographic materials” (ibid., 235).
to the general conditions of collective life in the social type under consideration," and this "verification is necessary when this fact relates to a social species which has not yet gone through its complete evolution."69 The results of the analyses using these two rules tend to contradict each other in the case under discussion (one suggesting normality, the other abnormality). If the anomic forms of the division of labor are a continuation of segmental society, and "now increasingly dying out, we shall be forced to conclude that this now constitutes a morbid state, however universal it may be."70 In other words, the theoretical analysis of the forms and functions of regulation suggest that economic anomie is pathological even if it is general; yet the principal rule suggests generality indicates normality. Because there is a problematic relation between rules and facts, Durkheim, reluctantly, is forced into a theoretical detour;71 a detour that ultimately saved his sociology from a reductionist empiricism (unable to read social causation directly from facts, he had to take his detour through theory).

After Durkheim's death in 1917, the second series of L'Année sociologique also followed Durkheim's example by attempting to reflect on method. In Mauss's 1927 transitional text on method – "Sociology: Its Divisions and Their Relative Weightings" – it is clear that the old framework is bursting at the seams as Mauss attempted to reconstruct the sociological project in a new situation.72 Mauss seems to have moved very strongly in the direction of anthropology, whether it be called ethnology or ethnography, and away from what was recognized as

71. Of course one of the reasons Durkheim choose suicide was to demonstrate that suicide rates could form a distinct object of study. Gabriel Tarde disputed this but nonetheless helped Durkheim to get access to statistics in Paris. Tarde held the view that there are only individuals and that society and social cause does not exist: "there can only be individual actions and interactions. The rest is only a metaphysical entity, mysticism" (On Communication and Social Influence, Terry N. Clark [ed.] [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969], 140). The help that Tarde gave Durkheim ironically became "the empirical basis for the sharpest attack that he ever received" (M. Borlandi, "Informations sur la rédaction du Suicide et sur l'état du conflit entre Durkheim et Tarde de 1895 à 1897," *Durkheim Studies* 6 [Fall 1994], 6). Durkheim developed in *Suicide* the classic case for the existence of unique structural social causes over and above individual interactions and *inter alia* presents one of his tactical critiques of Tarde (*Suicide*, 123–42, 306–25; *my On Durkheim's Rules of Sociological Method* [London: Routledge, 1988], 76–83).
“sociology” in the years of the first *Année*. Incontestably the essays published in that journal were dominated by themes of religion, ritual, classification, and sanctions in “primitive” societies. If Mauss even said, at one point, “I have never been a militant of sociology,” what is striking is that, after Durkheim’s death, Mauss began to work out a detailed conception of “general sociology” that is almost completely lacking in Durkheim’s formulations. It has even been claimed, by Bruno Karsenti among others, that Mauss now began to restructure the anthropological field. Karsenti argues that:

Relations are formed, connections established, and passages introduced which lead to a redistribution of knowledge. The latter, insofar as it no longer suffers from a foundational split, can now be seen from a unitary viewpoint and can take back the name of anthropology – although the old term has now acquired a new meaning.

Indeed, for Karsenti, sociology in the Maussian scheme “has the imperative duty to fulfill itself on this basis and rediscover its place within anthropology.” Mauss also seemed to want to develop Durkheim’s notion of *homo duplex*, but he did this in a way that did not confront the philosophers head on. The long-running dispute about reason and pure rationality, on the one hand, and social determinants, on the other, produced on Mauss’s part some ingenious interventions. His early concern with bodily gestures, indicated in his 1909 thesis *On Prayer*, was continued throughout his career with essays on “techniques of the body” and technology. He held that from *homo duplex* it was possible to think

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73. Between 1898 and 1913 twelve volumes were published, although the volumes that contained significant analyses ended with volume 9 in 1906. A conspectus of the contributions of Durkheim and Mauss indicates that their work was already dominated by questions of the nature of the “elementary forms” of social and cultural structure. The first volume of 1898 contained Durkheim’s essay on the origins of the incest taboo. The second published Durkheim’s essay on the definition of religious phenomena and Mauss and Hubert’s essay on sacrifice. The next major items by Durkheim appeared in volume 4 (1902), containing Durkheim’s essay on penal evolution, and in volume 5 with Durkheim’s essay on totemism. Volume 6 (1903) contained Durkheim and Mauss on “Primitive Classification.” Volume 7 (1904) contained Mauss and Hubert’s essay on magic. Volume 8 (1905) contained Durkheim’s essay on “The Matrimonial Organization of Australian Societies’), and volume 9 (1906) contained Mauss and Beuchat’s essay “Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo.”


76. *Ibid*.

of “homme total,” and of thinking not only with the brain but with the fingers. It is not far fetched to think that Mauss was developing here a materialist conception of practice that anticipated the critique of Durkheim developed later by sociologists such as Peter Worsley.

III. THEORETICAL REVISIONS

Durkheim developed his theory as his research grew more extensive. He began by suggesting that the earlier the society, the more likely it was to have repressive sanctions. He later revised this view completely. In his early lectures on Moral Education, for example, he argued that there was a plague of violent punishment in the schools of the Middle Ages, and the lash remained in constant use in schools up until the eighteenth century. After researching his lectures on educational thought in France, he describes the thesis of the violent medieval colleges as simply “a legend.” He had discovered that these educational communities remained essentially democratic and these forms “never have very harsh disciplinary regimes” because “he who is today judged may tomorrow become the judge.” The new analysis suggests that the turn towards a more oppressive disciplinary regime began at the end of the sixteenth century, just at the moment when the schools and colleges in France became centralized and isolated from the outside community.

But Durkheim faced up to the issue of punishment as a practical issue for teachers in his pedagogy classes. Between the offense and the punishment, he observed there is a hidden continuity, for they are not “two heterogeneous things coupled artificially.” This is the reason that erroneous theories of punishment arise. One such theory sees punishment as expiation or atonement; another sees punishment primarily as a way of intimidating or inhibiting further offenses. From a pedagogical point of view, the problem concerns the capacity to neutralize the demoralizing effects of an infringement of group norms. The effectiveness of punishment should be judged by how far it contributes to the solidarity of

81. Ibid., 155–7.
the group as a whole, since certain kinds of punishment can contribute to the creation of further immoral acts. Once applied, punishment seems to lose something of its power. A reign of terror is, in the end, a very weak system of sanctions often driven to extremes by its own ineffectiveness. Corporal punishment also involves an attack on the dignity of the individual, a dignity valued and fostered in modern societies.

The central theoretical issue here was addressed in his attempt to reconstruct the theses of *The Division of Labor in Society* in an article of 1900 called “Two Laws of Penal Evolution.” Durkheim criticized Spencer for thinking that the degree of absoluteness of governmental power is related to the number of functions it undertakes. But Durkheim worked toward the formulation: “the more or less absolute character of the government is not an inherent characteristic of any given social type” – an idea to be found in Spencer’s sociology. Durkheim presents an account of French society that is diametrically opposed to that of Marx, as he argues that “seventeenth-century France and nineteenth-century France belong to the same type.” To think there has been a change of type is to mistake a conjunctural event in the society (revolution) with its fundamental structure, since absolutism arises, not from the constituent features of a social form, but from “individual, transitory and contingent conditions” in social evolution. In principle, the form of state is never a fundamental constituting feature of any social type.

Durkheim’s work, then, involved considerable reworking of basic concepts, and his theorizing was constructed with a view that made this possible. One such important example was the conceptualization of the notion of primitive society itself between *The Division* (1893) and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912). In the first of these studies, the fundamental fact of the early societies is that they are held together by bonds of similitude and characterized by intense and violent reactions to infringements of a highly uniform “collective consciousness.” There is little social differentiation; even the gender division of labor is so slight there is no contractual regulation between the sexes, and relations between the sexes were characterized by sexual promiscuity. Durkheim’s more detailed investigations into Australian tribal society produced a more complex picture, as he began to see kinship organization as highly structured, and based on deeply embedded forms of sexual and age divisions. He came to view social structure as the outcome of symbolic practices, particularly

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83. Ibid., 199.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
those crystallized in rituals. He established the thesis that ritual beliefs were structured on basic categories that were themselves socially produced and reproduced. Fundamental to such systems of religious categories were the concepts of the sacred and profane, good and evil, which were involved both in organizing such rituals and being at the same time reproduced by them. In this way, Durkheim thought he could arrive at a definitive sociological critique of Kantian apriorism on the one hand, and Spencerian individualism on the other. He also thought that this kind of investigation could shed light on the notion of the soul, developing further his notion of *homo duplex*, since evidence showed that representations of individual souls were intimately linked to the structure of social groups and their internal differentiation (in some Australian groups, for example, women did not have souls).

Because Durkheim’s attention had shifted to these symbolic processes and practices of intervention in and reproduction of such symbolic materials, it has been assumed in some interpretations that his whole sociology had itself become a subjective exercise in symbolic interactionism and a rapprochement with pragmatism. Although there was no acknowledgment of this in Durkheim’s writings on methodology, the focus of analysis was no longer on the external modes of sanctioned conduct (moral facts). It had moved to social epistemology, or what he called “the sociology of knowledge and religion,” which examined the way immanent infrastructures imposed their exigencies on action. This shift of emphasis had already been signaled in his discussion paper on “The Determination of Moral Facts” (1906), where he had suggested that external constraint and obligation was one side only of moral discipline. Another dimension, neglected by Kant (but emphasized by Renouvier), was that aspect of morality beyond obligation that was “desirable and desired.” This he thought required a sociological analysis from the inside, to complement the analyses of the externality of obligation: “[t]he desirability peculiar to moral life participates of the … characteristic of obligation, and is not the same as the desirability of the objects that attract our ordinary desires.” Durkheim develops parallel ideas in his lectures on pragmatism with respect to truth.

Mauss’s political writings also reflect two important developments of Durkheimian theory after Durkheim’s death in 1917. On the one hand, Mauss is much more influenced by the theory of capital and capitalism than Durkheim

89. See my “Woman as Outsider,” in Gane, *The Radical Sociology of Durkheim and Mauss.*
was, and this gives certain parts of his writing a critical and radical character. On
the other hand, Mauss attempted to think about politics directly. One aspect of
this reflection can be found in his attempt to define the relation between soci-
ology and politics; another tended to look more to the practical development
of socialism than to criticize socialist theory (although he also does this), and
this leads him to assess progress on grounds that he claims are different from,
and often in advance of, theory.

Mauss did not give any great weight to the notion of social pathology, and
so does not locate himself in Durkheim’s scheme where the principal objec-
tive of theorists is to repair a social abnormality of structure through appeals
to statesmen. In fact, the very category of “abnormal” and “pathological” social
facts disappears with Mauss. But if Mauss kept his academic anthropology and
his political writing separate, he drew practical political lessons for sociology
whenever the opportunity arose. His judgment against the Bolsheviks draws some
harsh ones: the Bolshevik Revolution was more a creature of the crisis in Russia
than the outcome of the will of a people; it was not “methodically pursued … it
was just a great adventure,” in fact, “an accident, it has been grafted, overlaid onto
the life of a people … it does not correspond to the movement of the mentality
of the Russian people, any more than it is the pure realization of the ideas of its
leaders.” Even the February Revolution of 1917, when Kerensky took power,
was not the work of “a living society creating for itself by force a constitution,” and
even the socialist revolutionaries destroyed what political and civic organization
there was. As for the Bolsheviks, “at least they had will power … savage will …
not encumbered by any love for this immense people.” The Bolsheviks “exploited”
the revolution; they “seized Russia,” but the opposition was even worse and even
less popular. It proves that all social revolution “must take a national character,”
“it must be the work of the ‘general will’ of the citizens.” Indeed the communist
and terrorist period of the Russian Revolution was not socialist. Socialism would
organize the market and not attempt to produce a communism of consumption.
Socialism would not “dispense with money” nor suppress the essential “indus-
trial and commercial freedom” of the modern economy. Essentially socialism
should maintain and “respect … intermediary collectivities.” Indeed, “Durkheim’s
hypotheses about the moral and economic value of the professional group emerge
further confirmed. The Soviets failed precisely because they undermined and
destroyed this primordial organizational element.” Essential political conclu-
sions follow: “violence is only legitimate via the law, via the legal order whose

reign it supports: it is not itself order, still less faith”; second, “naïve sociologists, the Communists believed that the order of sovereignty, the law, can create … from nothing … the law does not create, it sanctions.”

The Durkheimians clearly aimed to decamp from philosophy, the discipline in which they were formed, into a positive science. They did not think that this involved an epistemological break, since their notion of philosophy was that it was already a science from the point of view of its methodology and logic. What they wanted was to put this science to use. The philosophers who did not take this route were, in their view, taking a path into a profoundly reactionary mysticism or scholasticism. But in their own practice, it seems clear to conclude that Durkheimian philosophy evolved into a radicalized Kantianism formed out of the French tradition of Cousin and Renouvier that they then applied to Comte in order to regenerate sociology and anthropology. What they produced was an experimental rationalism that had learning from errors as its objective.

MAJOR WORKS

Durkheim


Mauss


99. Ibid., 198–9.
Gottlob Frege (1848–1925), Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) are universally acknowledged as key figures in the development of philosophy in the twentieth century and, in particular, as centrally important in the development of the well-known divide between what we now call the analytic and continental philosophical traditions. Frege, the patriarch of the analytic tradition, established modern mathematical logic as both a technical subject (now often pursued primarily in departments of mathematics and computer science) and a foundational discipline for philosophy. Carnap, one of Frege’s very few students at the University of Jena in the years 1910–14, actively participated in the great transformation of mathematical logic that led to Kurt Gödel’s fundamental contributions in the early 1930s; and he also took Frege’s and Bertrand Russell’s conception of (mathematical) logic as the essence of philosophy several steps further – eventually leading (in 1934) to the radical idea that Wissenschaftslogik (the logic of science) should replace traditional philosophy entirely. Husserl, the patriarch of the twentieth-century continental tradition, established the new philosophical method of transcendental phenomenology, aiming (in a way quite different from Carnap) to “bracket” the ontological problems of traditional metaphysics and reconstitute philosophy as a scientific discipline. Heidegger, Husserl’s most important assistant at the University of Freiburg in the late 1910s and early 1920s, then went on to disappoint his erstwhile mentor by establishing yet another radically new...
conception of philosophy – as phenomenological ontology or the existential hermeneutic of Dasein – in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

These two different traditions of philosophical thought appear, at first sight, to be completely at odds with one another. It is no wonder, then, that the increasing tension (and mutual incomprehension) between them crystallized in the early 1930s when Carnap published his well-known paper, “Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache” (Overcoming metaphysics through the logical analysis of language) (1932), featuring a blistering criticism of Heidegger’s notorious sentence “Das Nichts selbst nichtet” (nothingness itself nothings) as a typical example of a metaphysical pseudo-sentence. After this, not surprisingly, the relationship between the two traditions went quickly downhill – hastened, in no small part, by the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 and the following migration of much of the German-speaking philosophical world (including Carnap) from central Europe to the United Kingdom or its dominions and the United States. The deep intellectual impasse characterizing most of the second half of the twentieth century between the analytic tradition, dominant in the English-speaking world, and the continental tradition, dominant in European lands, was the natural and inevitable result.2

Nevertheless, before the epoch-making events of the early 1930s, there was no such intellectual gulf within German academic philosophy. On the contrary, throughout the late 1910s and 1920s, logical empiricism (represented by Carnap and others), Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, neo-Kantianism (represented by the Southwest and Marburg Schools),3 and Heidegger’s new existential–hermeneutic variant of phenomenology were rather engaged in a fascinating series of philosophical exchanges and struggles, all addressed to the revolutionary changes that were then sweeping both the Naturwissenschaften and the Geisteswissenschaften. The differing philosophical movements of course disagreed with and opposed one another about the interpretation and significance of these revolutionary changes, but they still spoke the same philosophical language and actively engaged one another in a common set of philosophical problems. Moreover, many of these central points of both agreement and disagreement have their origin, as we shall see, in the earlier reactions of both Frege and Husserl to the profound developments in the foundations of mathematics of the late nineteenth century. For both were initially trained as

2. For a detailed consideration of the collision between Carnap and Heidegger over “metaphysical pseudo-sentences” in the early 1930s, together with extended discussion of its social and political context, see Michael Friedman, A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2000), on which we are drawing here. We shall return to this topic in §III below.

3. For a detailed discussion of these schools, see the essay by Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères in this volume.
mathematicians and were then led to philosophy by their deep (and somewhat different) interests in foundational problems.

Carnap’s evolving engagement with these problems was also fundamentally shaped, unlike Frege’s, by the influence of contemporary neo-Kantianism (especially as represented by the Marburg School), leading, in Carnap’s case, to an even more serious divorce between formal logic and intuitive experience than in Frege. Whereas Heidegger’s philosophy, after the fateful encounter with Carnap, was characterized by open hostility towards “logic and the scientific way of thinking,” his earlier writings (including *Being and Time*) express a serious interest in early-twentieth-century developments in logic, the foundations of mathematics, and the foundations of natural science. Moreover, although Heidegger’s evolving perspective on these issues was importantly shaped by both Husserl and the historically oriented *Lebensphilosophie* of Wilhelm Dilthey, he was also substantially influenced, like Carnap, by a thoroughgoing exposure to contemporary neo-Kantianism (here represented by the Southwest School). It turns out, therefore, that the original founders of the two traditions – even Carnap and Heidegger – had much more in common than may first appear. We shall argue, in particular, that one can go a long way toward understanding the divergent trajectories of the two traditions by concentrating on a single fundamental issue that divided them: the relative philosophical importance of the distinct but closely related disciplines Kant had called formal and transcendental logic.

I. FORMAL AND TRANSCENDENTAL LOGIC: THE KANTIAN LEGACY

Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is divided into two principal parts: a very long first part called the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements,” and a relatively brief second part called the “Transcendental Doctrine of Method.” The “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements” is then divided, in turn, into a relatively brief first part called the “Transcendental Aesthetic” (concerning our two pure forms of sensible intuition, space and time) and a very long second part called the “Transcendental Logic” (comprising both the “Transcendental Analytic” and the “Transcendental Dialectic”). Kant begins the introduction to the second part (of the doctrine of elements) by enunciating his fundamental distinction between two distinct faculties of the mind, intuitive and conceptual:

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4. We describe Heidegger’s early writings on logic towards the end of §1 (see, in particular, note 27 below). For Heidegger’s interest in both the foundations of mathematics (formalism versus intuition) and the foundations of physics (relativity theory), see *Being and Time* §3.

5. For a discussion of Dilthey, see the essay by Eric Sean Nelson in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*. 
Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, of which the first is [the faculty] to receive representations (receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty to cognize an object through these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the first an object is given to us, through the second it is thought in relation to this representation (as mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield a cognition. Both are either pure or empirical.⁶

On this basis, Kant continues, “we distinguish the science of the rules of sensibility in general, i.e., aesthetic, from the science of the rules of the understanding in general, i.e., logic” (A52/B76). And what Kant first has in mind by “logic,” in this context, is what he calls “general” or “formal” logic, characterized by the following two properties:

1) As general logic it abstracts from all contents of the cognition of the understanding and the diversity of its objects, and has to do with nothing but the mere form of thinking. 2) As pure logic it has no empirical principles, and thus it draws nothing from psychology (as one has sometimes allowed oneself to be persuaded), which therefore has no influence at all on the canon of the understanding. It is a demonstrated doctrine, and everything in it must be certain entirely a priori.

(A54/B78)

Kant’s own main concern, however, is a new type of logic, “transcendental” logic, which has the second property but not the first:

General logic abstracts, as we have indicated, from all content of cognition, i.e., from all relation of it to the object, and considers only logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another, i.e., the form of thinking in general. But now since there are pure as well as empirical intuitions (as the transcendental aesthetic has shown), there could also be a distinction between pure and empirical thinking of objects. In this case there would be a logic [i.e., transcendental logic], in which one did not abstract from all content of

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⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A50/B74. All subsequent references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are given parenthetically, as usual, via the A and B page numbers of the first (1781) and second (1787) editions respectively. All translations from the German are our own.
cognitions; for that [logic] which contained merely the rules of the
pure thinking of an object would exclude all those cognitions that
were of empirical content.

(A55/B79–80)

It is the task of transcendental logic, therefore, to relate the pure logical
forms of thought comprising general logic to the pure forms of sensible intu-
tion described in the “Transcendental Aesthetic”; and it is precisely this task
that is then carried out in the “Transcendental Analytic.”

But the rapid rise of scientific psychology in Germany in the second half of
the nineteenth century prompted a renewed challenge to the sharp separation
between logic and psychology originally ordained by Kant. With characteristic
forthrightness, John Stuart Mill had already deemed logic to be a chapter of
psychology:

[Logic] is not a science distinct from, and coordinate with, Psychol-
ogy. So far as it is a science at all, it is a part, or branch, of Psychol-
ogy … Its theoretical grounds are wholly borrowed from
Psychology, and include as much of that science as is required to
justify the rules of the art.7

A centerpiece of late-nineteenth-century materialism and naturalism, the reduc-
tion of logic to psychology was the research program of numerous psycholo-
gists and psychologistic logicians, who sought to show that the principles and
laws of logic are rooted in empirical psychological (and ultimately, biological
and chemical) laws governing actual mental processes. Accordingly, even the
most basic principles of logic (including noncontradiction) were regarded as
being about, and drawing their evidence from, a range of facts regarding the
particular mental acts and processes of empirical cognizing subjects. The rejec-
tion of such views, first by Frege and then by Husserl, drew on the antipsycholo-
gism of German philosopher and logician Rudolph Hermann Lotze, and both
Frege and Husserl accordingly attacked the psychological logicians’ attempts to
ground the objective and a priori validity of logical and mathematical principles
or laws in the mental acts or psychic experiences (Erlebnisse) of the judging or
reasoning subject.8

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7. John Stuart Mill, An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy (Boston, MA: William
V. Spencer, 1865), 359.
8. For further discussion of this nineteenth-century background to both Frege and Husserl see
Hans Sluga, Gottlob Frege (London: Routledge, 1980), and Michael Dummett, The Origins of
Analytic Philosophy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). For the nineteenth-
century logical background, more generally, to the analytic tradition compare J. Alberto Coffa,
The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station (Cambridge: Cambridge
Frege’s criticisms will be familiar to analytic philosophers. The laws of logic are not psychological laws, empirical generalizations describing how individuals actually reason, but are “laws prescribing the way one ought to think”: universal laws of truth concerning what obtains with the utmost generality for all rational thinking. The domain of logic is neither more nor less than objective thought, considered solely with regard to truth and falsity. Descriptions of the mental are to be purged altogether from logic, where “psychological considerations have no more place … than they do in astronomy or geology.” Indeed, logic is sui generis: a request for the justification of a law of logic is either answered by reduction to another law of logic or is not to be answered at all. Frege regarded any attempted justification of logic as inevitably circular, since logical laws and principles are presupposed by all rational inquiries. And this logocentrism is coupled with an objectivist and realist epistemology: knowledge is “an activity that does not create what is known but grasps what is already there,” and, accordingly, “what is true” is “objective and independent of the judging subject.” As the terminology of “grasping” suggests, Frege thus purchases his characterization of knowledge of logical and mathematical objects at the cost of a seeming Platonism about abstract objects, in particular, objective thoughts (Gedanken). Objective thoughts (e.g. the Pythagorean theorem) are not constituents of the stream of consciousness, but propositional bearers of truth-values: timeless objects of belief existing independently of being “grasped” by any subject.9

After Husserl had obtained a PhD in mathematics in Vienna in 1882, his interests turned to philosophy under the influence of Franz Brentano. Inspired by the latter’s concept of intentionality as well as his injunction that philosophy can and must become scientific, Husserl began his philosophical career in earnest pursuit of Brentano’s goal of showing that philosophy and logic are grounded in the laws of an empirical descriptive psychology. This is a principal thesis of his first book, The Philosophy of Arithmetic (1891), dedicated to Brentano. But Husserl’s failure clearly to distinguish between numbers as ideal objects and as ideas or representations (Vorstellungen) in the cognitive acts of counting, collecting, and comparing was subjected to a withering review by Frege in 1894. It has been long and widely believed that Frege’s caustic criticism
converted Husserl from seeking a psychological foundation for logic and that subsequently Husserl joined Frege in a common critique of that program.\textsuperscript{10} Nevertheless, recent studies argue in favor of Husserl’s own later claim that he came independently to the rejection of psychologism in logic for motivations immanent within his own agenda.\textsuperscript{11} One of these motivations, as evidenced by Husserl’s generous references throughout the \textit{Logical Investigations} (1900–1901), was his reading of Bernard Bolzano’s (1781–1848) \textit{Wissenschaftslehre} (1837). In the first two books of this neglected four-volume work (entitled \textit{A Theory of Ideas in Themselves} and \textit{A Theory of Propositions in Themselves}, respectively), Husserl found that “a complete plan of a ‘pure’ logic was already available.”\textsuperscript{12}

Furthermore, and in sharp contrast to Frege, Husserl regards the distinction between the descriptive and the normative as having little to do with the critique of psychologism. Instead, Husserl maintains that all normative sciences depend on theoretical sciences and, in particular, that applied logic, the technique of reasoning for a practical purpose, is itself grounded on a very general theoretical science termed, following Kant, Bolzano, and Lotze, “pure logic” (\textit{reine Logik}). The basic error of psychologism is its conflation of pure and applied logic, resulting in a misinterpretation of the pure laws of logic as empirical laws of psychology. Like Frege, the first volume of the \textit{Logical Investigations}, subtitled \textit{Prolegomena to a Pure Logic} (1900), argues that psychologism in logic inexorably leads to skepticism and relativism. But already in the early 1890s, and perhaps even by 1891, Husserl had acquired the un-Fregean view that the fundamental contrast between logic and psychology lies in the circumstance that logical and mathematical objects are presented or given to the mind in a quite specific

\textsuperscript{10} See Marvin Farber, \textit{The Foundation of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and the Quest for a Rigorous Science of Philosophy} (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1943), 54–8, and Dagfinn Follesdal, \textit{Husserl und Frege: Ein Beitrag zur Beleuchtung der Entstehung der phänomenologischen Philosophie} (Osl: Aschehoug, 1958). Husserl indeed frankly criticized his earlier psychologism in the first volume (\textit{Prolegomena to a Pure Logic}) of his \textit{Logical Investigations} (1900–1901), but the alleged role of Frege in Husserl’s conversion is puzzlingly not documented there, being limited to a footnote in which Husserl retracted his earlier criticism of Frege’s antipsychologism while warmly commending the reader to the Preface to Frege’s \textit{Grundgesetze} (1893).


fashion that lends them an identity distinct from the various individual psychic acts through which they are given. Thus, on the one hand, Husserl's alternative to Frege's antipsychologism took its first inspiration from Bolzano's conception of logic as the study of “propositions in themselves” (Sätze an sich), having no more relation to psychology than do the propositions of mathematics. And, on the other hand, Husserl regarded “propositions in themselves” as “metaphysical abstrusities (sic)”\(^{13}\) – and so he rejected the Platonism common to both Bolzano and Frege. It was only on reading Lotze that Husserl came to see that reference to such entities was but reference to the “sense” of statements of a pure logic, and that they crucially possessed the property Lotze had termed “validity” (Geltung). In particular, Lotze interpreted the Platonism of earlier writers in the tradition of pure logic (such as Bolzano) in a deontologized fashion, so that the notion of “validity” pertains to the peculiar way in which the systematic forms of thought comprising pure logic are ideal and independent of particular thinkers but not independent of mind as such. In a sense to be further articulated by Husserl, pure logic is formal in that it is regarded as the science of these ideal forms of thought.\(^{14}\)

Husserl's conception of pure logic thereby returns, in part, to Kant's conception of transcendental logic. For we are not concerned solely with abstract “propositions in themselves” (as in Bolzano or Frege) but also, and centrally, with the location or origin of these within the cognitive capacities of a pure or transcendental subject.\(^{15}\) Unlike Kant, however, Husserl has no room for a sharp dichotomy

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13. Ibid., 37 n.12.

14. See Husserl in “A Reply to a Critic of My Refutation of Logical Psychologism”: “I saw that under ‘proposition in itself’ is to be understood, then, what is designated in ordinary discourse – which objectifies the ideal – as the ‘sense’ of a statement. It is that which is explained as one and the same where, for example, different persons are said to have asserted the same thing. … And it further became clear to me that this identical sense could be nothing other than the universal, the species, which belongs to a certain moment or phase present in all actual assertions with the same sense, and which makes possible the identification [of sameness] just mentioned. … The proposition [Satz] thus relates to those acts of judgment to which it belongs as their identical intention [Meinung] in the same way as the species redness relates to individuals of ‘the same’ red color. Now with this view of things as a basis, Bolzano’s theory, that propositions are objects which nonetheless have no ‘existence’ [Existenz], comes to have the following quite intelligible signification: They have the ‘ideal’ being [Sein] or validity [Gelten] of objects which are universals [allgemeiner Gegenstände]; and thus that being which is established, for example, in the ‘existence proofs’ of mathematics. But they do not have the real being of things, or of dependent, thing-like moments – of temporal particulars in general. Bolzano himself did not give the faintest intimation that these phenomenological relationships between signification, signification moment, and full act of signifying had been noticed by him” (in Husserl: Shorter Works, Peter McCormick and Frederick Elliston [eds] [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], 154).

15. Compare Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason: “[Transcendental logic] would also concern the origin of our cognitions of objects, in so far as it cannot be ascribed to the objects; while general logic, by contrast, has nothing to do with this origin of cognition, but rather considers
between two distinct faculties of the mind, a purely conceptual faculty of understanding and a purely sensible faculty of intuition. On the contrary, all cognition, for Husserl, is necessarily both conceptual and intuitive, insofar as what Husserl calls “essential intuition” (Wesenschau, Wesenserchauung) immediately presents us (in the manner of direct intuition) with a (universal or conceptual) essence. Thus, whereas Bolzano, for example, explicitly opposed Kant on the need for intuition in mathematical analysis in favor of a purely logical, purely conceptual treatment of this subject,16 Husserl rejected the very distinction between intuition and concepts with his doctrine that both logic and mathematical analysis rests on “formal” or “categorial” intuition having no relation (as does geometry) to any particular “material” subject matter given in sense perception.17

As programmatically outlined in the first volume of the Logical Investigations, pure logic is the domain of concepts such as truth, object, sense, proposition, syllogism, ground, and consequence. Inspired by the Leibnizean idea of a mathesis universalis, it considers “pure logico-grammatical forms” without regard to the actual knowing, judging, inferring, representing, and proving of any individual cognizing subject. The laws of pure logic possess “eternal’ validity” (“ewige” representations, whether they are originally given a priori in ourselves or only empirically, merely according to those laws, in accordance with which the understanding brings them in relation to one another when it thinks, and therefore [general logic] deals only with the form of the understanding that can be provided for the representations, wherever they may have originated” (A55–6/B80).

16. As its title intimates, Bolzano’s most significant mathematical work, his proof of the intermediate value theorem (1817), is explicitly a “purely conceptual” result, pointedly eschewing any reliance on spatiotemporal intuition (as in a spatial curve described by “continuous” motion). As such, it is an early precursor of the program of “arithmetization” of analysis subsequently carried out by Augustin-Louis Cauchy, Richard Dedekind, Leopold Kronecker, and Karl Weierstrass. Husserl studied under the latter two in Berlin in the late 1870s and early 1880s, serving as Weierstrass’s assistant in 1883–84, and indeed Husserl would say that it was from Weierstrass that he had acquired “the ethos of my scientific endeavors”; see Karl Schuhmann, Husserl-Kronik (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 7. While Husserl’s conception of “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science” (1911) took as its model of rigor Weierstrass’s grounding of higher analysis in elementary arithmetic, it is indicative of Husserl’s more philosophically radical approach that he sought, in the Philosophy of Arithmetic, to extend Weierstrass’s critical project by scrutinizing the concept of number itself. As described above, this led, once freed from the psychologism inherent in Brentano’s conception of philosophy, to the development of phenomenology.

17. Husserl holds that, unlike logic and the sciences of number, pure geometry, as a formal conceptual structure, is an idealization of perceived space, which itself is an idealization from the space of actual experience. In the language of Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie (Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy; hereafter Ideas) (1913), in Husserliana (hereafter Hua; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1951– ), vol. 3, §§8–9, geometry is thus a “material,” not a “formal” eidetic science – “the ontological discipline relating to an essential moment of material thinghood, namely, spatial form.” See also note 19 below.
Geltung), a validity guaranteed *a priori* through knowledge of their conceptual essence; and this knowledge, in turn, is obtained from intuition of categorial forms to which nothing perceptual corresponds. For Husserl, the ideality and *a priori* truth characteristic of the propositions of pure logic (and the more abstract parts of mathematics) involve a type of evidence presented only in directed intentional acts of categorial intuition. Unlike intuitions in Kant's sense, therefore, categorial intuitions present us with an “essence” (an abstract object) immediately and directly as an intentional unity of distinct acts of signification, a “givenness” that is inextricably conceptual as well as conceptually determined. In this way, intricate patterns of “validity-foundings” (*Geltungsfundierungen*) can be described, showing how particular ideal meanings are founded on or presuppose others.

By refashioning Lotze's inchoate doctrine of validity into the phenomenological method of essential intuition, Husserl's earlier analyses of the psychological origin of the basic concepts of arithmetic are transformed into descriptive phenomenological analyses of structures of intentionality underlying the ideal validity of the objects of logic and pure mathematics. Thus, whereas Frege (and, following him, Carnap) understood late-nineteenth-century mathematical developments (primarily the “rigorization” and eventual “arithmetization” of analysis) as pointing in the direction of a purely logical foundation for mathematics (arithmetic and analysis) making no reference to intuition whatsoever, Husserl drew from a different, more geometrical strand (involving the *n*-dimensional spaces or “manifolds” of Riemann and Helmholtz, Grassmann's *Ausdehnungslehre*, and Lie's continuous transformation groups) in articulating a foundation in categorial intuition for the basic laws of logic themselves.

18. Bernhard Riemann (1826–66) was a German mathematician whose 1854 *Habilitationsschrift*, “On the Hypotheses which Lie at the Basis of Geometry,” is among the most influential documents of modern mathematics. In it, Riemann extended differential geometry, hitherto applied only on two-dimensional surfaces, to what he termed *n*-dimensional manifolds, positing a differential expression for metrical relations between nearby points. Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–94) was a German physicist, physiologist, and philosopher of science. Helmholtz's (1868) paper “On the Facts Underlying Geometry” is an attempt to derive the Riemannian metrical expression from “facts” regarding the “free mobility” of rigid bodies. However, Helmholtz's condition of free mobility picks out only a restricted class of Riemannian manifolds: those with constant curvature. Sophus Lie (1842–99) was a Norwegian mathematician and founder of the theory of continuous transformation groups. These (so-called “Lie”) groups were originally employed in the theory of differential equations, but Lie subsequently gave them a geometrical application, showing that they describe the set of rigid motions identified by Helmholtz's “free mobility.” Hermann Grassmann (1809–77) was a German linguist and mathematician. Grassmann's major work, his 1844 *Die Lineare Ausdehnungslehre* (Theory of linear extension), formulated an algebraic theory of higher dimensional spaces, essentially *n*-dimensional linear vector spaces.

19. Although Frege sharply opposed Kant's doctrine of the role of pure intuition in arithmetic, looking for a foundation in pure logic for this science (and for the science of analysis), he
According to Husserl, phenomenology was transformed from a purely descriptive psychology to transcendental phenomenology by pursuit of the main themes of the *Logical Investigations*, resulting in the distinctive form of “transcendental phenomenological idealism” articulated in the *Ideen zu einer reichen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, 1913).\(^{20}\) Whereas the logician is concerned with *a priori* truths of ideal objectivities (just as the number theorist is concerned with numbers and the truths of arithmetic), the thesis of intentionality led to the view that meaning-constituting experiences (if only of an idealized subject) are necessarily correlated with any object of knowledge. Thus, the phenomenological discovery of the meaning-constituting acts of consciousness in the context of mathematical and logical idealities was extended to all objects. Through a step-wise progression of acts of reflection undertaken within inner intuition, each directed toward a normally unthematized particular conscious experience, the character and limitations of each are successively exhibited, together with their possible interconnections to strata more deeply embedded in preconscious experience. The goal is to uncover and bring to full consciousness the multiplicity and structure of the subjective acts through which the intended objects are invested with objective meaning.

For Husserl, therefore, transcendental phenomenology is constitutional analysis: that is, the intentional analysis of how an object is continuously constituted, with respect to its sense and validity, in the interconnections of all acts of consciousness directed towards it. But this is not to say that the object, whose nonetheless followed the Kantian doctrine that the science of geometry, in particular, is based on our pure intuition of space (and is therefore *synthetic a priori*). Like Bolzano, then, Frege operated wholly within the Kantian conception of intuition, but he denied that any such intuition was needed in either arithmetic or analysis. Husserl, by contrast, is breaking with the Kantian conception completely: whereas arithmetic and analysis are based on formal or categorial intuition, the science of geometry is based on a *material* essential intuition having the essences of specifically spatial forms as its object (cf. note 17 above). In the terminology of *Ideas*, therefore, whereas logic, arithmetic, and analysis are completely universal or formal eidetic sciences, geometry is a regional or material eidetic science.

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\(^{20}\) The characterization of phenomenology as “descriptive psychology” in the first edition of the *Logical Investigations* (“Introduction” to vol. 2, 1901) was later regarded as “misleading” and removed in the second (1913) edition: see “Translator's Note,” in *Logical Investigations*, J. N. Findlay (trans.) (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), vol. 1, 262. Many phenomenologists resisted Husserl's “transcendental turn” away from “the things themselves [*die Sachen selbst*]” toward subjectivity as the ultimate stratum of phenomenological investigation, viewing it as a return to subjective idealism or even psychologism. For the controversy, see Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982). Husserl's own retrospective (1913) account of this transition – see his "Entwurf einer 'Vorrede' zu den Logischen Untersuchungen" – was not published during his lifetime.
sense may be that of a mind-transcendent object, is produced by consciousness, as subjective idealism absurdly maintains. Rather, constitution is a matter of “sense-bestowal through transcendental subjectivity,” and the task of constitutive analysis is to investigate how objects, exclusively considered as accomplishments of intentional acts, are ongoing unities of “sense formation” arising against the background of previous sense formations. In this sense, transcendental constitution presupposes a purely methodological “bracketing” (epochê) or “phenomenological reduction,” leaving the world of objects of science and everyday life “as is” but suspending or “putting out of action” the usual assumptions regarding the mind-independent existence of these objects. It is the attempt to understand the meaning of “mind-independent” being as arising within an object’s “sedimented” sense-history, a history to be transcendentally reconstructed and clarified as an accumulating achievement within conscious experience in the broadest sense.21

Only in later works did Husserl consider extending the phenomenological reduction, the epochê, “to formal logic and mathesis in its entirety.” By making these objects “essentially evident by observing consciousness itself in its pure immanence,” transcendental phenomenology seeks to discover the “transcendental subjectivity” underlying the objects of logic and mathematics, “the a priori other side of genuine objectivity.”22 As in Kant, it then becomes the task of a transcendental logic to seek “in subjectivity, or more precisely, the correlation between subjectivity and the objective, the ultimate determination of the sense of objectivity, as apprehended in cognition.”23 These correlations of the

21. See Thomas Ryckman, The Reign of Relativity: Philosophy in Physics 1915–1925 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), for a reconstruction of the mathematician Hermann Weyl’s attempt to implement something like Husserl’s program of transcendental phenomenological constitution in the context of classical field physics (Einstein’s theory of general relativity and Maxwell’s theory of electromagnetism). In 1918, Weyl formulated the first unified field theory of gravitation and electromagnetism; the theory’s epistemological core, heavily indebted to Husserlian transcendental phenomenological idealism, rested on what Weyl termed “the principle of the relativity of magnitude” (Raum–Zeit–Materie: Vorlesungen über allgemeinen Relativitätstheorie. Dritte Auflage [Berlin: J. Springer, 1919], 243), which essentially states that the laws of nature should be invariant under “arbitrary” changes of scale at neighboring space-time points. Although originating in the context of classical fields, Weyl’s principle, when reformulated for quantum mechanics (where it pertains not to a factor of length but to a factor of phase of the wave function, as Weyl himself later showed) is the progenitor of local gauge invariance, currently the unifying principle of the standard model of fundamental interactions, the cornerstone of the present understanding of elementary particles and the forces that act between them. See also Thomas Ryckman, “Hermann Weyl and ‘First Philosophy’: Constituting Gauge Invariance,” in Constituting Objectivity: Transcendental Perspectives on Modern Physics, Michel Bitbol et al. (eds) (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009).


formal objects of logic and mathematics with subjective processes of experiencing are treated schematically in the *Logical Investigations* but elaborated far more extensively in *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929) as well as other writings that remained unpublished in Husserl's lifetime. Transcendental logic is “foundational” only in a novel sense: its aim is the clarification of the fundamental concepts of logic and mathematics by showing how the sense of these ideal objectivities arises within “transcendental subjectivity,” through “originary” sense-bestowing acts of pure consciousness. Increasingly prominent in these last writings, the account of the constitution of logical and mathematical objects within transcendental subjectivity ultimately rests on the phenomenological description of the “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*), the world of ordinary activities and beliefs whose prelogical validities act as grounds for the logical ones. Through the phenomenological reduction, these practices, as intentional acts, become the objects of phenomenological reflection, disclosing how their sense formations arise, structuring the experience characteristic of the life-world. In particular, Husserl famously argues that geometry originates within meaning-conferring acts, revealed through phenomenological investigation of the life-world.24

Carnap, as we noted, studied with Frege at the University of Jena in the years 1910–14. After the First World War he first returned to Jena in the years 1919–22, where he completed his doctoral dissertation, *Der Raum* (1921/2), and he then lived in the town of Buchenbach, near Freiburg, from 1922 to 1926. Carnap had already become seriously interested in phenomenology during the years 1919–22, for he makes very significant use of the Husserlian notion of essential intuition in his dissertation. Indeed, not only does he use this latter notion to defend a modified version of the Kantian conception of pure spatial intuition, but Carnap also embraces Husserl’s notion of formal or categorial intuition for the most general laws of formal logic. After completing his dissertation, Carnap then turned in earnest to the project of *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (hereafter *Aufbau*; 1928) in the years 1922–25, and it was this project, in particular, that then facilitated his introduction to the Philosophical Circle surrounding Moritz Schlick at the University of Vienna in 1925. While working on the *Aufbau,*

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24. In his late work, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936–37), the English translation of which includes his 1936 paper on “The Origin of Geometry,” Husserl is concerned to exhibit the historical genesis through which the process of geometrical idealization has transpired, from practical activities of measuring and surveying to the triumph of the geometrical method in classical physics, as “a general method of knowing the real.” This illustrates a highly significant shift in emphasis in Husserl’s thought, from considering constitution principally as an achievement of the individual transcendental ego (termed, by later commentators, “static constitution”) to viewing it more generally as an intersubjective achievement, in that the layers of meaning investing and informing a given constituted object may have origins extending back in cultural and historical time (“genetic constitution”).

In particular, the project of the *Aufbau* is also called a “constitutional theory” (*Konstitutionstheorie*), and, more specifically, a “constitutional theory of the objects of cognition.”\footnote{Carnap described the *Aufbau* project this way in his lectures to Schlick’s Philosophical Circle in 1925; see Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways*, 70. It was on the basis of these lectures that Carnap then joined the Circle (soon to be named the Vienna Circle) as Schlick’s assistant in 1926.} Unlike in his doctoral dissertation, however, Carnap has now left all traces of Husserlian essential intuition (and of the Kantian synthetic a priori) entirely behind. In particular, the *Aufbau* presupposes only the theory of logical types of A. N. Whitehead and Russell’s *Principia Mathematica* (1910–13) as the objectifying framework of a theory of constitution, lending the term “constitution” a precise meaning within the language of logic. It articulates the goal of a “rational reconstruction” of the (simply assumed) system of scientific knowledge via an extensional “constitutional system of concepts” wherein each scientific concept is definable in constructive step-by-step fashion from concepts of lower levels, ultimately from primitive concepts pertaining to the subjective sensory data or “elementary experiences” of a single subject. On account of the transitivity of reducibility, the principal thesis of Carnap’s constitutional theory states that any scientific concept can be reduced, via logical chains of definition, to the primitive ones, thus reconstructing each concept in the epistemically privileged terms of first-person experiential content while simultaneously avoiding all (purely subjective) ostensive definitions (*Aufbau* §§1, 13–16). Logical construction thus provides “a rational justification of intuition,” insofar as “intuitive understanding” is now everywhere replaced with “discursive reasoning” (§§54, 100, 143). This automatically excludes any extra-logical justification of logical laws and principles.

Carnap’s *logocentrism* thus points to the vast abyss separating the constitutive approach of the *Aufbau* from transcendental phenomenology. Just as, for Carnap, all talk of “intuition” must be logically reconstructed, all talk of “acts of constitution” executed by a “transcendental subject” must similarly be replaced by purely logical constructions. Whereas all objects are indeed constituted from a “given” basis of first-personal (autopsychological) elementary experiences, it is a central thesis of Carnap’s construction that “the given has no subject” (§65). More generally, whereas we can, if we like, describe Carnapian constitution in terms of the successive operations carried out by a cognitive subject, Carnap is very clear that this mode of speaking is merely a “fiction” whereby we vividly...
represent the true purely logical procedure of step-wise definition (§99). In particular, all it ultimately means to “constitute” an object from “the given” is that we have a chain of logical definitions within the type-theory of *Principia Mathematica* leading from a single basic relation between elementary experiences (remembrance of part-similarity) to the object in question. Formal logic, in this sense, wholly takes the place of transcendent logic.

Heidegger studied at the University of Freiburg in the years 1910–15, completing his habilitation in philosophy under Heinrich Rickert in 1915. Rickert was a neo-Kantian strongly influenced by the “pure logic” tradition; and Heidegger’s earliest writings are largely concerned with this tradition and its ensuing problematic. Heidegger’s first publication, “Neuere Forschungen über Logik” (1912), is a critical review of recent contributions to logic with particular emphasis on the need to overcome psychologism. His doctoral dissertation, *Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus* (1913), is a much more extended treatment of the same theme, which exposes some of the most popular current theories of judgment as psychologistic and therefore unacceptable. Finally, Heidegger’s habilitation, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (1915), is a reading of the *Grammaticae speculativae* (which was then attributed to Scotus) through the lenses of the contemporary logical investigations of Rickert, Husserl, and Emil Lask.27

Heidegger’s early investigations revolve around the central distinctions between psychological act and logical content, between real thought process and ideal atemporal “sense,” between being (Sein) and validity (Geltung). For, as Lotze in particular has shown, the realm of pure logic has a completely different mode of existence (validity) than that of the realm of actual spatiotemporal entities (being).28 Moreover, as Rickert has shown, the realm of pure logic (the realm of validity) is also distinct from that of mathematics. For, although the latter is equally atemporal and hence ideal, it presupposes the existence of a particular object – the existence of “quantity” or a homogeneous serial order – and therefore lacks the complete generality characteristic of logic. It follows that we must sharply distinguish the realm of pure logic both from the given heterogeneous qualitative continuum of empirical reality and from the homogeneous

27. All three works are reprinted in Martin Heidegger, *Frühe Schriften, Gesamtausgabe* vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978), to which we refer in our citations. It is interesting to note that among the logical works Heidegger comments on are some of Frege’s (on which Heidegger comments positively; cf. *Frühe Schriften*, 20) and Russell’s (on which Heidegger comments negatively; cf. *Frühe Schriften*, 42–3, 174). Heidegger seems to see in Frege’s ideas a concern for meaning appropriate to a “philosophical” logic, whereas Russell’s work appears to him to tend in the direction of a mere “calculus,” and is thereby divorced from the genuine problem of judgment. We shall return to the important influence of Lask in §II below.

quantitative continuum of mathematics. In emphasizing these fundamental distinctions, and, above all, in maintaining “the absolute primacy of valid sense [den absoluten Primat des geltenden Sinnes],” Heidegger shows himself indeed to be a faithful follower of Rickert.

It then becomes radically unclear, however, how the purely logical realm of valid sense is connected with the real world of temporal being (Sein): with either the realm of empirical nature where the objects of our (empirical) cognition reside or the realm of psychological happenings where our acts of judgment reside. Rickert himself responds to this problem by appealing to “transcendental psychology.” As he explains in the Preface to the third edition of Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis (1915), it is precisely the role of the transcendental subject (in Rickert’s own terms, the “cognitive subject” or “theoretical subject”) to bind the realms of being and validity together:

We thus arrive at two worlds, a [world of] being [einer seinden] and a [world of] validity [einer geltenden]. But between them stands the theoretical subject, which binds the two together through its judgments, whose essence only becomes understandable in this way, and without which we could not meaningfully speak of existent [seienden] or real “objects” of cognition.

Unfortunately, however, Rickert is never able to develop in any detail a transcendental psychology that could perform this “binding” role.

Heidegger, for his part, is very sensitive indeed to the difficult position in which Rickert has become entangled, and, accordingly, he also thinks that some version of transcendental psychology is necessary. For Heidegger, however, it is above all the phenomenology of Husserl that offers us a way out of Rickert’s impasse:

[T]he sharp separation of logic from psychology is perhaps not achievable. We must distinguish here. It is one question whether psychology founds logic in principle and secures its validity [Geltungswert], it is another whether it assumes the role of its primary theater of action and basis of operation. And the second is in fact the case; for we are

29. See Heidegger, Frühe Schriften, 214–89; as Heidegger notes, his discussion here is based on Rickert’s “Das Eine, die Einheit und die Eins,” Logos 2 (1911).
30. See Heidegger, Frühe Schriften, 273. The realm of valid sense enjoys this primacy because all realms of existence as such (the natural, the metaphysical–theological, the mathematical, and the logical itself) become objects of our cognition only through the mediation of the logical realm (ibid., 287).
here concerned precisely with the remarkable fact, which perhaps involves problems that can never be completely illuminated, that the logical is embedded in the psychological. But this just determined role of psychology requires to be made more precise. Experimental psychology remains irrelevant for logic. Moreover, even so-called introspective \[selbstbeobachtende\] psychology only becomes relevant from a particular point of view. The investigation concerns the meanings, the sense of the acts and thus becomes theory of meaning, phenomenology of consciousness. Husserl, simultaneously with the critical rejection of psychologism, also theoretically grounded phenomenology in a positive fashion and himself made fruitful contributions to this difficult subject.\[^{32}\]

Whereas Rickert himself had serious doubts whether Husserl's phenomenology can fulfill the function of what he calls “transcendental psychology,” Heidegger is now convinced that only Husserlian phenomenology can possibly play this role.

When, in 1916, Rickert left Freiburg to take Wilhelm Windelband's position at Heidelberg, and Husserl left Göttingen to take Rickert's position at Freiburg, Heidegger became an enthusiastic proponent of the new phenomenology and, in particular, distanced himself further and further from Rickert.\[^{33}\] Nevertheless, in the very same year, in a concluding chapter added to the published version of his habilitation, there also appear rumblings in a new and quite un-Husserlian direction. For Heidegger this suggests that a genuine reconciliation of psychology and logic – here equated with a reconciliation of change and absolute validity, time and eternity – can be effected only through the concept of “living spirit” \(\textit{der lebendige Geist}\) construed as a concrete and essentially historical subject. The “subjective logic” sought by Rickert and Husserl requires a radically new


\[^{33}\] This distance from Rickert becomes quite extreme by 1925–26, when Heidegger was completing \textit{Being and Time}, and can be graphically seen in lectures Heidegger presented at Marburg in the summer semester of 1925 on the concept of time – see Martin Heidegger, \textit{Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs} (Gesamtausgabe vol. 20 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1979]) – and in the winter semester of 1925–26 on logic – see Heidegger, \textit{Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit} (Gesamtausgabe vol. 21 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976]). Heidegger speaks of Rickert with almost entirely undisguised contempt, whereas Husserl appears as the leader of a new “breakthrough” in philosophy, which, in particular, has definitively overcome neo-Kantianism. Extensive discussion of these lectures, together with Heidegger’s other lecture courses leading up to \textit{Being and Time}, can be found in Theodore Kisiel, \textit{The Genesis of Heidegger’s “Being and Time”} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993). See also the essay by Miguel de Beistegui in this volume.
point of view according to which the subject is no merely cognitive (“punctiform”) subject, but rather an actual concrete subject comprehending the entire fullness of its temporal–historical involvements. And such an investigation of the concrete historical subject, according to Heidegger, must now be a “translogical” or “metaphysical” investigation. Thus, Heidegger is here already beginning to come to terms with the historically oriented Lebensphilosophie of Dilthey, an influence that will prove decisive in Being and Time (1927).  

II. THE CATEGORIES OF OBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE: CARNAP, HEIDEGGER, AND THE NEO-KANTIANS

Both Carnap and Heidegger were philosophically trained within a neo-Kantian tradition that dominated the German-speaking world at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The two most influential movements or “schools” in this tradition were the Marburg School, founded by Hermann Cohen and then continued by Paul Natorp and Ernst Cassirer, and the Southwest School, founded by Windelband and then systematically developed by Rickert. Heidegger, as we noted, studied with Rickert at Freiburg and, in fact, completed his habilitation under Rickert in 1915. Carnap, for his part, studied Kant at Jena with Bruno Bauch (1877–1942) – also a student of Rickert’s from Freiburg – and, in fact, completed his doctoral dissertation (Der Raum) under Bauch in 1921. It is clear, moreover, that Carnap carefully studied several

34. See Heidegger, Frühe Schriften, 341–411. For Heidegger’s assessment of Dilthey’s conception of the subject as “living person with an understanding of active history,” in contrast to Husserl’s more formal conception of the subject, see Heidegger, Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, 161–71. As is well known, in Being and Time Heidegger is quite explicit that the crucial chapter on “Temporality and History” (Division Two, ch. 5, §§72–7) depends fundamentally on Dilthey: “The just completed analysis of the problem of history has arisen out of the appropriation of Dilthey’s work” (§77). The influence of Dilthey is further exhibited in 1916 in Heidegger’s preface to his habilitation, with its call for philosophy to become weltanschaulich, that is, engaged in the concrete historical events of the time; see Heidegger, Frühe Schriften, 191; and cf. 205 n.10. This call contrasts sharply with Husserl’s own arguments (contra Dilthey) that philosophy as a science must be eternally valid and thus essentially ahistorical; see Edmund Husserl, “Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft” (1911), in Hua, vol. 25, 323–41; “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science,” Quentin Lauer (trans.), in Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 122–47.

35. At Jena, Bauch was a close colleague and associate of Frege’s. After the First World War, for example, Frege joined Bauch’s conservative Deutsche Philosophische Gesellschaft and published his last three papers (“Logical Investigations”) in the official journal of this society, Beiträge des deutschen Idealismus. For Bauch and his relationship to Frege, see Hans Sluga, Gottlob Frege, and Heidegger’s Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993). For Carnap’s relationship to Bauch and neo-Kantianism more generally – including discussions of Der Raum – see Alan Richardson, Carnap’s
versions of neo-Kantianism, including, in particular, the writings of Natorp, Cassirer, and Rickert.

Common to both schools of neo-Kantianism is a conception of the object of knowledge or judgment inherited from Kant. Our true judgments should not be construed as representing entities existing independently of them, whether as the “transcendent” objects of the metaphysical realist existing “behind” our sense experience or the raw unconceptualized sense experience itself beloved of the empiricist. In the first case, true judgment would be impossible for us, since, by hypothesis, we have no independent access to such objects by which we could verify the desired relation of representation between them and our judgments. In the second case, true judgment would be equally impossible, for the stream of unconceptualized sense experience is utterly chaotic and intrinsically undifferentiated. Comparing the articulated structure of our judgments to this chaos of sensations therefore makes no sense. How, then, is knowledge or true judgment possible? What does it mean for our judgments to relate to an object? The answer is given by Kant’s “Copernican Revolution.” The object of knowledge does not exist independently of our judgments at all. It is, rather, first “constituted” when the unconceptualized data of sense are organized within the *a priori* logical structures of judgment itself; the initially unconceptualized data are thereby brought under *a priori* “categories” and thus become capable of empirical objectivity.

Yet there is a crucially important difference between this neo-Kantian account of the object of knowledge and Kant’s original account. For Kant, we cannot explain how the object of knowledge becomes possible on the basis of the *a priori* logical structures of judgment alone. We need additional *a priori* structures – the pure forms of sensible intuition – that mediate the pure forms of judgment comprising what Kant calls general (or formal) logic and the unconceptualized manifold of impressions supplied by the senses. The pure logical forms of judgment thus only become *categories* in virtue of the transcendental schematism of the understanding – that is, when pure forms of thought are given a determinate spatiotemporal content in relation to the pure forms of sensible intuition. The pure logical form of a categorical judgment, for example, becomes the category.

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36. Some of the most important epistemological works of the two traditions are: Cassirer, *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff: Untersuchungen über die Grundfragen der Erkenntniskritik*; Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*; Natorp, *Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaften*; and Rickert, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*. Very useful summary presentations of the basic ideas of the two traditions can be found in Heinrich Rickert, “Zwei Wege der Erkenntnistheorie,” *Kant-Studien* 14 (1909), and Paul Natorp, “Kant und die Marburger Schule,” *Kant-Studien* 17 (1912).
of substance when it is schematized in terms of the temporal representation of permanence; the pure logical form of a hypothetical judgment becomes the category of causality when it is schematized in terms of the temporal representation of succession; and so on. For Kant, therefore, pure formal logic must, if it is to play an epistemological role, be supplemented by transcendental logic: an explanation of how logical forms become schematized in terms of pure spatio-temporal representations belonging to the independent faculty of pure intuition. And it is precisely this explanation, in particular, that forms the heart of the “Transcendental Analytic” of the Critique of Pure Reason – the so-called metaphysical and transcendental deductions of the categories.

Nevertheless, both versions of neo-Kantianism entirely reject the idea of an independent faculty of pure intuition. They here follow the tradition of post-Kantian idealism in vigorously opposing the dualistic conception of mind characteristic of Kant’s own position: the radical distinction between a conceptual faculty of pure understanding and an intuitive faculty of pure sensibility. The a priori formal structures in virtue of which the object of knowledge becomes possible must therefore derive solely from the logical faculty of understanding. In particular, since space and time no longer function as independent forms of pure sensibility, the constitution of experience described by transcendental logic must now proceed on the basis of purely conceptual – and thus essentially non-spatiotemporal – a priori structures. And it is this last feature of their conception of epistemology that associates the neo-Kantians with the “pure logic” tradition derived from Bolzano, which had earlier arrived, as we have seen, at a conception of pure thought or pure logic whose subject matter is an essentially nontemporal, and therefore certainly not psychological, realm – an “ideal” (Platonic) realm of timeless formal structures.37

In any case, the “constitution” of experience described by transcendental logic must now proceed on the basis of purely conceptual a priori structures: formal logic must somehow take over the mediating role between a priori intellection and a posteriori sensible experience all by itself. The leading idea of the Marburg School – especially as developed in Cassirer’s Substance and Function

37. As explained in Friedman, A Parting of the Ways, ch. 3, this point needs qualification in the case of the Marburg School, which attempted to avoid such Platonism by embedding formal logic within a transcendental logic depicting all cognitions of the understanding as belonging to a historical developmental process (in accordance with the “genetic” conception of knowledge). As we explained in §1 above, Husserlian phenomenology is also predicated on a rejection of the original Kantian dichotomy between concepts and intuition. In contrast to both neo-Kantian traditions, however, Husserl does not give priority to concepts over intuition in his phenomenological method; on the contrary, he views all cognition, as we said, as a necessary unity of both elements (compare notes 17 and 19 above, together with the corresponding discussion in the main text).
– was to take as our most important “clue” to the fundamental structure of the intellect nineteenth-century developments in mathematics and mathematical physics, and not the traditional Aristotelian theory of the logical forms of judgment. For the modern concepts of function, relation, and series provide us with entirely new insights into our basic forms of concept formation, which we can then use to construct a new picture of the way in which the mind establishes a necessary relation to sense experience: namely, the so-called “genetic” conception of knowledge, wherein empirical knowledge, in particular, is now seen as a never-completed historical sequence of formal abstract structures somehow “converging” on the concrete object of experience as an ideal limit – as a forever unreachable ideal $X$.

The Southwest School, by contrast, decisively rejects this Marburg “mathematization” of formal logic. Formal logic remains Aristotelian syllogistic, so that mathematical thought, in particular, must be sharply distinguished from properly logical thought.\(^{38}\) Hence, the concrete object of experience cannot be viewed as a formally constructed ideal limit (as conceived by the Marburg School), but must rather be viewed as a genuinely independent entity – given, as it was for Kant, in an independent “manifold of sensations” – standing over and against the original forms of thought expressing the purely logical structure of the intellect. Yet, since Kant’s idea of an independent *a priori* faculty of pure intuition (to which the logical forms of thought are related by the transcendental schematism of the imagination) is also rejected, we are left with overwhelming problems in constructing any kind of mediating connection between formal logic on the one side and concrete sensory experience on the other. We are left with overwhelming problems, that is, in effecting a Kantian theory of the categories; and precisely these problems, as we shall see, then initiated the radically new (and explicitly anti-neo-Kantian) conception of the object of knowledge later articulated by Heidegger.

Although Carnap had defended a more orthodox Kantian position in his doctoral dissertation (where he retained an important role for the pure intuition of space), Carnap’s own radical reconceptualization of epistemology in the *Aufbau* can be seen, at least in part, as a further development of the more mathematical “logicization” of experience effected by the Marburg School. In particular, by taking formal logic to be given by the new mathematical logic of Whitehead and Russell’s *Principia Mathematica*, one can now show by logical construction how the initially entirely private and subjective “manifold of sensations” (Carnap’s “elementary experiences”) is successively “objectified” by application of the *a priori* formal structures of logic in a step-wise “constitution of reality.”

\(^{38}\) See Rickert, “Das Eine, die Einheit und die Eins”; cf. note 29 above.
Carnap makes his debt to Cassirer and neo-Kantianism completely explicit here:

Cassirer ([Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff] 292ff.) has shown that a science having the goal of determining the individual through lawful interconnections [Gesetzeszusammenhänge] without its individuality being lost must apply, not class (“species”) concepts, but rather relational concepts; for the latter can lead to the formation of series and thereby to the establishing of order-systems. It hereby also results that relations are necessary as first posits, since one can in fact easily make the transition from relations to classes, whereas the contrary procedure is only possible to a very limited extent.

The merit of having discovered the necessary basis of the constitutional system thereby belongs to two entirely different, and often mutually hostile, philosophical tendencies. Positivism has stressed that the sole material for cognition lies in the undigested [unverarbeitet] experiential given; here is to be sought the basic elements of the constitutional system. Transcendental idealism, however, especially the neo-Kantian tendency (Rickert, Cassirer, Bauch), has rightly emphasized that these elements do not suffice; order-posit [Ordnungssetzungen] must be added, our “basic relations” (Aufbau §75).

That Carnap has the genetic (erzeugende) conception of knowledge characteristic of the Marburg School specifically in mind here becomes especially clear later in the Aufbau, when Carnap describes his position this way:

Constitutional theory and transcendental idealism agree in representing the following position: all objects of cognition are constituted (in idealistic language, are “generated in thought [im Denken erzeugt]”); and, moreover, the constituted objects are only objects of cognition qua logical forms constructed in a determinate way. ($177$

Nevertheless, constitutional theory does not conceive the real individual object of experience as an infinitely distant ideal limit; for, as Carnap emphasizes, all objects of knowledge are defined or “constituted” at definite finite ranks in the hierarchy of Russelian logical types:

According to the conception of the Marburg School (cf. Natorp [Die logischen Grundlagen der exakten Wissenschaften] 18ff.), the object is the eternal X, its determination is an incompletable task. In opposition to this it is to be noted that finitely many determinations suffice
for the constitution of the object – and thus for its univocal description among the objects in general. Once such a description is set up the object is no longer an X, but rather something univocally determined – whose complete description then certainly still remains an incompletatable task.

(§179)

As a result, as Carnap also emphasizes, there is no longer any need for the synthetic (as opposed to the purely logical or analytic) *a priori*. Since an object is always defined or “constituted” at a definite finite rank in the hierarchy of logical types, we can always separate those features of the object comprising its definition from those features that express further information about the object uncovered in the course of properly scientific investigation. Fully determining the latter is indeed an infinite task requiring the entire future progress of empirical science, but establishing the former is simply a matter of stipulation:

After the first task, that of the constitution of the objects, follows as the second the task of investigating the remaining, non-constitutional properties and relations of the objects. The first task is solved through a stipulation, the second, on the other hand, through experience. (According to the conception of constitutional theory there are no other components in cognition than these two – the conventional and the empirical – and thus no synthetic a priori [components].)

(§179)

Carnap thus overcomes even the attenuated version of the synthetic *a priori* characteristic of the Marburg genetic conception of knowledge, and, as we have already suggested, he thereby completely absorbs Kantian transcendental logic within pure formal logic.

We noted above that Heidegger’s earliest writings revolved around the idea of pure logic and its resulting problematic. The most important of these writings, as we also suggested, was Heidegger’s habilitation, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus*, which examined logical doctrines then attributed to Scotus through the lens of the contemporary logical investigations of Rickert, Husserl, and Lask. What is now most important, from our present point of view, is that the work of Lask, in particular, was especially important for Heidegger’s later development, for it was here that the deep tensions arising for the Southwest School in constructing a mediating connection between formal logic and concrete sensory experience emerged in their sharpest form.39

39. See note 33 above, together with the associated discussion in the main text, for Heidegger’s evolving appreciation of these deep tensions arising within the Southwest School.
Lask was a brilliant student of Rickert’s who held an associate professorship at Heidelberg before he was killed in the First World War in 1915. The basic argument of Lask's most important work, *Die Lehre vom Urteil* (1912), is that, whereas the Kantian philosophy has indeed closed the gap between knowledge and its object, we are nonetheless left with a new gap between what Lask calls “transcendental,” “epistemological,” or “material” logic on the one side and “formal” logic on the other. Formal logic is the subject matter of the theory of judgment: the realm of necessarily valid and timeless “senses,” “objective thoughts,” or “propositions in themselves” familiar under the rubric of pure logic. Transcendental or material logic, by contrast, is the theory of the categories: an explanation of how the concrete object of experience is made possible by the constitutive activity of thought. But, and here is the central point of Lask’s argument, transcendental or material logic is not based on formal logic, and, accordingly, he explicitly rejects Kant’s metaphysical deduction of the categories. For Lask, what is fundamental is the concrete, already categorized, real object of experience. The subject matter of formal logic (which includes all the structures of the traditional logical theory of judgment) only arises subsequently in an artificial process of abstraction, by which the originally unitary categorized object is broken down into form and matter, subject and predicate, and so on. Moreover, since this comes about owing to a fundamental weakness or peculiarity of our human understanding – our inability to grasp the unitary categorized object as a unity – the entire realm of “pure logic,” despite its timeless and necessary character, is, in the end, nothing but an artificially constructed intermediary possessing no explanatory power whatsoever.

The importance of Lask’s work for Heidegger’s later development is clearly evident in a crucial section of *Being and Time* on “Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth” (§44), where Heidegger explicitly rejects the Kantian “Copernican Revolution” in favor of an apparently “naive realist” conception of truth as direct “agreement with the object” (a view Heidegger associates with Aristotle). After explaining that “[t]he neo-Kantian theory of knowledge of the 19th century frequently characterized this definition of truth as an expression of a methodologically backward naive realism and described it as incompatible with a posing of the question having undergone Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution,’” Heidegger articulates the “standard” epistemological position he wishes to oppose as follows: “Truth according to the general opinion is cognition. But cognition is judgment. And in the judgment we must distinguish between the judging as real psychical process and the judged as ideal content.” Heidegger then protests vehemently against this latter distinction:

And is not the separation of real execution and ideal content with reference to the “actual” judging of the judged as such unjustified? Is
not the actuality of cognition and judging not broken apart into two
types of being and “levels,” whose piecing-together never touches the
mode of being of knowing? Is not psychologism correct to resist this
separation – even though it itself neither clarifies the mode of being
of the thinking of the thought ontologically, nor even is acquainted
with this as a problem?

Finally, Heidegger formulates his own “naive realist” account of truth:

The meant being itself shows itself so, as it is in itself, i.e., that it
in its self-sameness [Selbigkeit] is so, as how it, being pointed out
in the assertion, is uncovered. Representations are not compared,
either among themselves or in relation to the real thing. In identifi-
cation there is not an agreement between knowing and object and
certainly not between psychical and physical – but also not between
“contents of consciousness” among themselves. In identification
there is only the being-uncoveredness [Entdeckt-sein] of the being
itself, it [itself] in the How of its uncoveredness. This [uncovered-
ness] proves true [bewährts sich] in that what is asserted – that is,
the being itself – shows itself as the same. [Such] proof [Bewährung]
means: the showing itself of the being in its self-sameness.

Heidegger finishes this passage with a footnote that refers us to the Sixth
Investigation of volume two of Husserl’s Logical Investigations (which introduces
the idea of truth as “identification” – a direct relation of identity between the
“intended” meaning and the real object) and to the work of Lask.40

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40. The footnote warns us against relying exclusively on the first volume of the Logical
Investigations, which may appear merely to represent the traditional theory of the proposi-
tion in itself derived from Bolzano. The relevant sections of volume two (1901, §§36–52), by
contrast, present a conception of truth in which an intention or meaning is directly “identi-
fied” – in immediate intuition – with the very thing that is intended or meant. According to
the theory of truth articulated in these sections of the Logical Investigations, truth in general
is not even propositional. My representation of the table may be immediately compared with
the table, just as my assertion that the table is brown may be immediately compared with
the table’s being brown. Thus, truth in general need involve none of the structures (subject
and predicate, ground and consequent, and so on) studied in traditional formal logic. On
the contrary, such peculiarly logical structures only emerge subsequently in the very special
circumstances of “categorial intuition,” where specifically propositional intentions or mean-
ings are intuitively grasped in their most abstract – and, as it were, secondary and derivative
– formal features. In this sense, Husserl’s conception of the relationship between logical form
and truth in general parallels Lask’s view of the artificiality and subjectivity of logical form. In
neither case can formal logic be in any way foundational or explanatory for truth as a “rela-
tion to an object.” For Heidegger’s assessment of the notion of “categorial intuition” in the
Heidegger is a “naive realist” here insofar as he begins with the idea of “being-in-the-world.” We do not start with a cognitive subject together with its contents of consciousness, but rather with a living practical subject necessarily engaged with its environment. Assertion, as Heidegger explains earlier (§33), is a “derivative mode of interpretation” in which the “hermeneutical ‘as’” of practical understanding of the “ready-to-hand” (where an item “ready-to-hand” is understood “as” suited for a given end or purpose) is transformed into the “apophantical ‘as’” of theoretical understanding of the “present-at-hand” (where an item “present-at-hand” is understood “as” determined by a given predicate). Truth in the traditional (Aristotelian) sense – as a relation of agreement with an object – then emerges (§44) as itself a derivative phenomenon (where an assertion is compared with a “present-at-hand” object it points out in a relation that is itself “present-at-hand”). If we forget this derivative character, however, all the misunderstandings currently prevalent in the (neo-Kantian) “theory of judgment” then arise:

If the phenomenon of the “as” remains hidden, and, above all, if its existential origin in the hermeneutical “as” remains covered over, then Aristotle’s phenomenological approach to the analysis of the logos collapses into a superficial “theory of judgment” according to which judging is a connection and/or separation of representations and concepts. (§33)

In tracing the collapse of the “superficial ‘theory of judgment’” prevalent in the contemporary neo-Kantian tradition to a neglect of the distinction between the “apophantical ‘as’” of theoretical understanding and the “hermeneutical ‘as’” of practical understanding, Heidegger has taken Husserl’s theory of identification and Lask’s emphasis on the primacy of the actual concrete object of experience an important – and absolutely decisive – step further. For Heidegger now conceives the concrete human subject neither as a cognitive or theoretical subject in the sense of Rickert nor as the subject of “pure consciousness” in the sense of Husserl. The concrete human subject (Dasein) is rather primarily and originally oriented towards pragmatic engagements and practical projects necessarily directed towards a temporal future; and it is in precisely this way, for Heidegger, that Dasein is an essentially finite, essentially temporal, being. And for such a being, in particular, the thought of temporal finitude is not simply the representation of an eventual limit or boundary to the sequence of passing phenomena and mental contents; it is rather the thought of the subject’s own death – the

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context of Husserl and Lask (which Heidegger sees as destroying once and for all the Kantian “mythology” of a synthesis of understanding and sensibility, form and matter) see Heidegger, Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, 63–99.
radical possibility that, at any given moment, one’s ongoing projects and pragmatic engagements may simply cease to be. Whereas, in its everyday understanding of itself, Dasein is completely unaware of its own peculiar character and is simply caught up in its projects and practical involvements, in “being-toward-death” Dasein is revealed to itself for what it is – as what Heidegger calls “thrown being-in-the-world.”

Hence, temporality, for Heidegger, is neither the all-embracing public time within which events are dated and ordered nor the subjective time of “pure consciousness” in which experienced mental contents flow in review past the intentional “now.” Temporality is rather first manifested in the being-towards-the-future of primarily practically oriented Dasein, a being-towards-the-future that necessarily includes being-towards-death and can therefore be either “authentic” or “inauthentic.” Thus, in authentic existence, Dasein’s concernful practical orientation (its “care” [Sorge]) is unified by a “resolute” and thorough-going decision. In inauthentic existence, by contrast, Dasein’s “care” is dispersed and “fallen”: Dasein has, so to speak, lost itself in its world.41 Finally, in authentic existence, Dasein’s practically oriented being-towards-the-future is at the same time a practically oriented (historical) being-towards-the-past. For, at precisely the moment of an authentic decision, Dasein must choose among possibilities that must themselves be already present and available in the historically given situation. Dasein, at the moment of its most authentic freedom, reveals itself as nonetheless dependent on possibilities that have been handed down or inherited. Dasein must thus appropriate its “fate” and is therefore necessarily historical.42

Heidegger’s radical transformation of the neo-Kantianism of the Southwest School thus involves not only the deep influence of Husserlian phenomenology, but also a further appropriation of both the existential spirituality of Søren Kierkegaard and the historically oriented Lebensphilosophie of Dilthey. 43 The

41. See Heidegger, Being and Time: “Dasein can understand itself as understanding from the side of the ‘world’ and the other or from the side of its ownmost possibility-for-being [aus seinem eigensten Seinkönnen]. The last-mentioned possibility means: Dasein discloses itself to itself in and as its ownmost possibility-for-being. This authentic disclosedness shows the phenomenon of the most original truth in the mode of its authenticity. The most original and authentic disclosedness in which Dasein as possibility-for-being can be, is the truth of existence” (§44).

42. The temporality of “authentic” existence is articulated in Division Two, ch. 3 (§§ 61–6), the temporality of everyday “inauthentic” existence in ch. 4 (§§67–71), the temporality of “historicality” in ch. 5 (§§72–7). How the temporality of Dasein is actually the prior ground of the “ordinary conception of time” (viz. the all-embracing public time within which events are dated and ordered) is explained in ch. 6 (§§78–81). Note that the historicality of Dasein means only that the totality of its possible practical involvements is historically determined (and, indeed, by its own interpretation of this history). Dasein’s actual practical involvements are up to its own free choice from among these historically determined possibilities. True authenticity, for Heidegger, rests on the correct understanding of precisely this situation.

43. For the importance of Dilthey, in particular, see note 34 above.
result is a breathtakingly original exploration of the spiritual and philosophical predicament of the early twentieth century; and Heidegger’s decisive rejection of the authority and primacy of formal logic and the exact sciences in the dispute with Carnap over “metaphysical pseudo-sentences” can be properly understood, as we shall see, only against this particular background. Just as Carnap brings the mathematical “logicization” of experience begun by the Marburg School to completion using the new logic of *Principia Mathematica*, Heidegger, for his part, completes the “de-logicization” of experience implicit in the problematic of the Southwest School – which was made explicit, for the first time, in the work of Lask and then incorporated into Heidegger’s own existential–hermeneutic version of phenomenology.

### III. OVERCOMING METAPHYSICS

All four of our protagonists – Frege, Husserl, Carnap, and Heidegger – conceived themselves as making revolutionary breaks with the philosophy of the past through the invention (or discovery) of radically new types of philosophical tools. For Frege, this was the new form of logical language he created – the *Begriffsschrift* (1879) – where, in particular, a purely formal or conceptual treatment of the great mathematical discoveries of the nineteenth century (especially in the foundations of arithmetic and analysis) became completely clear and explicit for the first time.44 This new logical language then constituted the indispensable basis for Frege’s subsequent investigations into the philosophy of logic, language, and mathematics, which are still an essential part of the canon for an education within what we now call the analytic tradition.45 The ambitions of this philosophical tradition to be “scientific” – and to leave behind the irresoluble obscurities of traditional metaphysics – rest squarely on the presumed scientific status of the new philosophical tool Frege created.

For Husserl, by contrast, although he, like Frege, drew very important inspiration from nineteenth-century mathematics, the formal language of modern logic

44. Cf. notes 17 and 19 above. Frege brings the process of showing that arithmetic and analysis are purely conceptual (and thus nonintuitive in Kant’s sense) to a conclusion by finally articulating an explicit conception of purely formal logic adequate to the task.

45. See Gottlob Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik: Eine logisch-mathematische Untersuchung über den Begriff der Zahl* (Breslau: Koebner, 1884); “Über Sinn und Bedeutung,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100 (1892); “Über Begriff und Gegenstand,” *Vierteljahrschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 18 (1892); and “Der Gedanke: Eine logische Untersuchung,” *Beiträge zur Philosophie der deutschen Idealismus* 1 (1918). The last of these, “Thought” (*Der Gedanke*), is the first of Frege’s final papers published under the title of “Logical Investigations.”
(or any other formal language) was, by itself, quite insufficient to dissolve the obscurities of traditional metaphysics and now launch philosophy on a properly “scientific” path. Thus, as we have seen, Husserl found the modern logical tradition of Bolzano and Frege (and even Carnap) to be philosophically “naive,” insofar as it appeared to give aid and comfort to a Platonistic ontology of timeless abstract objects and thereby render our supposed cognitive “grasp” of logic and mathematics completely obscure. Husserl addressed this difficulty, as we have also seen, by turning to a phenomenological investigation into the “mode of givenness” or “sense” of logical and mathematical objects as they first appear (immanently) to consciousness, while simultaneously “bracketing” all ontological questions as to their “real existence” (transcendently) independent of consciousness. And, more generally, Husserl applied the same method of “phenomenological reduction” to physical objects as well: what matters to phenomenology is again their distinctive “mode of givenness” to consciousness, not the question of their “real existence” independent of consciousness. The new discipline of transcendental phenomenology thereby achieved a distinctively philosophical standpoint that attempted to be entirely neutral with respect to all metaphysical disputes between conflicting “realist” and “idealist” tendencies in the philosophical tradition.

Carnap, in the *Aufbau*, attempted to do something very similar. We observed in §II above that, according to the *Aufbau*, constitutional theory and “transcendental idealism” agree that “all objects of cognition are constituted (in idealistic language, are ‘generated in thought’)” (§177); and, as we also observed, by “transcendental idealism” Carnap has primarily in mind the “logical idealism” of the Marburg School. Nevertheless, in the same section, Carnap also explicitly argues that “[c]onstitution theory and realism do not contradict one another at any point”; and, in an earlier section, he explains the precise sense of this metaphysical neutrality as follows:

Are the constituted structures “generated in thought,” as the Marburg School teaches, or “only recognized” by thought, as realism asserts? Constitutional theory employs a neutral language; according to it the structures are neither “generated” nor “recognized,” but rather “constituted”; and even at this early stage it cannot be too strongly emphasized that this word “constitution” is always meant completely neutrally. From the point of view of constitutional theory the dispute involving “generation” versus “recognition” is therefore an idle linguistic dispute.  

(§5)

In particular, by “constitute,” as we saw in §I, Carnap means only the construction of a sequence of logical definitions from his single autopsychological basic relation within the logic of *Principia Mathematica*, and he explicitly asserts, in
addition, that all talk of “acts” of constitution by a cognitive subject is merely fictional (§99). Thus, although the Aufbau shows very clear signs of the influence of Husserl, it is ultimately modern mathematical logic, for Carnap, rather than transcendental phenomenology, that secures him a metaphysically neutral standpoint.46

Heidegger begins by following Husserl in taking the new phenomenological method decisively to transcend traditional philosophy and place philosophy on the path of a science. In part C of §7 of Being and Time, entitled “The Preliminary Concept of Phenomenology,” Heidegger characterizes phenomenology as a “science of phenomena,” but he then turns in a quite un-Husserlian direction by asserting that, “with respect to its subject matter, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings—or ontology.” In particular, phenomenology, in its Husserlian form, now appears to Heidegger as excessively idealistic, because, as we have seen, he now takes being-in-the-world, rather than pure consciousness, as the subject of characteristically “phenomenological” investigation (within existential–hermeneutic phenomenology rather than Husserlian transcendental phenomenology). To be sure, the resulting “naive realism” still has an important transcendental dimension, insofar as we can pursue “fundamental ontology” only by means of an (existential–hermeneutic) “analytic of Dasein.” It is quite clear, nonetheless, that Heidegger intends to rescue both fundamental ontology and traditional metaphysics, together with the real “being of the world,” from precisely Husserl’s phenomenological reduction.47

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46. For more on Carnap’s antimetaphysical standpoint in the Aufbau, see Michael Friedman, “Introduction: Carnap’s Revolution in Philosophy,” in Friedman and Creath, The Cambridge Companion to Carnap. Carnap famously uses the Husserlian terminology of the “epoché” when discussing his “autopsychological basis” of “elementary experiences”: “At the beginning of the system the experiences are simply taken in as they are given; the postulations of reality and non-reality in them that are to follow are not yet made, but rather ‘bracketed’; the phenomenological ‘reduction’ (‘epoché’) in the sense of Husserl is thus exerted” (Aufbau §64). Yet Carnap does not intend a reduction to the sphere of pure consciousness (of the transcendental subject), in the sense of Husserl. As he makes perfectly clear in the same section, Carnap simply has in mind the circumstance that all distinctions among “real” and “non-real” objects will be made at later stages (in the hierarchy of logical types of Principia Mathematica) of his purely logical sequence of constitutional definitions: “For the basis no distinction is made between those experiences which are distinguished from one another as perception, hallucination, dream, etc. on the basis of later constitution. This differentiation, and thereby that between actual and non-actual objects, only appears at a rather high constitutional level (cf. §170ff.).”

47. Thus, Husserlian transcendental phenomenology, from Heidegger’s point of view, is still excessively “idealistic.” See Heidegger’s vehement rejection of the idea of a “pure” or “idealized” subject at the conclusion of Being and Time §44: “The ideas of a ‘pure I’ and of a ‘consciousness in general’ so little contain the a priori of the ‘actual’ subject that they either pass over the ontological character of the factuality and the constitution of being of Dasein or they do not see it at all. Rejection of a ‘consciousness in general’ does not mean the negation of the a priori, any more than the positing of an idealized subject guarantees the objectively
In the years following the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger embarked on something of a campaign on behalf of metaphysics. His first target was the neo-Kantian conception, especially as defended by the Marburg School, according to which the “return to Kant” they stood for implies that all traditional metaphysics (especially that of post-Kantian German idealism) should now be replaced by “theory of knowledge” (*Erkenntnistheorie*). To this end, Heidegger developed a “metaphysical” interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* itself (still quite influential within German-language Kant scholarship) explicitly opposed to the Marburg School. He first made this interpretation public in a celebrated disputation with Ernst Cassirer at Davos at the end of March and the beginning of April 1929, which Heidegger then wrote up in a few short weeks and published as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929). In that same year, moreover, he took over Husserl's Chair at Freiburg and delivered “What is Metaphysics?” as his inaugural address. It appears, therefore, that Heidegger intended his new defense of metaphysics to represent not only the eclipse of Marburg neo-Kantianism, but also (at least symbolically) that of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

Now Carnap's collision with Heidegger over metaphysical pseudo-sentences was directed at precisely Heidegger's inaugural address (where the sentences in question appear). Indeed, Carnap attended the disputation with Cassirer at Davos in 1929, and he came away both impressed and alarmed by Heidegger. Carnap then returned to Vienna and undertook a rather serious study of *Being and Time*. He wrote up and delivered earlier drafts of “Overcoming Metaphysics” directly in the wake of this experience, as he struggled to find a professorship in Europe in the extraordinarily uneasy political climate of the early 1930s. Carnap finally secured a professorship at the German University in Prague (in the Division of Natural Sciences) in 1931, and he published “Overcoming Metaphysics” in *Erkenntnis* (the official journal of the Vienna Circle) in 1932. In December 1935, increasingly distressed by the “stifling political climate” and “danger of war” in Europe, he emigrated to the United States, taking up a position at the University of Chicago. Carnap's radical new attempt at overcoming metaphysics can only be properly understood against this background.
In §5 of “Overcoming Metaphysics,” entitled “Metaphysical Pseudo-Sentences,” Carnap introduces his consideration of examples from Heidegger by remarking that, although “we could just as well have selected passages from any other of the numerous metaphysicians of the present or the past,” Carnap has here chosen to “select a few sentences from that metaphysical doctrine which at present exerts the strongest influence in Germany.”51 There follows a discussion of several of Heidegger’s sentences involving the concept of nothingness (das Nichts), including especially the notorious Das Nichts selbst nichtet.

Carnap’s criticism is more sophisticated and penetrating than one might antecedently expect. For, in the first place, Carnap’s complaint is not that the sentence in question is unverifiable in terms of sense data; nor is the most important problem that the sentence coins a bizarre new word (the verb nichten) and thus violates ordinary usage. The main problem is rather a violation of the logical form of the concept of nothing. Heidegger uses the concept both as a substantive and as a verb, whereas modern logic has shown that it is neither: the logical form of the concept of nothing is constituted solely by existential quantification and negation. In the second place, however, Carnap also clearly recognizes that this kind of criticism would not affect Heidegger himself in the slightest, for the real issue between the two lies in the circumstance that Heidegger denies while Carnap affirms the philosophical centrality of logic and the exact sciences. Carnap accordingly refers explicitly to such Heideggerian passages as the following:

[N]othingness is the source of negation, not vice versa. If the power of the understanding in the field of questions concerning nothingness and being is thus broken, then the fate of the dominion of “logic” within philosophy is also decided therewith. The idea of “logic” itself dissolves in the turbulence of a more original questioning.

especially among the younger philosophers, in the scientific method of philosophy, based on modern logic, and that this interest was growing from year to year” (in The Philosophy of Rudolf Carnap, Paul A. Schilpp [ed.] [La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1963], 34). Compare also his remarks several pages later: “In 1936, when I came to this country, the traditional schools of philosophy did not have nearly the same influence as on the European continent. The movement of German idealism, in particular Hegelianism, which had earlier been quite influential in the United States, had by then almost completely disappeared. Neo-Kantian philosophical conceptions were represented here and there, not in an orthodox form but rather influenced by recent developments in scientific thinking, much like the conceptions of Cassirer in Germany. Phenomenology had a number of adherents mostly in a liberalized form, not in Husserl’s orthodox form, and even less in Heidegger’s version” (ibid., 40).

The supposed soberness and superiority of science becomes ridiculous if it does not take nothingness seriously. Only because nothingness is manifest can science make what is itself into an object of investigation. Only if science takes its existence from metaphysics can it always reclaim anew its essential task, which does not consist in the accumulation and ordering of objects of acquaintance but in the ever to be newly accomplished disclosure of the entire expanse of truth of nature and history.

Therefore no rigor of a science can attain the seriousness of metaphysics. Philosophy can never be measured by the standard of the idea of science.52

Carnap concludes, in his own characteristically sober fashion: “We thus find a good confirmation for our thesis; a metaphysician here arrives himself at the statement that his questions and answers are not consistent with logic and the scientific mode of thinking.”53

The “Postscript” to “What is Metaphysics?”54 considers three types of criticism that have been made of the original lecture. Heidegger reserves his most extensive and militant response for the third criticism, namely, that “the lecture decides against ‘logic.’” The heart of his response is as follows:

The suspicion directed against “logic,” whose conclusive degeneration may be seen in logistic [i.e. modern mathematical logic], arises from the knowledge of that thinking that finds its source in the truth of being, but not in the consideration of the objectivity [Gegenständlichkeit] of what is. Exact thinking is never the most rigorous thinking, if rigor [Strenge] receives its essence otherwise from the mode of strenuousness [Anstrengung] with which knowledge always maintains the relation to what is essential in what is. Exact thinking ties itself down solely in calculation with what is and serves this [end] exclusively.55

It is clear, then, that Heidegger and Carnap are actually in remarkable agreement. Metaphysical thought of the type Heidegger is trying to awaken is possible only on the basis of a prior overthrow of the philosophical authority and primacy of logic and the exact sciences. The difference is that Heidegger eagerly embraces such an overthrow, whereas Carnap is determined to resist it at all costs.

This sheds considerable light, we believe, on the context and force of Carnap’s antimetaphysical attitude. For, by rejecting “metaphysics” as a field of cognitively meaningless pseudo-sentences, Carnap is by no means similarly rejecting all forms of traditional philosophy. He makes this perfectly clear, in fact, in his “Remarks by the Author” appended to the English translation “The Elimination of Metaphysics” in 1957:

To section 1, “metaphysics.” This term is used in this paper, as usually in Europe, for the field of alleged knowledge of the essence of things which transcends the realm of empirically founded, inductive science. Metaphysics in this sense includes systems like those of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger. But it does not include endeavors towards a synthesis and generalization of the results of the various sciences.56

In Carnap’s “Replies and Systematic Expositions,” the point is made even more explicitly:

Note that the characterization as pseudo-statements does not refer to all systems or theses in the field of metaphysics. At the time of the Vienna Circle, the characterization was applied mainly to those metaphysical systems which had exerted the greatest influence upon continental philosophy during the last century, viz., the post-Kantian systems of German idealism and, among contemporary ones, those of Bergson and Heidegger. On the basis of later, more cautious analyses, the judgment was not applied to the main theses of those philosophers whose thinking had been in close contact with the science of their times, as in the cases of Aristotle and Kant; the latter’s epistemological theses about the synthetic a priori character of certain judgments were regarded by us as false, not as meaningless.57

57. Rudolf Carnap, “Replies and Systematic Expositions,” in The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, Paul A. Schilpp (ed.) (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1963), 874–5. On the following page Carnap continues: “I think, however, that our [antimetaphysical] principle excludes not only a great number of assertions in systems like those of Hegel and Heidegger, especially since the latter
So Carnap is primarily concerned with “overcoming” a very particular kind of “metaphysics.” The main target is the post-Kantian German idealism Carnap views as currently dominating European thought (in the early 1930s), and he views Heidegger, in particular, as the leading contemporary representative of this trend.

It is noteworthy, therefore, that Heidegger was aware of Carnap’s attack and, indeed, explicitly responded to it – in a draft of his original 1935 lecture course, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, that does not appear in the published version (1953). Heidegger explains how, with the collapse of German idealism in the second half of the nineteenth century, the philosophical understanding of being degenerated into a consideration of the “is” – that is, a logical consideration of the propositional copula. He continues in a memorable paragraph that is worth quoting in full:

> Going further in this direction, which in a certain sense has been marked out since Aristotle, and which determines “being” from the “is” of the proposition and thus finally destroys it, is a tendency of thought that has been assembled in the journal *Erkenntnis*. Here the traditional logic is to be for the first time grounded with scientific rigor through mathematics and the mathematical calculus, in order to construct a “logically correct” language in which the sentences of metaphysics – which are all pseudo-sentences – are to become impossible in the future. Thus, an article in this Journal II (1931 f.), pp. 219 ff. bears the title “Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache.” Here the most extreme flattening out and uprooting of the traditional theory of judgment is accomplished under the semblance of mathematical science. Here the last consequences of a mode of thinking which began with Descartes are brought to a conclusion: a mode of thinking according to which truth is no longer disclosedness of what is and thus accommodation and grounding of Dasein in the disclosing being, but truth is rather diverted into certainty – to the mere securing of thought, and in fact the securing of mathematical thought against all that is not thinkable by it. The conception of truth as the securing of thought led to the definitive profaning [Entgötterung] of the world.

says explicitly that logic is not applicable to statements in metaphysics, but also in contemporary discussions, e.g., those concerning the reality of space or of time.” Cf.: “It is encouraging to remember that philosophical thinking has made great progress in the course of two thousand years through the work of men like Aristotle, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Dewey, Russell, and many others, who were basically thinking in a scientific way” (“Intellectual Autobiography,” 42–3).
The supposed “philosophical” tendency of mathematico-physical positivism wishes to supply the grounding of this position. It is no accident that this kind of “philosophy” wishes to supply the foundations of modern physics, in which all relations to nature are in fact destroyed. It is also no accident that this kind of “philosophy” stands in internal and external connection with Russian communism. And it is no accident, moreover, that this kind of thinking celebrates its triumph in America. All of this is only the ultimate consequence of an apparently merely grammatical affair, according to which being is conceived through the “is,” and the “is” is interpreted in accordance with one’s conception of the proposition and of thought.58

Thus Heidegger once again expresses a rather remarkable agreement with Carnap concerning the underlying sources of their opposition – which, as is now clear, embrace both fundamental issues about the philosophical centrality of logic and the exact sciences, and the extremely fraught social and political climate of the late 1920s and early 1930s within which Heidegger’s renewed defense of metaphysics first emerged.

It is even more remarkable, finally, that Carnap’s and Heidegger’s philosophical trajectories exhibited a surprising amount of convergence both before and after their collision over metaphysical pseudo-sentences. In particular, in the final section of “Overcoming Metaphysics,” entitled “Metaphysics as expression of Lebensgefühl,” Carnap refers very favorably to the Lebensphilosophie of Dilthey and his students (by which Carnap himself was considerably influenced during his own student years),59 and he also refers very favorably to

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58. See Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Gesamtausgabe vol. 40 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983], 227–8); the unpublished pages were apparently replaced by Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), 78–90; *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 86–99. Otto Pöggeler comments on this (1935) passage as follows: “Heidegger had sufficient taste not to deliver a previous version of his lecture in which Carnap’s emigration to America was put forth as confirmation of the convergence between Russian communism and the ‘type of thinking in America’” (“Heidegger’s Political Self-Understanding,” in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, Richard Wolin [ed.] [New York: Columbia University Press, 1991], 218–19). Given that Carnap did not emigrate until December 1935, however, whereas Heidegger’s lectures were held in the summer of that year, Heidegger cannot be referring to Carnap’s emigration here. It is more likely, for example, that he is referring to Schlick’s trip to Stanford University in 1929, which is prominently mentioned in the foreword to the Vienna Circle’s manifesto *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung* (1929).

Nietzsche’s Also sprach Zarathustra, in which, according to Carnap, the traditional confusion between metaphysics (as a supposed theoretical enterprise) and poetry (as the expression of Lebensgefühl) has been almost entirely avoided. Indeed, it is possible that Carnap took the wording of his title, “Überwindung der Metaphysik,” directly from Also sprach Zarathustra, where the themes of the Überwindung and Selbstüberwindung of man (leading, of course, to the Übermensch) figure very prominently. Moreover, Heidegger, in the mid- to late 1930s (directly following his collision with Carnap), also began using the expression “overcoming metaphysics” to characterize his own philosophical ambitions, in connection with his work on Nietzsche and his increasing concern with technology.60 This period, in particular, marks Heidegger’s attempt to come to terms with the failure of his rectorate at Freiburg (1933–34), and his consequent disenchantment with the Nazi regime over its overwhelmingly technological character.61 It also marks the boundary of Heidegger’s famous Kehre, where he leaves behind the existential–hermeneutic analytic of Dasein once and for all in favor of a new appreciation for the inextricable connection between the type of philosophy he now wants to practice and poetry.62

It is during this same period, as we have seen, that Carnap, for his part, became increasingly distressed by the “stifling political and cultural atmosphere … in Europe,”63 resulting in his emigration to the United States in December 1935. Carnap had just published his last major work written in German, Logische Syntax der Sprache (1934), where he announced a new type of philosophy – or rather what he calls a “replacement” for all traditional philosophy – devoted wholly to Wissenschaftslogik, the logic of science: this new discipline, he says, now “takes the place of the inextricable tangle of problems known as philosophy.”64 Moreover, just before leaving Europe, in September 1935, Carnap participated in the last great international congress devoted to the “scientific philosophy” of logical empiricism that took place before the advent of war. Among other things, Carnap delivered a programmatic paper, “Von der Erkenntnistheorie zur Wissenschaftslogik” (From epistemology to the logic of science), where he asserts that all previous epistemology, including his own earlier epistemology developed in the Aufbau, must now be renounced as an “unclear mixture of

60. See e.g. Heidegger, “Überwindung der Metaphysik,” written in the years 1936–41 (contemporaneous with his Nietzsche lectures).
61. See Rüdiger Safranski, Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit (Munich: Hanser, 1994), ch. 17, for an illuminating description of this period.
64. Rudolf Carnap, Logische Syntax der Sprache (Vienna: Springer, 1934), §72.
logical and psychological components.”\textsuperscript{65} The purely logical analysis of language – the purely logical analysis of scientific language – must now completely take its place.\textsuperscript{66} Carnap here, and at virtually the same time as Heidegger’s famous \textit{Kehre}, has undergone a parallel \textit{Kehre} of his own: he has not only rejected all of traditional metaphysics, but has also renounced the earlier post-metaphysical philosophies of Husserlian phenomenology, Marburg neo-Kantianism, and his own attempt logically to reconstruct both of these earlier revolutionary traditions in the \textit{Aufbau}.\textsuperscript{67}

We cannot pursue the further development of the (now entirely divergent) analytic and continental traditions beyond this point. Suffice it to say that the final philosophical history of the intricate and multifaceted web of interconnections between logic, intuitive experience, and the time-honored but always questionable enterprise of metaphysics has yet to be written. We believe, however, that it is only possible to make progress here by first adequately understanding how this web itself became “inextricably tangled” – to breaking point – between the two world wars of the twentieth century, and then proceeding (very patiently) to disentangle it.


\textsuperscript{66} For further discussion of Carnap’s mature conception of philosophy as \textit{Wissenschaftslogik}, see Michael Friedman, “‘The \textit{Aufbau} and the Criticism of Metaphysics,” in Friedman and Creath, \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Carnap}.

\textsuperscript{67} Husserl’s late work, \textit{The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology} (1936–37), represents his reaction to this most difficult time – and, in particular, to the now very alarming challenge he sees in Heidegger. Here, in particular, Husserl finally explicitly incorporates a fundamentally \textit{historical} dimension into transcendental phenomenology (cf. note 24 above).
It is possible to reconstruct a story about the development of twentieth-century continental philosophy that includes almost all of its major figures and movements either as extensions of the phenomenological tradition or as a critical response to it. Moreover, even though Edmund Husserl was not, and never claimed to be, the inventor of the philosophical term “phenomenology,” nor even the sole initiator of phenomenology as one the most important philosophical movements in twentieth-century philosophy, it is not an exaggeration to say that during the first few decades of the twentieth century, the term “phenomenology” as a philosophical method and direction of research became so closely associated with the thinking and the works of Husserl that the term “phenomenology” now usually means a kind of philosophizing associated with Husserl, his philosophical allies such as Max Scheler or Alexander Pfänder, and his successors such as Martin Heidegger or Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Hence, the philosophy of Edmund Husserl can legitimately be seen as the beginning of twentieth-century continental philosophy as an identifiable tradition and leading philosophical movement. Prior to Husserl’s work, there may have been differences between some of the dominant tendencies in philosophy in various continental European countries as opposed to the British Isles and the United States, but these were hardly identifiable as a specific movement. But by the middle of the

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1. Edmund Husserl (April 8, 1859–April 27, 1938; born Proßnitz [now Prostějov], formerly Austro-Hungarian Empire; died in Freiburg, Germany) was educated at the Universities of Leipzig (1876–78), Berlin (1878–81), and Vienna (1881–82) and took his doctoral degree at Vienna in 1882. His influences included Brentano, Cantor, Dilthey, Stumpf, and Windelband, and he held appointments at the Universities of Halle (1887–1901), Göttingen (1901–16), and Freiburg (1916–28).
twentieth century at the latest, those philosophical approaches that had developed as extensions of phenomenology in one way or another had come to be seen as something other than the predominant mode of philosophy in English-speaking countries at the time.

I. EARLY WORKS

Husserl was born in 1859 to a Jewish family that had long been settled in the town of Proßnitz (now Prostějov) in the district of Maehren, which is now part of the Czech Republic and was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although many of his contemporaries still attended Jewish schools, Husserl was educated in a secular grade school and later attended and completed Gymnasium in the nearby provincial capital of Olmütz (now Olomouc). In 1876, he enrolled at the University of Leipzig, first studying astronomy and taking courses in mathematics, physics, and philosophy. This is also where he met and became lifelong friends with Thomas Masaryk (1850–1937), who was later to become the first President of Czechoslovakia. In 1878, he switched to the University of Berlin, first studying mathematics under Karl Weierstraß (1815–97) and Leopold Kronecker (1823–91), and philosophy with Friedrich Paulsen (1846–1908). Husserl’s special philosophical interests at this stage centered on investigations into the foundations of mathematics and logic. In 1881, he transferred to Vienna, where he completed his doctoral degree in mathematics under Leo Königsberger (1837–1921) with a dissertation on Contributions to a Theory of Variable Calculus in 1882. It was also in Vienna that Husserl began to work under Franz Brentano (1838–1917), who then recommended Husserl to his former student Carl Stumpf (1848–1936) in Halle. Under Stumpf’s supervision, Husserl enjoyed his first regular academic appointment in philosophy and completed his first major work – Concerning the Concept of Number. Psychological Analyses – as a habilitation in 1887. This work was later revised and published as The Philosophy of Arithmetic: Psychological and Logical Investigations in 1891. During this period Husserl also came to know and be influenced by George Cantor (1845–1918) and his work in set theory. In these early studies, Husserl takes up the question of the foundation of mathematics as an inquiry into its origins. He attempts to show how the science of arithmetic and the concept of number on which it is founded are dependent on certain elementary operations. For example, to form the concept of “one,” a person must abstract from the specific character of what that person experiences and form a notion of “something in general” as the basis for the idea of “unit.” Forming the notion “multiplicity” involves the operation of collectively conjoining such abstract units. At this stage of his thinking, Husserl called this
approach to explaining the origin of arithmetic as a discipline back to such elementary operations as abstraction and conjunction “psychological” analyses. He also argued that symbolic representation is a necessary element in arithmetic since the development of a system of integers for a finite discursive intellect necessarily involves the ability of consciousness to conceive of numbers that it cannot intuitively represent to itself. Hence symbolic representations such as numerals are required to conceive of larger numbers.

Husserl’s general approach here is closely tied to Brentano’s notion of “intentionality,” which posits directedness to objects as an essential feature of all mental states, and thereby also sets the stage for an approach that analyzes objectivity as it presents itself to consciousness in certain mental acts. Thus the promising approach to questions concerning the foundation of mathematics and logic appears to be through an analysis of certain kinds of acts that must be presupposed if certain kinds of conceptions and entities are to be present for consciousness. However, both in substance and in the description of these investigations as “psychological analyses,” there is a danger of confusing questions concerning the origin and status of mathematical entities with the question concerning the origin and status of the possible representation of those entities. The question of the implicit assumptions of certain kinds of simple concepts that are necessarily involved in more complex concepts such as that of a number is different from the question of the operations that are necessary to form those concepts. Moreover, there are important distinctions that would need to be made about what one means here by “operation” or “act,” yet in Husserl’s early work these distinctions are far from clear. One can easily gain the impression that Husserl is trying to suggest that the objects of mathematics and logic are psychological or subjective rather than genuinely objective, ideal entities.

Gottlob Frege was one critic who read Husserl’s early work in this vein and voiced his objections in a well-known review of *The Philosophy of Arithmetic*. He accused Husserl of mixing logic and psychology so as to distort the status of the mathematical entities Husserl purports to analyze, such as “number,” which is not a mental representation. When Husserl opened his next major published work, *The Logical Investigations* (1900), with a “Prolegomena” dedicated to the refutation of “psychologism” – the confusion of mathematical and logical principles with statements about psychological necessities or mental states – there was a common perception that Husserl had adopted as his own Frege’s criticisms of his earlier work. While many assumed that it was in response to Frege’s criticisms that Husserl had achieved a significant breakthrough towards a new approach that does not reduce ideal entities such as meanings or logical principles to mental acts, in fact it is now apparent from letters and minor publications such as book reviews written during the period between 1891 and 1900 that Husserl on his own had become aware of the ambiguities and possible
confusions involved in his earlier work. The Logical Investigations should, therefore, be understood more as an extension and clarification of the general approach taken in his earlier work than a repudiation of it.

II. LOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The Logical Investigations was Husserl’s first introduction to a broader philosophical audience. It was published in two volumes – the Prolegomena to a Pure Logic as volume one in 1900, followed a year later by six specific investigations into topics pertaining to the foundation of such a pure logic in volume two. Husserl describes the pure logic it purports to found as a “mathesis universalis” for all individual sciences, that is, as a universal and formal theory of theories in general that could ground a universal system of all knowledge. The investigations thus center around such concepts as meaning, object, truth, and evidence, whose clarification is essential for any theory of science.

Given Frege’s criticisms of Husserl’s earlier position as “psychologism,” it is ironic that it was the extended and devastating criticism of psychologism in volume one of the Logical Investigations that initially attracted the most attention. Here Husserl defines psychologism as the view that pure logic can ultimately be reduced to psychology, that is, that logical principles are at bottom nothing other than assertions about the predominant patterns of human cognition. Included in Husserl’s list of those guilty of the sin of falling prey to this fallacious view is an array of thinkers from John Stuart Mill, Christoph Sigwart, Benno Erdmann, Richard Avenarius, and Hans Cornelius, who were all prominent in the fields of psychology and logical theory at the time. Husserl’s refutation points to the differences in character between a priori logical principles and empirical generalizations about actual human thinking. Empirical laws are necessarily vague (i.e. always include ceteris paribus conditions), merely probable and, as supposed causal principles governing existing things, also have implicit existential import. Logical laws, by contrast, hold unconditionally. They are exact (i.e. are not restricted by ceteris paribus conditions), certain, and do not presuppose actually existing entities. The reality of logical principles is therefore of a fundamentally different kind than that of material or psychological objects. Husserl refers to them as “ideal objects,” in a sense simply as the opposite of “real” objects, whereby their ideality does not make them any less genuine than

physical objects or mental states, although Husserl does not explicitly turn to ontological questions in the *Prolegomena* in order to begin to clarify how such nonphysical and nonmental objectivity might be possible.

In the course of the following investigations, however, Husserl does begin to address such questions. In the First Investigation, for instance, Husserl turns to the question of meaning: since the same expression may mean the same thing when uttered by the same speaker on different occasions, by different speakers, or even when the speaker may be unknown, Husserl again distinguishes the meaning of an expression from the mental state of the person uttering the expression. Thus the function of expressions as bearers of meaning is different from the function that they may play as indicators of the speaker’s beliefs or emotions. Husserl tries to show that the meaning of an expression must also be distinguished from the object that the expression refers to, since different expressions with different meanings may point to different aspects of the same object (e.g. the victor at Jena and the vanquished at Waterloo), and the same meaning (e.g. horse) can be used to refer to different objects. Meanings for Husserl are ways of relating to an object. For instance, one could intend the same object as a horse, a mammal, a quadruped, or – mistakenly perhaps – a mule. Each of these establishes a different intention and would have a different set of conditions that would confirm or refute it. Meanings are not identical to expressions, however, since there may be different expressions within a language or across languages for the same meaning, or different meanings for the same expression. Meanings are an abstract, ideal stratum of expressions, which have both a material and an ideal side, and can be viewed in terms of their function of expressing meaning or of indicating the mental state of the speaker.

Meanings and logical principles are not the only kinds of ideal entities for Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*. In the Second Investigation, he also defends the position that meanings may refer not only to individual physical objects, but also to ideal objects he call “species” or classes of things. “Red,” for instance, is the object referred to by the general concept “red” and is neither itself a red object nor a mental operation. It emerges for a knower through the process of abstraction, but is not itself a mental process, as some empiricist theories might suggest. (This is one step along the way to the clarification of his own earlier positions in which he had not clearly enough distinguished the “meaning” or the concept from the operation through which the concept or meaning is grasped.) The Third Investigation makes clear, however, that Husserl does not view species and other

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abstract objects as existing independently, but as nonindependent “moments” of concrete wholes in which they actually occur. Moreover, he argues that there are essential laws governing which kinds of meanings (and their corresponding objects) are independent and which kinds are dependent, and he asserts that there are essential laws that even stipulate which specific kinds of independent or concrete meanings and objects provide the foundation for specific kinds of dependent or abstract objects and meanings. The project of a pure phenomenological ontology, then, would be to investigate systematically and lay out these essential relationships. Closely related is the project of a pure grammar, described in the Fourth Investigation. A pure grammar would reflect on essential relationships that govern the kinds of meanings that are compatible with each other and those that are not, and which kinds of simpler meanings must be combined in which ways to result in more complex meanings such as those expressed in sentences.

The Fifth Investigation is particularly significant since it is here that Husserl introduces the notion of intentionality with explicit reference to Brentano and grants it a significant role in explicating the notion of meaning that has been functioning in the previous four investigations. Meanings become connected to intentionality since it is through meanings that a specific mode of directedness towards an object is established. Brentano had reintroduced the Scholastic notion of intentionality in his attempt to distinguish the realm of the mental from that of the nonmental. It is the unique property of mental acts to be about some object toward which they are directed, and Husserl adopts this view when he defines consciousness as intentional experiencing. In the Sixth Investigation Husserl complements this insight with the assertion that all objects for knowledge are at the same time intentional objects, that is, mediated through some meaning that governs the specific way in which they are intended.

Already in the Fifth Investigation, however, Husserl further distinguishes between the content or material and the quality of an intentional act, whereby the material names the particular object and the meaning through which consciousness is directed to it (e.g. an ice cream cone) and the quality of the act concerns the way that consciousness is directed to the object (imagining, desiring, or perceiving the ice cream cone). He also is careful to distinguish the material as the intentional object from the material of sense perception that may serve as the basis for the intention of that object, since from the phenomenological perspective those aspects of a sensibly perceptible object that are given through the senses (such as its specific color or taste) occur for consciousness only as aspects of the object as a whole (in this case, the ice cream cone) and not as independent objects. Thus, by “material” Husserl does not mean something like sense data, but rather intended objects that may include sensibly perceptible moments as part of their complete intention, but these sensibly perceptible moments are not separately intended objects.
Among the various kinds of intentions, Husserl identifies “representations” as the most basic units that are presupposed by others. He follows Brentano’s analysis that it is indeed conceivable that one may represent, for instance, an ice cream cone to oneself without desiring it, but that one cannot desire it without implicitly representing it to oneself, so that there is a one-sided foundational relationship between them, in which representations found all other sorts of intentions.

In the Sixth Investigation, Husserl turns explicitly to the relationship between intentions and intended objects. He begins by focusing on the so-called “objectifying intentions,” that is, those intentions that can be verified or falsified through appropriate intuitions. Thus, the traditional question about the relationship between subject and object, knowing and the object known, is approached in terms of the question of meaning-intentions and their fulfillment. An objectifying intention establishes a relationship to the object such that certain kinds of intuitions count as fulfilling the intention and thus presenting the intended object not merely as intended, but as actually known. The object of knowledge is just that which is given in a fulfilled intention. Hence, corresponding to every intention is an intended object, but in the case of an empty intending, that is, an intending not based on actual sense intuitions, there may or may not be an actual object that corresponds to the intention. In the case of a fulfilled intention, intuition confirms that there is an existent object that indeed corresponds to the intention and that the object is just as it has been intended, so that there is an identity between intended object and the actual object itself. The ideal of a completely fulfilled intention is captured in the notion Evidenz, the experience of an object being evidently given just as it has been intended, so that it is apparent that the actual object coincides precisely with the intention of it. In Husserl’s view, the experience of the evidentness of the object for us as it is in itself lies at the basis of the notion of truth in all of its various manifestations, which all proceed from this notion of evidentness. Taken as a property of the intending or of a judgment expressing a specific intention, truth refers to the ability of an intention to be fulfilled by such an evidential experience. Truth can also be taken to be a property of the intended object or state of affairs, in the sense that something is indeed a true object or a true state of affairs if it can be evidently experienced in the appropriate manner. Moreover, one can further distinguish between truth as the actual experience of the identity between the intention and the intended object by an observer and the claim that such an experience could be had by an ideal observer. But in any case, the claim that a proposition or a state of affairs is a true one ultimately must bear some possible or actual relationship to this experience of evidentness that is the fundamental phenomenon to which any truth claim must be referred.

The Sixth Investigation makes clear that the objects of legitimate intention are not limited to sensible individuals, but may also be states of affairs or other
kinds of objectivities that may be founded in, but are not necessarily reducible to, that which may be directly perceived through the senses. Having articulated the general relationship between intention, fulfillment, and the objects of the intentions that are presented through the fulfillment of an intention in the first half of the Sixth Investigation, Husserl then turns to what he calls “categorial objects” such as states of affairs and the corresponding “categorial intuitions” that fulfill them. Not only does Husserl recognize as legitimate objects those states of affairs that are intended through complex meaningful expressions such as sentences, but he also maintains that there are other meaningful expressions, such as those referring to universals (or “species” as he called them in the Second Investigation), that each have their own appropriate and unique form of fulfillment. Thus, in addition to sense intuition, Husserl proposes that there are other forms of intuition, among them for instance categorial intuition (e.g. seeing that \( a \) is \( b \)) as the fulfillment of the intention of categorial objects (\( a \)’s being \( b \)), each with its own unique structure that is an appropriate topic for phenomenological investigation. Particularly important in this regard is his assertion that there may be kinds of intuitions parallel to categorial intuitions that could fulfill the intention of ideal objects, so that the fulfillment of intentions with regard to mathematical or logical truths would be possible, even though they are not reducible to sense intuitions. Husserl asserts that there is an essential sameness in character in the function that fulfillment plays in all of these forms of intuition in its ability to confirm or disappoint an intention. As a result, the parallel relations between intention, fulfillment, and objectivity make it necessary to recognize each fulfilling act of the confirming self-presentation of an object (even a complex object such as a state of affairs or an ideal object such as a logical principle) as a perception, each fulfilling act in general as an intuition, and its intentional object as an object (Gegenstand). Thus the realm of intuition extends beyond the realm of sense perception and the range of possible objects extends beyond that of mere individual physical objects to any sort of object whatsoever that can be intended and possibly fulfilled through an appropriate form of intuition in this extended sense of the term.

This opens the way for a whole range of investigations into the nature of these various realms or “regions” of objects, into the nature of the kinds of intentions and fulfillments appropriate to them, and into the relationship between the various kinds of objects, intentions, and fulfillments that belong to each of these realms to see how they are essentially related. The sensually perceivable or “real” objects are characterized as objects of the lowest stage of possible intuition; the categorial or ideal objects that are founded on them are by contrast higher-order objectivities. The project of spelling out just how they are related, what the essential structures of each of these regions are, and what essential relations obtain between the intention, fulfillments, and objects of the various regions is
not carried out in the *Logical Investigations*, but the possibility of such a project is outlined and the necessity for it as part of an overall grounding for all of the particular sciences is asserted.

For all of Husserl’s later work, this project will remain at the heart of phenomenology as a systematic field of study. However, a decisive question that remained at this stage of Husserl’s thinking was the proper method for the execution of this project. What guarantees the necessary correlation between intention and object? How is reflection on such essential states of affairs possible and how is it different from the kind of internal observation of one’s own mental states that would amount to nothing other than a new version of psychologism? What is the proper method for studying such essential correlations? Husserl’s turn to transcendental phenomenology during the decade that followed the *Logical Investigations* was meant to answer such questions.

III. THE TURN TO TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Shortly after the appearance of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl received a professorship in Göttingen, where he would remain until 1916. During this period, he developed phenomenology as an explicit methodology and field of research, and he came to be regarded as the leading figure in phenomenology. It was also during this period that phenomenology became an intellectual movement centered on Husserl and his students in Göttingen (e.g. Winthrop Bell, Theodor Conrad, Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Adolf Grimme, Jean Hering, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Roman Ingarden, Fritz Kaufmann, Hans Lipp, Alfred Reinach, and Edith Stein) and a group of sympathetic scholars in Munich, some of whom were already well established on their own. The latter group had been introduced to Husserl’s work by an independent scholar by the name of Johannes Daubert and included among others Theodor Lipps, Alexander Pfänder, Moritz Geiger, and Max Scheler. In his discussions with these circles as well as in critical yet friendly debates with leading representatives of neo-Kantianism such as Paul Natorp and of the philosophy of life such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Husserl comes to see phenomenology as the study of pure transcendental consciousness – both its intentional acts and the correlative forms of objectivity constituted through these acts. The process of “transcendental phenomenological reduction,” through which all forms of objectivity are traced back to the processes in subjectivity through which they are constituted, was recognized as the key mode of access to the realm of pure phenomenology, which was now seen not as a reflection on the individual mental life of existing subjects within the world, but as an analysis of the realm of “pure transcendental subjectivity.” What does this mean?
From the outset of his work, one of Husserl’s problems had been distinguishing his own analysis of the essential processes through which various forms of objectivity become apparent to consciousness from a study of the mental processes that actually take place in individual subjects. In a polemical essay written for the journal *Logos* in 1911, Husserl described the need for a philosophical method that could make philosophy into a rigorous science, indeed the most rigorous of sciences, since it would presuppose no other. In order to fulfill this task, phenomenological philosophy must avoid the twin dangers of “naturalism,” that is, approaching consciousness only from the standpoint of other natural, ultimately material phenomena, and “historicism,” that is, reducing philosophical issues to matters of historical worldviews. As opposed to either of these ultimately empirical approaches, phenomenological philosophy, if it is to fulfill the task of philosophy as a rigorous science, must be a “pure,” a priori, and hence certain discipline. If it is to study invariant, essential structures and not merely psychological patterns, then phenomenology must find a way to exclude all merely empirical elements from its analysis.

First in working manuscripts composed in 1905, then in lectures presented in 1907 and published posthumously under the title *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl proposed the procedure of phenomenological reduction as the means for accomplishing this goal. The first step is to exclude, bracket out, or put out of play as fallible and thus not the source of genuine evidence those elements in any claim to knowledge that refer not to the processes through which the objects of knowledge are given to consciousness, but to the objects themselves. The technical term Husserl employs to name such suspension of belief on such matters of fact is the Greek term *epochē*, which arose in ancient Stoicism. Accordingly, it is not a phenomenological, but rather an empirical, question whether there actually is a tree outside my window, whether there are such things as magnetic force fields (or phlogiston, for that matter), or whether any particular physical object at all exists. The first step, then, toward moving from the natural or empirical attitude to the phenomenological attitude is to concentrate not on the tree that is seen or the magnetic force field that is proposed as an explanation for certain phenomena, but on the seeing of the tree or the explaining of the phenomena through the proposal of something like a force field, since – following a motif familiar to philosophers at least since Descartes – the seeing or explaining, at least at the moment they are going on, are indubitable occurrences for the subject that is performing the seeing or explaining. But even within this reflective attitude, it turns out that a further kind of reduction or bracketing is necessary to exclude all empirical and thus nonapodictic elements, since mental processes themselves are empirical facts about which one can be mistaken. It is not only possible to be mistaken about whether the tree is such as I perceive it, or even whether there is a tree there at all, but also, at least in principle, equally
open to doubt whether it is I, the empirical person with this or that specific identity, physical or mental traits, and personal history, who is doing the perceiving. At least in principle, I could, for instance in a dream, be thinking of myself as a sixteen-year-old high-school student again talking to my father, who in reality has long since passed away. So in addition to bracketing out all commitments to the truth of the statement about whether the object is such as I perceive it, the phenomenologist must also bracket all empirical psychological claims about the perceiver. What is indubitable is the content and nature of the purported perceiving itself, including beliefs that the perceiver holds about his or her own identity and empirical character. The same holds not just for acts of perception, according to Husserl, but for any mental act whatsoever. The phenomenologist can reflect on those claims without any commitment to their empirical truth at all. Moreover, the phenomenologist can even reflect on what would count as good empirical evidence for those claims and the necessary limitations of such evidence. There can be doubt about whether there is anything that corresponds to these contents of consciousness, and even about the identity of the consciousness that is aware of them, but whenever these contents are present for consciousness there can be no doubt of their presence for the consciousness that is aware of them. Moreover, on reflection, one can also become aware of what would count as experiences that would validate the claims inherent in these beliefs about things like trees, our own identity, or anything else we might intend. Thus, if phenomenology limits itself to an analysis of these “pure” contents, that is the contents apart from all of the empirically dubitable claims attached to them, it has access to a sphere that is beyond doubt, a realm of apodictic certainty for its analyses.

Within this realm of pure self-givenness, Husserl’s interest is and remains the analysis of essential structures and connections within cognition, of its various forms and correlative objectivities. Thus transcendental phenomenological reduction involves a third moment, which one might term eidetic reduction. Phenomenology’s interest pertains to the eidetic, that is, the invariant and thus essential elements that present themselves to pure consciousness. In the Sixth Investigation, Husserl had maintained that such invariant structures or essences can be just as much an object for pure intuitions as an empirical physical object can be given to sense perception. With this reduction to the sphere of pure universal self-givenness, Husserl now believes he can distinguish phenomenology from descriptive psychology, since the investigation no longer concerns the immanent sphere of empirical consciousness, but rather the realm of the purely self-given contents that can be made apodictically evident to phenomenological reflection. Phenomenological reduction thus builds on and presupposes the procedure of imaginative variation through which those things that can conceivably be otherwise than they are may be separated from those that cannot
conceivably change. This procedure, known as “eidetic variation,” is a kind of thought experiment employed by the phenomenologist to distinguish empirical associations and contingent conjunctions from essential structures that cannot conceivably be different from the way they are. Phenomenology is thus a science of “pure possibilities” whose interest is directed to the necessities that underlie any such possibilities and consequently also hold for any conceivable actuality, so that they apply to all possible and actual relationships without implying any commitment to which actual relationships and objects genuinely exist.

Husserl introduced the phenomenological reduction for the first time to a wider audience outside his lecture halls in his major programmatic work, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book, which he described as a general introduction to pure phenomenology (commonly referred to simply as Ideas I). It was published in 1913 as the first volume of the Yearbook for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, which he cofounded and edited together with Alexander Pfänder, Moritz Geiger, Max Scheler, and Adolf Reinach, and which was to remain the leading venue for phenomenological research until its final volume in 1930. In the general introduction, Husserl describes the sphere of phenomenological research as the “region of pure consciousness,” as the “region of all regions,” since it is within and for that sphere that all other regions are constituted. Transcendental phenomenology is said to be a kind of transcendental idealism, within which the pure or invariant structure of an act of consciousness (the “noesis”), its corresponding intentional object (the “noema”), and the necessary correlation between the two are investigated. It does not purport to replace the individual sciences that operate in the natural attitude and concern themselves with empirical facts. Instead, it seeks to ground all of them as well as formal disciplines such as logic and mathematics by showing how each of them presupposes certain essential structures or essences, whose description and explication can be properly executed only by transcendental phenomenology that brackets out or neutralizes the assumptions made within the natural attitude. The term Husserl now introduces to describe the process by which subjects come to intend objects is “constitution,” through which he seeks to avoid causal terms that would imply a dependency relationship between two existing things such as consciousness and objects, but at the same time stresses the necessary role of specific cognitive operations (noeses) if various kinds of objects are to become present for consciousness (noemata).

In the final section of Ideas I, Husserl turns to the questions of reason and actuality. How does phenomenology fit in with the traditional philosophical project of rational foundation for knowledge and action, and what is the relationship between the eidetic analyses undertaken in phenomenology and actual existence? Husserl describes the two problems as interrelated, for to speak “reasonably” or rationally about objects involves a claim to justification
or possible confirmation through evidence. Thus, under “reason” in this context Husserl understands the inherent directedness of intentions toward fulfillment. There is not only a corresponding noema for each noesis, but also the inherent directedness of objective consciousness toward the confirmation or fulfillment that would establish the relationship toward an actually existent object that would be identical to that noema. However, since there can be different kinds or “regions” of objectivities (such as physical objects, mathematical objects, cultural objects, etc.), there will also be correspondingly different kinds of confirming intuitions that fulfill them. Thus the philosophical project of reason is to lay out what these would be and systematically to delineate the various kinds of essential relationships that hold between them. Again, it is a nonphilosophical question which of these intentions is actually fulfilled, but that does not mean that phenomenology as the science of reason does not address questions of actual existence or actual objects, only that it addresses them exclusively in terms of their “meaning” and their structure. It analyzes the kinds of fulfillment that would be appropriate to these intentions and their corresponding objects, but does not claim to be able to take a stance as a pure science on which of them actually has been or will be fulfilled or not. This means that, for Husserl, the themes of reason, being, and truth are essentially interconnected in a way that presages how Heidegger’s later analyses also attempt to establish an essential interconnection between logos, Being, and truth as αληθεία.

It is during this period that, in addition to intentionality, temporality emerges for Husserl as the second significant essential structure of all consciousness. He demonstrates how consciousness occurs as a flow, so that each event in conscious life has a temporal location with regard to all others. The appearance of any object can necessarily be characterized in terms of a “now,” a “before,” or an “after.” Moreover, Husserl’s further analyses reveal that these distinct modes of past, present, and future are not only mutually related to each other, but also should not be conceived as discrete moments, each separated sharply from the other. Rather, the now appears always with a temporal fringe or horizon. The now taken as a moment around which past and future gather is never strictly an isolated point. Indeed, the very idea of the now as a point is merely a limit concept that is never experienced in itself, since in conscious life every now also involves the consciousness of a having-been that has immediately preceded it and a not-yet that is about to become now. Thus, the “now” for consciousness is always an extended “living presence” that, as the “originary temporal field,” also includes the “no-longer” and the “not-yet.”

One of Husserl’s original contributions to the discussion of temporality, which he had taken up from Brentano, is his distinction between “retention” as that form of the no-longer that is part of the immediate horizon of the now, and “memory,” which involves making present again to consciousness what
was no longer immediately present for consciousness. Retention, along with “protention,” its corresponding form of the not-yet, is a mode of what Husserl calls “impressional consciousness.” Memory, by contrast, is a form of “representational consciousness.” For example, when one hears a melody, a note runs off into the retentional past as it comes to be replaced by a new one, without disappearing from consciousness, since it would otherwise be impossible to hear a melody as such. Similarly, there arises at each moment a new anticipation of a coming note (its “protention”) emanating from the present, which Husserl calls the “primal” impression in order to distinguish the way that it is present for retentive and protentive consciousness. All of these modes of temporal awareness of objects are ultimately grounded for Husserl in the temporality of consciousness itself, that is, in the self-constitution of its own identity throughout its different moments in the flow of consciousness. Another name for transcendental subjectivity is therefore “absolute primordially constituting consciousness” or “absolute primordial temporality,” which has a specific structure that can be the object of phenomenological analysis and forms the horizon against which the constitution of the empirical consciousness of the individual and the objects of consciousness takes place. However, in Ideas I and other works from this period, Husserl does not trace back the constitution of specific kinds of objects to their ultimate temporal foundations, even though it is indeed during this period that the framework for such a project was laid.

IV. THE FREIBURG YEARS (1916–38)

A few years after the appearance of Ideas I, Husserl was named Chair of Philosophy at the University of Freiburg, succeeding Heinrich Rickert, who had accepted an appointment in Heidelberg and recommended Husserl to follow him. Here Husserl remained for the rest of his academic career until his retirement in 1928, and then until the end of his life in 1938. During these years, Husserl concentrated on the completion of phenomenology not just as a methodology, but as a concrete and comprehensive research project. This involved, on the one hand, pursuing a wide range of specific phenomenological constitutional analyses into the relationship between realms of nature and of spirit, or the correlative naturalistic and personalistic attitudes, as well as into the structure of the everyday life-world out of which science emerges; into intersubjectivity and into nature as the correlate of intersubjective intentionality; into the constitution of ideal objects such as numbers or geometrical shapes; into the foundations of sense experience and formal logic; and into the phenomenological foundation for normative sciences such as ethics and value theory. On the other hand, it also involved a deepened understanding of what phenomenological analysis
must entail if it is indeed supposed to trace back the constitution of various kinds of objects to their ultimate origins. Instead of being a static description of various kinds of essential structures and the necessary relationships that obtain between them, if phenomenology is to be a genuine science of absolute origins, it will ultimately have to trace back all forms of objectivity to the structures of consciousness and its basic forms of intentionality and temporality. Constitutive phenomenology thus explicitly evolves into genetic phenomenology, which traces higher-order forms of objectivity back to lower-order forms, and these in turn to the most elementary structures of intentional consciousness that in turn have their ultimate basis in modes of temporality. Accordingly, phenomenology not only must provide a description of the essential relationships governing all of reality, but must also provide an account of the necessary origins of these relationships in and for consciousness in accordance with its most elementary structures. It must not only describe the constitution of the predicative realm and the operations most directly and easily accessible to reflection, but also trace these back to activities at the pre-predicative level that are generally thought of rather as passivities, the passive syntheses that take place at the most basic levels of consciousness as it organizes sense experience into the experience of individual material objects, on the basis of which higher-order objects are constituted.

One guiding theme throughout all of Husserl’s work, and not only in this period, is his opposition to philosophy’s recent attempt to model itself after the natural sciences and to reductionistic tendencies in many other sciences that have also falsely attempted to pattern themselves after that model. This is already a familiar theme developed in Husserl’s earlier refutation of psychologism, where he argued against the attempt to reduce mathematics and logic to natural phenomena in the *Logical Investigations*, and then later again in his critique of naturalism, where he refutes the attempt to reduce all mental phenomena to externally observable physical entities in “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science.” Already during his middle period, Husserl had discovered commonalities in this regard with the philosophy of life as represented by Dilthey, and with philosophers such as Wilhelm Windelband and Rickert, neo-Kantians of the Southwest School who stressed the independence of the cultural sciences from the natural sciences. Whereas the critique of naturalism in the *Logos* essay clearly demonstrated Husserl’s common ground with them, the polemical tone of the critique of historicism offered in the second part of that essay (which exhibits Husserl’s concern with the topic of history and the relationship between philosophy and the cultural sciences) stresses Husserl’s differences from Dilthey and related thinkers instead of their commonalities. Indeed, not until the very last major published work by Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), does it become apparent that Husserl shares with the philosophers of life and of culture an appreciation of the cultural and historical
dimensions that are constitutive of everyday human existence, dimensions that provide the background against which abstract disciplines such as the modern natural sciences arise. However, posthumously published writings such as Husserl’s *Ideas II* reveal that Husserl had gained an appreciation for the non-naturalistic attitude that constitutes everyday life much earlier and that he had been decisively influenced in this regard by Dilthey, Windelband, and Rickert.

In *Ideas II*, Husserl contrasts the naturalistic and the personalistic attitudes. Each attitude may be described as a noetic stance, within which specific kinds of entities appear for consciousness. In the naturalistic attitude, everything appears as nature in the sense of modern natural science: what exists is spatially and temporally located, causally determined, and measurable. Husserl analyzes the fundamental concepts or categories that govern this region and shows how anything that does not fit into these categories is dismissed as nonexistent by these standards. However, Husserl makes clear that the naturalistic attitude is only one possible stance toward objects, and that other equally legitimate attitudes can reveal other kinds of equally genuine objects. For instance, in the personalistic attitude, governed by the category not of causality but of motivation, other human beings are encountered as subjects of intentional states who behave in the way they do not because of material causes, but on the basis of motivating mental states such as beliefs and desires. Moreover, even the everyday nonhuman objects that surround us are organized not in terms of the predicates of natural science, but rather in terms of their serviceability to our needs. In contrast to the world of “nature” and its seemingly objective properties, the everyday world in which we live as persons is filled with cultural objects such as tables and chairs and with other human beings who are also persons with beliefs, needs, and desires of their own.

In *Ideas II*, Husserl also examines the essential relationships that hold between the two different regions that emerge in the two different attitudes – that is, the naturalistic and the personalistic – and concludes not only that the personalistic realm is every bit as much a realm of genuine objects as the naturalistic realm, but also that the latter, that is, the scientific realm, is grounded in the former, the realm of everyday life, and not the other way round. Although it is true that the higher-order objects such as cultural objects or persons are founded on natural objects in the sense that each of these more complex, higher-order objects necessarily contains a stratum that can be described simply in naturalistic terms (its weight, spatial location, etc.), Husserl demonstrates that the realm of nature as such arises only through abstraction from the predicates that present themselves to us as genuine predicates of the objects in our everyday, concrete lived existence. The realm of nature or science is an abstraction derived from and therefore dependent on the realm of concrete everyday existence that we encounter in the personalistic attitude. Moreover, in the personalistic world, which Husserl
Edmund Husserl
calls the “Umwelt” (“environment” or literally “surrounding world”) in contrast
to nature, it is apparent that objectivities emerge for us in the way they do,
show up as tables or chairs, in view of certain subjective acts. This realm makes
the subjective role in the constitution of objects more easily apparent than an
approach through the realm of nature, since the latter, in its search for universal
and reliable structures of the objects, constitutes an idea of “objectivity” that is
seemingly independent of any subjective acts or attitudes. Phenomenological
investigation reveals, however, that this very notion of “objectivity” is itself a
subjective construct that can be traced back to certain motivations and inter-
ests of persons. As such it is also subject to critical examination. If it is clear that
the everyday surrounding world shows up the way it does in part as a result of
the activity of a subject or a community of subjects, then critical reflection on
its origins and justification is also possible. Whereas the world of science can
tend to forget or hide its subjective origins and thus seem to remove itself from
the necessity for critical scrutiny, the personalistic attitude is much closer to the
truths that phenomenology reveals, namely that all supposed objectivities are
correlates of subjective activities and attitudes that are amenable to reflective
analysis and criticism.

One important insight developed for the first time in this work is the recog-
nition that, in everyday perception, one is aware not only of the information
provided to us about these objects through our senses, but also of information
about the state and activity of ourselves as embodied agents as well. These
ideas will be especially important for Merleau-Ponty in his Phenomenology
of Perception. Using the notion of kinaesthesis, which in nineteenth-century
psychology was used to describe our immediate sense of our bodies’ own posi-
tions and movements that we can have without necessarily having to see or hear
these movements, Husserl extends the term to refer not only to our awareness of
our own bodily position and movements, but also to the way that we are actu-
ally engaged as embodied agents in the process of perception itself. We might
walk around an object to get a better look at it or be in a better position to hear
something. Moreover, whenever we are trying to make sense of what is going on
in the world, we are constantly in the process of sorting out those changes in the
perceptual field that come from changes in our bodily positioning and those that
are independent of it. For instance, when I shake my head from right to left, what
I see changes, but I attribute those changes not to changes in the objects seen, but
to how my field of vision is changing because of the change in the direction I am
looking. Moreover, in daily perception I am also aware that much of the way the
world looks has to do with me and my own bodily states (where I am looking,
whether I have good or poor eyesight, etc.), but also with the circumstances
under which I perceive things (in a dark or well-illuminated room or in a room
with a red light bulb that makes everything else appear with a reddish hue). In
everyday life, then, the notion or “optimal” or “normal” perceptual conditions plays a constitutive role in our view about how objects “really” are.

Husserl also builds on these insight in the later sections of part one of *Ideas II*, where he shows how a modern notion of objectivity in the scientific sense emerged through an attempt to construct a conceptual framework that would not be contingent on accidental features of the human perceptual apparatus (e.g. the difference between primary and secondary qualities) or other “subjective” factors.

In fact, in Husserl's final works he returned to these themes and developed them further. In a 1935 essay entitled “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity,” he expanded his critique of naturalism into a sweeping indictment of the recent developments of Western culture in general under the heading of “objectivism.” Objectivism, according to Husserl, is the belief that all genuine knowledge is objective knowledge and that objective knowledge is to be gained only by science after the model of modern natural science as it has developed since Galileo. Questions not accessible to the modern mathematical sciences are taken to be outside the realm of the rational; entities that cannot be captured in or reduced to these terms are taken to be nonexistent. Husserl, by contrast, claims that phenomenology realizes the true telos of Western science that was initiated by the Greeks and reawakened at the beginning of the modern age through its quest for absolute rational grounding of the subject and its activities by means of radical self-reflection. Rather than grounding all other sciences, modern mathematically oriented natural science must itself be grounded in a more radical and basic science, that of pure phenomenology.

In *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl presents an extended and detailed study of precisely how Galilean science emerged against the backdrop of a much broader attempt to capture nature in an all-encompassing rational framework. Husserl traces out how this ideal mathematization arose out of the everyday practice of measuring, then ultimately took on a dynamic of its own so that it came to appear as if nature as the construction of modern natural science bore no inherent relationship at all to human motivations and practices. Modern science involves a kind of subjective self-forgottenness in which human beings have come to take certain tenets about the nature of reality and knowledge for granted that now seem to be exempt from or even nullify the possibility of critical reflection on them. For instance, the assumption that all real knowledge can be or must be empirically verified is not itself an empirical tenet, nor is the modern assumption that all real entities are natural entities. These basic philosophical assumptions arise out of and express a specific worldview that cannot be justified or falsified through the procedures of modern natural science. The name for the ultimate sphere out of which science and all other human practices arise is now termed the “life-world.”
Since it is the source for all other spheres of human activity and cognition, its investigation is the proper object of transcendental phenomenology.

The reference to Galileo and the mathematization of nature in modern science points to another central theme in Husserl’s later work, namely the origin of ideal entities such as logical principles and mathematical entities out of the most basic tendencies in human cognitive life. This topic, the foundation and origin of mathematics and logic, had of course been one of Husserl’s guiding concerns since his earliest work. In the other major published work from Husserl’s later period, *The Formal and Transcendental Logic* (1929), Husserl once again returned to this problem, now not just in regard to arithmetic and its basic operations, nor to certain questions related to the general nature of formal logic, as in the first volume of the *Logical Investigations*; rather, he now tried to show in a very detailed way how the formalization of reason and its operations can result in the discipline of formal logic and its various divisions along with a pure science of manifolds or quantities. He also tried to show how even formal logic, since it necessarily aims at truth, still implicitly refers to and depends on its roots in the life-world out of which it arises. In this work, Husserl also introduces a distinction between apodicticity and adequacy that has far-reaching implications for his own phenomenological project. In his original formulations of the phenomenological method, Husserl had contrasted the apodicticity or certainty of phenomenological analysis under the presupposition of the transcendental reduction with the inherent inadequacy of empirical knowledge about external objects, suggesting that the difference between the two removed any source of uncertainty or error from phenomenological research. However, even nonempirical research such as phenomenological investigations always has absolute universality as part of its very intention, so that the attainment of such apodictic knowledge must at least in principle be reconfirmed over and again by the same researcher at different times and by other members of the community of researchers in order to test its adequacy. This, then, makes phenomenology not only an unending project that must be ever renewed, but also an inherently intersubjective enterprise to be carried out by individuals working in concert with one another, guided by the ideals of truth and self-responsibility.

This brings us to one final predominant theme in Husserl’s later work that also deserves mention. If, on the one hand, phenomenology proceeds through pure reflection on the part of individual subjects, and yet on the other hand, as a genuine science, lays claim to intersubjective validity, then the problem of intersubjectivity and the idea of intersubjective validity will be especially pressing for phenomenology.¹ Husserl’s most extended and best-known treatment of the

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¹ For a discussion of the question of the other in Husserl and Fichte, see the essay by Robert Williams in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*.

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problem can be found in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*, based on a series of lectures he gave at the Sorbonne in 1929 and published only in French translation during his lifetime. The intention of the Fifth Cartesian Meditation is to show that phenomenology is not a solipsistic enterprise. Consistent with his general project of showing how higher-level, more complicated intentions arise from simpler lower-order intentions, Husserl traces out the constitution of intersubjectivity for subjective consciousness. He begins by isolating that stratum of consciousness that is conceivable without any reference to other subjects. By abstracting from everything that involves a commitment to the existence of other subjects and any elements of consciousness that depend on others, Husserl identifies that stratum of conscious life he terms the “sphere of ownness.” Within this primordial sphere, however, Husserl notes there is still a stratum of the world as the correlate of my isolated but ongoing experience, a stratum he calls “nature within ownness,” that is different from the full notion of intersubjectively constituted nature that we intend in our everyday experience. Within this sphere there is also one unique object, namely one’s own lived body (*Leib*) that is the organ of sense impressions and of movement and activity. Even as an isolated individual – if such a thing were empirically possible – one would thus be capable of recognizing objects within the world, of constituting oneself as a unity of body and soul, and of organizing the world in terms of use and value predicates. However, a subject that had constituted the notion of a lived body as a unity of mental and physical nature in his or her own case would also be capable of recognizing other perceivable entities that resemble his or her body in their appearance and behavior. Husserl calls the attribution of mental states to these other bodies on the basis of the observations of general similarities between my own lived body and theirs “pairing.” The apprehension of these entities as lived bodies involves seeing them and their behavior as an expression (*Ausdruck*) of mental states. He refers to this apprehension as “empathy” (*Einfühlung*), although he admits that this term is easily misleading. He also describes it as an “appresentation,” since the specifically subjective side of the other, the other’s first-person awareness as such, is still never given to one directly. One can indeed have genuine and reliable awareness of at least some of another person’s mental states, but only on the basis of some externally observable deed or statement. The experience of the other is therefore said to be founded on, but not reducible to, the physically observable states of his or her body as a material object in the world. In imputing to the other a subjectivity like mine, I also constitute the idea of a world that is the same for us all in spite of different perspectives, an intersubjective nature, and I can envisage myself as an object for others, as part of that intersubjective world. Moreover, it is also possible to constitute on this basis a world of shared values, a cultural world that could ultimately serve as the norm against which all individual beliefs and actions can be measured. Phenomenology as
the realization of the inherent striving of all agents for rationality in the form of beliefs and norms that can be universally justified is thus necessarily an intersubjective enterprise, toward which Husserl viewed his own work as an important, but merely initial, contribution.

This analysis and most especially the reduction to the “primordial sphere” has been much discussed and criticized in subsequent phenomenological and post-phenomenological work, perhaps most notably by Emmanuel Levinas. Many question whether such a reduction is even possible. Others are concerned about the purported priority it seems to give to an isolated subject who is the source of the being of all other subjects. Can the concept of “pairing” do justice to the irreducible otherness of the other? Are community and language not so fundamentally presupposed for the constitution of any subject as such that the very notion of a primordial sphere as the foundation for intersubjectivity reverses the appropriate foundational order? Much of the answer to these questions will have to do with one’s reading of the nature of Husserl’s project in this brief Meditation.

From its beginnings as a theory in the foundations of logic and mathematics and as a method of reflection on the pure contents of the mental life of individual subjects, Husserl’s phenomenology evolves into an all-encompassing research program that reveals the historical and intersubjective origins of the world in which we live and the objects within it. Husserl himself never rejects the centrality of the method of transcendental reduction, nor does he overlook the important foundational role of the simplest elements of conscious life, for example sense perception and an individual’s direct first-person awareness of his or her own mental states. But Husserl’s analyses demonstrate at the same time that the concrete world – the world in which we all live and which provides the basis from which any specialized scientific research, the world from which even phenomenology itself must proceed – is constituted historically and intersubjectively. Later successors to Husserl’s phenomenological project, notably Heidegger, Eugen Fink,5 Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, and Levinas, will attempt to go beyond Husserl by purging his approach and his results of what

5. Eugen Fink (1905–75) was Husserl’s research assistant from 1928 until Husserl’s death in 1938. In Husserl’s final years, he collaborated closely with Fink and took steps to insure that Fink, and not Heidegger, would take his place at the center of the phenomenological research community. Fink also played a crucial role in assisting Father Herman Leo van Breda in the transfer of all of Husserl’s manuscripts to Leuven, Belgium in 1938, and he emigrated to Belgium to continue working with the manuscripts in 1939. Following the German invasion of Belgium, Fink returned to Germany; and, after the war, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Husserl-Archiv in Freiburg in 1950, where he worked until 1971. His critical assessment of Husserl’s phenomenology is described in great detail in Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology, 1928–1938* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). Fink’s interpretation of Husserl had an important influence on later French readers such as Merleau-Ponty and Derrida.
they perceive as undue Cartesian residues in the emphasis on logic, science, perception, theory, and subjective reflection. They consciously acknowledge their debt to the phenomenological method as developed by Husserl, but attempt to take his insights and develop them into a new way of doing philosophy that moves from the sphere of modern philosophy, in which he still located himself, into a new kind of philosophy that overcomes the modern scientifically oriented philosophy of subjective reflection. On this reading, Husserl represents an important transitional figure in the history of continental philosophy, since he stands as a leading and perhaps the last great representative of classical modern philosophy and a key figure in the transition to a philosophy that goes beyond it.

MAJOR WORKS


I. SCHELER’S LIFE AND WORK

Max Ferdinand Scheler was born in Munich on August 22, 1874, and brought up in an orthodox Jewish household. After completing high school in 1894, he started to study medicine, philosophy, and psychology. He studied with Theodor Lipps in Munich, with Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey in Berlin, and with Rudolf Eucken in Jena,1 where he received his doctorate in 1897 with a thesis entitled Beiträge zur Feststellung der Beziehungen zwischen den logischen und ethischen Prinzipien (Contributions to an appraisal of the relations between the logical and ethical principles). Two years later this was followed by his habilitation thesis on Die transzendentale und die psychologische Methode.2 In 1902, Scheler met Edmund Husserl for the first time at a reception in Halle given by Hans Vaihinger (1852–1933), the editor of Kant-Studien. Their discussion mainly turned on the relation between intuition and perception.3 It was a meeting that would prove quite decisive for Scheler. As he was subsequently to write in the preface of Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik, “I owe the methodological consciousness of the unity and sense of the phenomenological

1. Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) was a prominent philosopher and psychologist known today mainly for his work on empathy. Georg Simmel (1858–1918) was an influential sociologist, and Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926) a philosopher, known mainly for his principle of ethical activism, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1908.
2. Scheler’s influences included Bergson, Dilthey, Eucken, Husserl, Kant, Nietzsche, and Pascal.
attitude to the work of Husserl," but as he then also continues, "I take full responsibility for the manner in which I understand and execute this attitude."\footnote{Max Scheler, \textit{Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward a Foundation of an Ethical Personalism}, Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), xi.}

Scheler is notorious for his rather tumultuous private life. In 1899, he converted to Catholicism and married Amélie von Dewitz-Krebs; it was an unhappy marriage that quickly fell apart, allegedly because of Scheler’s many love affairs. In 1905–6, marital problems led to a public scandal that as a result had Scheler’s wife confined in a psychiatric institution, whereas Scheler was forced to relinquish his teaching position in Jena and move to Munich. One consequence of this move was that Scheler was able to join the Munich Phenomenological Circle. This group consisted of students of Lipps (Theodor Conrad, Johannes Daubert, Moritz Geiger, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Alexander Pfänder) who had all been devoted to phenomenology since the publication of Husserl’s \textit{Logical Investigations}. In the meantime, Scheler’s unhappy marriage dragged on, and in 1910, as the result of yet another debacle, where his wife publicly accused Scheler of amoral behavior, Scheler lost his position, and had to begin earning his income as a free lecturer, essayist, and publicist. From 1910 to 1911, Scheler lectured in Göttingen, where he met the Göttingen phenomenologists (including Hedwig Conrad-Martius, Jean Hering, Roman Ingarden, Alexandre Koyré, and Adolf Reinach). Edith Stein was at this point one of his students. In 1912 Scheler finally managed to obtain a divorce, and shortly afterwards he married Märit Furtwängler – the sister of the noted conductor – and left for Berlin.\footnote{The work of many of the phenomenologists mentioned in this paragraph is touched on in the essay by Diane Perpich in this volume.}

Scheler had by then managed to establish himself as a phenomenological voice to count on, and in 1913 he was asked by Husserl to become coeditor of the \textit{Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung}, together with Pfänder, Geiger, and Reinach. It was in this venue that both parts of his \textit{Formalismus} were published in 1913 and 1916, respectively. In 1913 he also published the work \textit{Zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Hass} (later republished in an extended version in 1923 under the better-known title \textit{Wesen und Formen der Sympathie}).

Scheler’s reputation continued to increase and by the end of the First World War he was considered one of the most influential Catholic thinkers in Germany. After a short interim, during which Scheler joined the German Foreign Office as a diplomat in Geneva and The Hague, he was in 1919 invited by Konrad Adenauer – then mayor in Cologne – to become one of the directors of the newly founded Forschungsinstitut für Sozialwissenschaft and at the same time professor of philosophy in Cologne. Shortly after taking up the position, however, Scheler
publicly distanced himself from the Catholic faith. This alienated him not only from his erstwhile supporters in Cologne, but also from many of his phenomenological colleagues who, owing to his influence, had converted to Catholicism. In the same period, Scheler fell in love with a young student, Maria Scheu. In 1923, he divorced his second wife and married Scheu the following year, a move that did little to improve his popularity in Catholic circles. During these years, Scheler’s reputation as a phenomenologist continued to grow; he was the first of the leading phenomenologists to be invited to visit France, in 1924 and again in 1926, and his 1923 text Wesen und Formen der Sympathie was the first work of phenomenology to appear in French translation, published in 1928 as Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l’étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle. In 1928 Scheler was offered the Chair in Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Frankfurt. He accepted the position with pleasure, looking forward to future collaboration with thinkers such as Ernst Cassirer, Karl Mannheim, and Rudolf Otto, but on May 19, 1928, he died suddenly of heart failure. In his eulogy, Heidegger would praise him as “the strongest philosophical force in modern Germany, nay, in contemporary Europe and in contemporary philosophy as such.”

When reading Scheler, one is struck by the scope of his references. It is more wide-ranging than what one will find, for instance, in Husserl or Heidegger. The sources he drew on included not only classics from the history of Western philosophy as well as contemporary empirical research, but also works by figures such as Buddha, Freud, Muhammad, Goethe, Lao Tzu, Darwin, and Tagore.

When Scheler died in 1928, many of his writings remained unpublished. The publication of his posthumous writings commenced in 1933, but the enterprise came to a sudden halt with the rise of Nazism, which suppressed and banned Scheler’s work owing to his Jewish background. Their publication resumed in 1954.

II. PHENOMENOLOGY AS EIDETIC ANALYSIS

Scheler worked on a wide variety of topics, and it is impossible to do justice to them all in a short overview such as this. However, in his late text Die Stellung des Menschen in Kosmos, Scheler writes that the question concerning the ontological status of man had been central to him since the beginnings of his philosophical career, and that he had spent more time on this question than on any

7. For an excellent general introduction, see Angelika Sander, Max Scheler zur Einführung (Hamburg: Junius, 2001).
other. Given Scheler’s recognized status as a phenomenologist and as a pioneer of philosophical anthropology, these two domains will constitute the focal points in the following presentation. I shall start with a brief account of Scheler’s phenomenological methodology, and then in turn discuss his concept of person, his description of the nature of sociality, and the in-depth analysis of expression and empathy found in *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*. This selection, which pays scant attention to his value theory, is motivated by what I take to constitute Scheler’s more enduring contribution, and also reflects the manner in which Scheler was received and discussed by contemporary and subsequent phenomenologists such as Stein, Husserl, Heidegger, Schutz, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

Scheler’s understanding of phenomenology has many affinities with the early reception of Husserl’s writings by the Munich and Göttingen phenomenologists. Scheler took the guiding idea of phenomenology to be the clear distinction between the essential and the existential, between the essence and the fact. He consequently (mis)read Husserl’s phenomenological reduction to be a question of ignoring the *hic et nunc* of objects in order to focus on their essential features. To put it differently, Scheler read Husserl’s phenomenological reduction as an eidetic reduction, thereby disregarding the distinctly transcendental aspects of Husserl’s enterprise. Indeed, rather than seeing phenomenology as a form of transcendental philosophy, Scheler primarily conceived of it as an intuitively based eidetic discipline. For the same reason, Scheler distanced himself from Husserl’s *Ideas I*, which Scheler characterized as a turn toward epistemological idealism and as a curbing of phenomenology to a mere eidetics of consciousness.

Phenomenology is supposed to provide a rigorous intuitive method that will allow for the disclosure of *a priori* structures. This intuitive basis was stressed to such an extent by Scheler that his definition of phenomenology must count as decidedly antithemeneutical. On his account, the aim of phenomenology is to describe the given in as direct, unprejudiced, and pure a manner as possible, thereby allowing for a disclosure of its essence. As he writes in one of his posthumously published writings, phenomenology has achieved its goal when “there is no longer any transcendence and any symbol left.” Indeed, on his view, whereas nonphenomenological experience is experience through or by means of symbols

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9. To illustrate (but see also the concluding section of this overview), of the six thinkers mentioned, the most extensive discussion of Scheler is found in a paper by Alfred Schutz entitled “Scheler’s Theory of Intersubjectivity and the General Thesis of the Alter Ego.”
12. Ibid., 311.
and hence remains a mediated experience that never gives us the things themselves, phenomenological experience is in principle nonsymbolic. It alone yields facts themselves in an immediate and unmediated fashion. In phenomenological experience nothing is meant that is not given and nothing is given that is not meant: phenomenological experience contains no transcendence.\textsuperscript{14}

Scheler’s strength as a phenomenological thinker is undoubtedly to be found in his concrete analyses – in particular in his analyses of emotional life and sociality – rather than in his methodological considerations. It is for this very reason remarkable that he was quite explicit in his rejection and ridicule of what he termed “picture-book phenomenology,” namely, the view that phenomenology should primarily be concerned with various eidetic analyses, and that any overarching systematization and systematic ambition should be avoided since it inevitably would involve distortions of the phenomena to be investigated.\textsuperscript{15}

III. THE CONCEPT OF PERSON

According to Scheler, the task of philosophical anthropology is to show how all specifically human products, abilities, and activities are rooted in the fundamental ontological structures of man.\textsuperscript{16} What then, on his account, uniquely characterizes human existence?

Scheler accepts the classical distinction between inorganic (or inanimate) being on the one hand and living creatures on the other. Whereas inorganic being lacks any kind of individual unity and interiority (\textit{Innesein}) – it is in no way for-itself (\textit{für-sich}) – all living creatures possess these features; they are more than merely objects for external observers. Scheler ultimately distinguishes three different levels of living creatures. At the bottom, we find plants, which although they possess unity and individuality (if you cut a plant in two, you destroy it), and even a certain interiority and expressivity (plants can appear as languishing, vigorous, etc.), lack both consciousness and self-consciousness. Next we find animals, which possess consciousness but which at the same time are bound to the environment. At the top level, we find human beings, who possess both consciousness and self-consciousness, and who in contrast to animals are not caught up in the world, but rather retain a certain distance from it: a distance that also enables them to objectify entities. To put it differently, in order to apperceive the given as objects, it is necessary to distance oneself somewhat from it. The ability to do so is a distinctive feature of human beings. Thus, on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Scheler, \textit{Formalism in Ethics}, 50–51.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, xix.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Scheler, \textit{Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos}, 86.
\end{itemize}
Scheler’s account, among all creatures human beings alone are able to distance themselves from the world and to objectify the world (and themselves). What provides human beings with this ability? The fact that human beings are spiritual creatures. Indeed, what characterizes human beings as human is precisely the presence of spirit (Geist). It is our spirituality that makes our human life highly independent of drives and independent of the attachment to a specific environment. It is our spirituality that allows us to transform and transcend the closed environment and makes us open to the world (weltoffen). As he puts it at one point, man is “the one who can say ‘no’, the ascetic of life, the eternal protestant against all mere reality.”

Scheler next argues that the center from which human beings are able to perform these objectifying acts cannot be a part of the world, but must rather be appreciated as an aspatial and atemporal dimension. Indeed, for Scheler the spiritual center or source of intentional acts – which he also calls the person – is not only not a substance or thing, but is in its core nonobjectifiable. This holds true not only for our own personal being, but also for other persons. We cannot objectify them without losing them as other persons.

Despite his occasional reference to the Kantian idea of a transcendental subject, however, Scheler’s notion of person differs in certain crucial respects. For Scheler, the person is not some posited supra-individual principle behind or outside the immediately given. Rather, the person is the immediate coexperienced unity of experiencing. The person only exists and lives in the accomplishment or performance of intentional acts. Furthermore, every person is individuated as a person, and not merely by virtue of their bodies, their spatio-temporal locations, and the content of experience. Indeed, for Scheler persons are absolute individuals in the sense that they and they alone are individuated in terms of themselves. So far, Scheler’s concept of person might be different from Kant’s but it seems to retain a high degree of formality. However, Scheler also claims that the possession of a fully sound mind is a prerequisite for being a person. On this account, animals, as well as children, madmen, and slaves (!), are not persons. Your thoughts and actions must be bound by a unity of sense, must constitute parts of one meaningful life, if you are to qualify as a person.

17. Ibid., 39.
18. Ibid., 56.
19. Ibid., 80.
20. Ibid., 64, 79.
21. Ibid., 49.
22. Scheler, Formalism in Ethics, 371, 386.
23. Ibid., 476.
You must be the source of your own decisions, feelings, and thoughts; you must enjoy control and mastery over your own body.24

IV. SCHELER ON EMPATHY

Scheler’s work *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1923) is frequently listed as an example of a phenomenological investigation of emotional life. But in addition to presenting us with careful analyses of various emotional phenomena, the work must also be considered a significant contribution to the phenomenology of sociality and social cognition. It is no coincidence that Scheler at the outset states that the problem of how we understand other minds is a foundational problem for the human sciences. It is one that must be resolved if we are to determine the scientific status of history, psychology, sociology, and so on with any degree of adequacy.25

According to Scheler, sociality is not primarily a theoretical matter; rather, it is an essential aspect of our emotional life. Indeed, a fundamental Pascalian claim of Scheler’s is that our emotions are characterized by an *a priori* content and are subject to *a priori* laws, and that one must recognize an *a priori* “order of the heart” or “logic of the heart.”26 It is in connection with his analysis of this emotional *a priori* that Scheler makes the claim that “all morally relevant acts, experiences, and states, in so far as they contain an intentional reference to other moral persons” (acts such as obligation, responsibility, loving, promising, etc.), “refer, by the very nature of the acts themselves, to other people,” without implying that such others must already have been previously encountered in concrete experience (NS 229). Hence our relation to the other is not some empirical fact; on the contrary, the concrete experience of others presupposes an *a priori* relatedness to one another, and simply represents the unfolding of this possibility.27

Scheler elaborates on this by stating that every finite person is as originally a member of a community as he is an individual. A human being does not live a communal life with other persons “from pure accident”; rather, being a (finite) person as such “is just as originally a matter of being … ‘together’” as it is a matter of being-for-oneself.28 Thus, the experience of belonging to a community

is just as fundamental as self-experience and world-experience, and the intention “in the direction of community” exists completely independently of whether or not it finds fulfillment in a contingent experience of others. Scheler illustrates this idea by speaking of an epistemological Robinson Crusoe. Such a figure would be aware of his relatedness to an intersubjective community even if he had never had a concrete experience of others, and, indeed, would possess such an awareness by virtue of his experience of an emptiness or absence or lack in the fulfillment of intentions such as loving, promising, requesting, obeying, and so on, which can only form an objective unity of sense “in conjunction with the possibility of a social response” (NS 235).

Scheler obviously considers the relation between the individual and the community to be essential. But what kind of justification might we have for positing the real de facto existence of a specific other? How is the other given? To answer this question, we need to take a closer look at Scheler’s analysis of empathy. Let us start by considering two groups of cases discussed by Scheler.

Consider first the situation where you see the face of a crying child, but rather than seeing it as expressing discomfort or distress, you see merely a certain distortion of the facial muscles; that is, you basically do not see it as emotionally expressive. Compare this (pathological case) with the situation where you see the same face as emotionally expressive, but without feeling any compassion, that is, while remaining indifferent. And finally consider the situation where you also feel compassion or concern for the child. For Scheler, the last situation counts as a case of sympathy, which he considers an ethically relevant act. But in order to feel sympathy – in order to feel compassion with, say, somebody’s suffering – you need to realize or recognize that the other is indeed suffering. More basic than sympathy is what Scheler terms Nachfühlen, rendered in the following as empathy.29 In short, whereas empathy has to do with a basic understanding of expressive others, sympathy adds care or concern for the other.

29. Unfortunately, Scheler does not stick to a single term when referring to this basic form of understanding. Rather, he uses terms such as Nachfühlen (reproduction of feeling), Nachleben (reproduction of experience), Nacherleben (visualizing of experience), Verstehen (understanding), and Fremdwahrnehmung (perception of other minds) (NS 9, 238). In some of the cases, the English translation might not be ideal, but Scheler himself must also be blamed for the inevitable confusion. How can Nachfühlen and Fremdwahrnehmung refer to one and the same phenomenon? As we shall see in a moment, Scheler rejects the view that our understanding of the emotional experience of others is based on an imitation or reproduction of the emotion in question, but why does he then himself use a term like Nachfühlen? The fact remains, however, that Scheler is quite unequivocal in his rejection of the view that our understanding of the emotional experiences of others requires us to have the same emotion ourselves (NS 9–10), and one must consequently simply note that his choice of terms left something to be desired. For want of a better term, I have decided to use “empathy” as the best way of capturing what Scheler was referring to when he spoke of a basic experience of others.
Now, apart from stressing the difference between empathy and sympathy, the point of Scheler’s example is also to make it clear that it is possible to empathize with somebody without feeling any sympathy (NS 8–9). Just think of the skilled interrogator or the sadist. Sadistic cruelty does not consist merely in failing to notice the other’s pain, but in empathically enjoying it (NS 14).

Consider now a second group of cases. You might enter a bar and be swept over by the jolly atmosphere. A distinctive feature of what is known as emotional contagion is that you literally catch the emotion in question (NS 15). It is transferred to you. It becomes your own emotion. Indeed you can be infected by the jolly or angry mood of others without even being aware of them as distinct individuals. But this is precisely what makes emotional contagion different from both empathy and sympathy. In empathy and sympathy, the experience you empathically understand or sympathetically care for remains that of the other. In both of the latter cases, the focus is on the other, the distance between self and other is preserved and upheld. Another distinctive feature of emotional contagion is that it concerns the emotional quality rather than the object of the emotion. You can be infected by cheerfulness or hilarity without knowing what it is about. This is what makes emotional contagion different from what Scheler calls emotional sharing. Consider the situation where a father and mother stand next to the corpse of a beloved child. For Scheler, this situation exemplifies the possibility of sharing both an emotion (sorrow or despair) and the object of the emotion. But emotional sharing must on its part still be distinguished from both empathy and sympathy. Consider the situation where a common friend approaches the despairing parents. He can empathize or more likely sympathize with their sorrow, without himself experiencing the despair in question, which is why his state of mind differs qualitatively from either of theirs. Indeed their sorrow and his empathy or sympathy are clearly two distinct states. Their sorrow is the intentional object of his empathy or sympathy (NS 12–13). On Scheler’s account, empathy is not simply a question of an intellectual judgment that somebody else is undergoing a certain experience. It is not the mere thought that this is the case; rather, Scheler clearly defends the view that we are empathically able to experience other minds (NS 9). It is no coincidence that Scheler repeatedly speaks of the perception of others (Fremdwahrnehmung), and even entitles his own theory a perceptual theory of other minds (NS 220).

“Empathy” is usually considered the standard translation of Einfühlung, and it so happens that Scheler himself only used the latter term rather sparingly, and, when he did, frequently rather dismissively. However, Scheler’s reservation was mainly due to his dissatisfaction with Lipp's projective theory of empathy, and it is telling that other contemporary phenomenologists, including Stein, also referred to Scheler’s theory of empathy (Einfühlung); see Edith Stein, On the Problem of Empathy, Waltraut Stein (trans.) (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1989), 27.
is a basic, irreducible, form of intentionality that is directed toward the experiences of others. It is a question of understanding other experiencing subjects. But this does not entail that the other’s experience is literally transmitted to us. It does not entail that we share his or her experience, and it does not entail that we ourselves undergo, say, the emotion we observe in the other. It might – as a consequence – but it is not a pre-requisite. We might encounter a furious neighbor and become furious ourselves, but our empathic understanding of our neighbor’s emotion might also elicit a quite different response, namely, the feeling of fear.

To sum up, on Scheler’s account empathy involves neither some kind of analogical inference, nor some kind of projection, simulation, or imitation (NS 12). In fact, Scheler insists that it is necessary to reject the projective theory of empathy in all its forms (NS xlviii), and he is also very dismissive of the attempt to account for the experience of others in terms of some imaginative transformation. In basic empathy, the focus is on the other, on his thoughts and feelings, and not on myself, not on how it would be like for me to be in the shoes of the other (NS 39).

V. ANALOGY AND EXPRESSION

Scheler’s investigation of empathy and social understanding is restricted to the personal level. He is not concerned with the various sub-personal mechanisms that might be involved in interpersonal understanding. His main objection against competing theories seems to be that they are phenomenologically inadequate and that they fail to do justice to our actual experience. On this basis, it might be natural to conclude that his project is exclusively descriptive. It seeks to describe how we experience other minds, but it does not address the normative question concerning the justification or validity of that experience. But this is a mistake. Not only does Scheler provide more systematic arguments against the appeal to analogical inference, but ultimately he also seeks to provide an account of the nature of experience that makes comprehensible how we can experience other minds, and why such an experience can be justified.

According to Scheler, the argument from analogy presupposes that which it is meant to explain. In order for the argument to work, there has to be a similarity between the way in which my own body is given to me, and the way in which the body of the other is given to me. But if I am to see a similarity between, say, my laughing or crying and the laughing or crying of somebody else, I need to understand the bodily gestures and behavior as expressive phenomena, as manifestations of joy or pain, and not simply as physical movements. If such an understanding is required for the argument of analogy to proceed, however, the
argument presupposes that which it is supposed to establish. To put it differently, in some cases we do employ analogical lines of reasoning, but we do so only when we are already convinced that we are facing minded creatures but are simply unsure about precisely how we are to interpret the expressive phenomena in question (NS 240).

In addition, Scheler questions two of the basic presuppositions behind the argument from analogy. First, it assumes that my point of departure is my own consciousness. This is what is at first given to me in a quite direct and unmediated fashion, and it is this purely mental self-experience that is then taken to precede and make possible the recognition of others. One is at home in oneself and one then has to project into the other, whom one does not know, what one already finds in oneself. Incidentally, this implies that one is able to understand only those psychological states in others that one has already experienced in oneself. Second, the argument also assumes that we never have direct access to another person’s mind. We can never experience her thoughts or feelings. We can only infer that they must exist based on that which is actually given to us, namely, her bodily behavior. Although both of these assumptions might seem perfectly obvious, Scheler rejects both. As he points out, as philosophers it is our duty to question the obvious. We should pay attention to what is actually given, rather than letting some theory dictate what can be given (NS 244). On his view, the argument from analogy underestimates the difficulties involved in self-experience and overestimates the difficulties involved in the experience of others (NS 244–6). We should not ignore what can be directly perceived about others and we should not fail to acknowledge the embodied and embedded nature of self-experience. Scheler consequently denies that our initial self-acquaintance is of a purely mental nature, as if it anteceded our experience of our own expressive movements and actions, and as if it took place in isolation from others. He considers such an initial purely internal self-observation a mere fiction.

Scheler also denies that our basic acquaintance with others is inferential in nature. As he argues, there is something highly problematic about claiming that intersubjective understanding is a two-stage process, of which the first stage is the perception of meaningless behavior, and the second an intellectually based attribution of psychological meaning. Scheler argues that in the face-to-face encounter we are neither confronted with a mere body, nor with a pure soul, but with the unity of an embodied mind. He speaks of an “expressive unity” (Ausdruckseinheit), and claims that the notion of behavior is a psychophysically undifferentiated concept. It is only subsequently, through a process of abstraction, that this unity is divided and our interest then proceeds “inwards” toward the merely psychological or “outwards” toward the merely physical (NS 218, 261).
Foreshadowing something that both Sartre and Levinas would later discuss in more detail, Scheler writes that I experience, say, the hostility or love in the expression of another’s gaze long before I can specify the color of his eyes (NS 244). Indeed, on Scheler’s account, our primary knowledge of nature is knowledge of expressive phenomena. He finds this claim corroborated by newborns’ preferential interest for expressive faces and human voices. This knowledge of a living world is taken to precede our knowledge of a dead and mechanical world. So, for Scheler, it is not the case that we first see inanimate objects and then animate them through a subsequent addition of mental components. Rather, at first we see everything as expressive, and then we go through a process of de-animation. Learning is a question of Entseelung (de-animation) rather than Beseelung (animation) (NS 239).

To sum up, Scheler opposed the view according to which our encounter with others is first and foremost an encounter with bodily and behavioral exteriorities devoid of any psychological properties. According to such a view, which has been defended by behaviorists and Cartesians alike, behavior, considered in itself, is neither expressive nor significant. All that is given is physical qualities and their changes. Seeing a radiant face means seeing certain characteristic distortions of the facial muscles. But, as Scheler pointed out, this account presents us with a distorted picture, not only of behavior but also of the mind. It is no coincidence that we use psychological terms to describe behavior and that we would be hard pressed to describe the latter in terms of bare movements. In most cases, it is quite hard (and artificial) to divide a phenomenon neatly into its psychological and behavioral aspect; think, for example, of a groan of pain, a handshake, an embrace, a leisurely stroll. In his view, affective and emotional states are not simply qualities of subjective experience; rather, they are given in expressive phenomena; that is, they are expressed in bodily gestures and actions, and they thereby become visible to others. Instead of attempting to secure an access to the minded life of others through technical detours, he argued that we need a new understanding of the given. If the realm of expressive phenomena is accepted as the primary datum or primitive stratum of perception, the access to the mind of others will no longer present the same kind of problem. What we see is the body of the other as a field expressive of his or her experiences (NS 10). Indeed, on Scheler’s view, expressive phenomena – in particular facial expressions and gestures, but also verbal expressions – can present us with a direct and noninferential experience of the emotional life of others. As he eventually put it:

For we certainly believe ourselves to be directly acquainted with another person’s joy in his laughter, with his sorrow and pain in his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands, with his love in his look of affection, with his
rage in the gnashing of his teeth, with his threats in the clenching of his fist, and with the tenor of his thoughts in the sound of his words. If anyone tells me that this is not “perception,” for it cannot be so, in view of the fact that a perception is simply a “complex of physical sensations,” and that there is certainly no sensation of another person’s mind nor any stimulus from such a source, I would beg him to turn aside from such questionable theories and address himself to the phenomenal facts. (NS 260)

It should by now be clear that Scheler took a solution to the problem of other minds to require a correct understanding of the relation between mind and body. And of course, the mind–body relation in question is not the mind–brain relation. Scheler was not concerned with the search for the neural correlates of consciousness. Rather, he was interested in the relation between experience and expressive behavior, and he obviously took the connection to be intimate and essential. He claimed that a repression of the emotional expression will necessarily lead to a reduction of the felt quality of the emotion (NS 251), and he even postulated the existence of what he called a universal grammar of expression, one that enables us to understand – to some extent at least – the expressions of other species, be it the gasping fish or the bird with the broken wing (NS 11, 82).

Despite his emphasis on the extent to which the life of the mind of others is visible in their expressions, Scheler insisted however that we should not commit the mistake of claiming that all aspects of the experiential life of an individual are equally accessible to others. Whereas we can in many cases intuit and even share the other’s beliefs and emotions, there are, on Scheler’s account, two limitations. On the one hand, we cannot literally share bodily sensations like a stomach ache (NS 255). I can have a similar stomach ache, but I cannot have the very same pain sensation as somebody else. On the other hand, although Scheler obviouslyconcedes that we can learn something about the other from his automatic and involuntary expressions, he also insisted that there is a limit to how far this will get us. If we wish to grasp what Scheler called the intimate spiritual being of the other, that is the essence of his personhood, we need to rely on language and communication. More specifically, Scheler claimed that there will be aspects of the other that will remain concealed or hidden unless the other decides to reveal and communicate it freely (NS 225). Yet, even then, there will remain something ineffable in the other. There is an absolute intimate sphere of foreign personhood that even the act of free communicative intention cannot disclose (NS 66, 219). On some occasions, though, Scheler suggests that love is what can bring us closest to the essence of foreign individuality. As he would say, drives make blind, whereas love makes seeing (NS 71, 160).
VI. SCHELER’S RECEPTION BY AND INFLUENCE ON OTHER PHENOMENOLOGISTS

An early sustained engagement with Scheler’s theory can be found in Stein’s 1916 dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy*. Not surprisingly, her focus is on Scheler’s account of how we come to understand others. Although she does raise critical points, her overall appraisal of his theory is positive, and she certainly takes it to constitute an improvement compared to Lipps’s projective account of empathy.

After Scheler lost his position in 1910, Husserl wrote him a strong letter of reference, stating that Scheler was no second-rate thinker, but a very sharp, independent and scientifically rigorous scholar.30 In his subsequent private correspondence, however, Husserl repeatedly expressed serious reservations about Scheler’s work. Not surprisingly, his main objection concerned methodological issues. In letters to his friend Adolf Grimme (1889–1963) from 1917 and 1918, Husserl complained about Scheler’s alleged attempt to hijack phenomenology for his own purposes, and even described Scheler as a genius of reproduction and secondary originality.31 Indeed Husserl’s main criticism was precisely that Scheler had misunderstood the sense of phenomenology by confusing the phenomenological reduction with the eidetic reduction, thereby missing its true transcendental character in favor of a philosophically naive anthropology.32 In letters to Ingarden from 1927 and 1931, Husserl disputed that Scheler was a true phenomenologist, and made it clear that Scheler and Heidegger were the main targets of his 1931 lecture “Phenomenology and Anthropology” (although Scheler is mentioned only once by name, and Heidegger not at all).33 In this lecture, Husserl referred very critically to the younger generation of German philosophers, who, inspired by Dilthey’s philosophy of life, had turned toward philosophical anthropology and sought to renew philosophy through a focus on concrete existence.

At the beginning of his analysis of being-with (*Mitsein*) in *Being and Time*, Heidegger referred to Scheler’s *The Nature of Sympathy* in support of his claim that a clarification of being-in-the-world leads us to the insight that a subject is never given in isolation from others.34 But most of Heidegger’s discussion of Scheler concerned the latter’s analysis of personhood, in particular his attempt

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to stress the nonobjectifi able character of the person.\textsuperscript{35} According to Heidegger, Scheler failed to think the \textit{being} of the person in a sufficiently radical manner. This criticism is more developed in Heidegger’s 1925 lecture course \textit{History of the Concept of Time}. As we have seen above, for Scheler the person exists in the performance of intentional acts. The person is neither a thing nor a substance. But Heidegger asked for a more positive determination of the being of the person, and argued that Scheler remained silent on this and failed to articulate or develop the concept of performance.\textsuperscript{36}

Of the major phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty was probably the one to appraise Scheler’s work most positively. \textit{Phenomenology of Perception} contains a number of references to Scheler, but Merleau-Ponty’s most extensive reference to Scheler in that book touches on Scheler’s conception of expression and on his criticism of the argument from analogy.\textsuperscript{37} Scheler’s contribution to both of these issues is also taken up in Merleau-Ponty’s lectures on child psychology at the Sorbonne, where Merleau-Ponty, however, added a critical remark. He claimed that Scheler, in order to make the experience of others possible, ended up defending a kind of pan-psychism that led to a denial of the individuation of consciousness and thereby also to a destruction of the very distinction between self and other.\textsuperscript{38} Although Scheler does at one point write that we can take the existence of emotional identifi cation (\textit{Einsfühlung}) – a limit case of emotional contagion – as an indication of the metaphysical unity of all organic life (NS 73–4), Merleau-Ponty’s criticism is nevertheless unjustifi ed, since Scheler is adamant in insisting that the existence of a unity on the level of organic life in no way rules out the \textit{absolute difference} between individual persons (NS 65, 121). Indeed, one of the central fi ndings of Scheler’s analysis of empathy was precisely that it presupposes the difference between self and other.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 44.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, \textit{Merleau-Ponty à la Sorbonne} (Grenoble: Cynara, 1988), 41–4.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Merleau-Ponty’s criticism is nevertheless interesting since it throws an illuminating light on one of Merleau-Ponty’s own famous claims, found in \textit{Signs}, where he writes: “The solitude from which we emerge to intersubjective life is not that of the monad. It is only the haze of an anonymous life that separates us from being; and the barrier between us and others is impalpable. If there is a break, it is not between me and the other person; it is between a primordial generality we are intermingled in and the precise system, myself–the others. What ‘precedes’ intersubjective life cannot be numerically distinguished from it, precisely because at this level there is neither individuation nor numerical distinction” (\textit{Signs}, Richard C. McCleary [trans.] [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964], 174).
\end{itemize}
Scheler's application of phenomenology to areas such as the emotional and affective domain, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy of religion was instrumental in making phenomenology known and appreciated outside academia. Indeed, in the period between Husserl's Ideas I (1913) and Heidegger's Being and Time (1927) – when neither of these thinkers published any major works – Scheler counted in the public eye as the most prominent phenomenologist.\textsuperscript{40} Although Scheler was not a very systematic thinker, he proved a source of inspiration for many contemporaries, including neurologist Paul Schilder (1886–1940), physician and physiologist Viktor von Weizsäcker (1886–1957), psychiatrists Kurt Schneider (1887–1967), Viktor Frankl (1905–97), Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966), psychologist F. J. J. Buytendijk (1887–1974), and sociologists Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985) and Arnold Gehlen (1904–76).\textsuperscript{41}

**MAJOR WORKS**


\textsuperscript{40} Wolfgang Henckmann, _Max Scheler_ (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 232.

\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, Gehlen argued that Scheler's _Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos_ constituted the point of departure for modern philosophical anthropology; "Rückblick auf die Philosophie Max Schelers," in _Max Scheler im Gegenwartsgegeschichte der Philosophie_, Paul Good (ed.) (Bern: Francke, 1975), 188.
Held by many to be the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century (and by others as an obscure philosopher whose involvement with National Socialism only highlighted the flaws of his philosophy), Martin Heidegger exercised, and continues to exercise, a deep fascination and considerable influence over generations of students and philosophers (Hannah Arendt, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Jonas, Leo Strauss, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas, to name only a few). His personal and philosophical style was entirely new, and his understanding of the history, the aim, and the nature of philosophy nothing short of revolutionary. To this day, and despite the roughly eighty volumes of his Complete Works already published, it is his third book – Being and Time (1927) – that remains his most famous work. The reason for its success lies in the fact that it was the result of ten years of relentless and groundbreaking philosophical activity, carried out mostly in a series of lecture courses and seminars between 1916 (the year his previous work, in fact his habilitation dissertation, was published) and 1926. This is all the more remarkable in that the work in question was – and remains – incomplete. Its incompleteness was due partly to the sudden pressure under which Heidegger came to publish the results of his research and philosophical questioning in order to obtain a Chair at the University of Freiburg. More fundamentally, though, it was the
sign that the project laid out in the book – and characterized as “fundamental ontology” – however groundbreaking, could not succeed on its own terms, and needed to be revised. This realization, in turn, forced Heidegger’s thought into a new beginning, and triggered an extraordinary burst of philosophical creation in the 1930s and 1940s. By following the itinerary of Heidegger’s thought from his early years as a student to the publication of *Being and Time* and its immediate aftermath, we shall see how he arrived at the following conclusions, which are the central theses of his *magnum opus*: first, that the one and only question that philosophy always presupposes, but is never able to make explicit or answer adequately, is the question of being (*die Seinsfrage*), or the difference between beings (*das Seiende*) and being (*das Sein*) – a difference Heidegger also refers to as the ontico-ontological difference; second, that in order to be addressed properly, and solved, the question of being must be formulated in terms of *time* – time is the key to understanding what it means to be, not just for ourselves, but for all “beings.” It was only by understanding being in terms of *time*, and by transforming classical ontology into onto-chronology, that Heidegger was able to revolutionize philosophy. But this is a revolution that occurred after many years of hard work and a series of breakthroughs.

I. THE STUDENT YEARS (1909–15)

(a) From theology to philosophy

Born in the quiet, rural, and conservative Swabian town of Messkirch, and into a modest, Catholic family, Heidegger gained access to secondary and higher education through the material and financial support of the Catholic Church. He was destined for the priesthood (his father was the sexton of the Church of St. Martin). His Catholicism, and his complex and tormented relation with it, should not be underestimated. He attributes his early interest in philosophy, and in the question that was to guide him through the writing of his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time*, to the reading in 1907 of Franz Brentano’s doctoral thesis, *On the Manifold Senses of Being according to Aristotle* (1862). If, as Aristotle claimed, we can rightly say of all the things that are (of “beings” or *das Seiende*) that they are in different ways, and that what it means for them to be varies in each instance (*to on legethai pollakos*), according to meanings or “categories” that we can list (being as “substance,” “accident,” “truth,” “actuality,” “potentiality,” etc.),

*2. For a discussion of Heidegger’s work following the period covered by this essay, see the essay by Dennis J. Schmidt in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
might it be possible to go further still and identify a single, unifying meaning of being (Sein) itself? And could this question be the question of philosophy? Also important for Heidegger at that time was the discovery of a book entitled Vom Sein: Abriss der Ontologie (1896) by Carl Braig, a Freiburg theologian who taught Heidegger a few years later. The reading of Brentano and Braig was key in introducing Heidegger to a puzzlement regarding what he later called the “question of being” (die Seinsfrage) and to the problematic of intentionality as a way of addressing it.

Between 1909 and 1911, Heidegger studied theology and philosophy at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Freiburg in preparation for the archdiocesan priesthood. In the winter semester of 1911–12, he withdrew from the Department of Theology and the Theological Seminary for health reasons and abandoned his career plans for the priesthood. He attended classes in mathematics (in analytic geometry of space, differential and integral calculus, algebraic analysis, and advanced algebra), experimental physics and chemistry, but also in logic and epistemology, epistemology, and metaphysics (with the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert), the history of philosophy, theology (dogmatic theology, Gospel of John), Hellenic mystery religions, and art history, before deciding to dedicate himself entirely to philosophy. In July 1913, he obtained his doctorate with Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus (The doctrine of judgment in psychologism). Immediately thereafter (August 1913), he applied to the Freiburg Archdiocesan Chancellery Office for a grant in order “to dedicate himself to the study of Christian philosophy and to pursue an academic career” through work on the habilitation and license to teach in German universities as a lecturer (Privatdozent). He was awarded a scholarship for two years with the expectation that he “would remain true to the spirit of Thomistic philosophy.” In 1915, he submitted his habilitation thesis Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus (The doctrine of categories and meaning according to Duns Scotus), directed by Rickert.4

(b) Phenomeno-logical investigations

After his early encounter with the works of Brentano and Braig, and his initial puzzlement concerning the manifold meaning of being, Heidegger seemed to be moving in a different direction. He devoted his initial investigations, written under the influence of Husserl’s Logical Investigations and the neo-Kantian

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4. Both of Heidegger’s theses are now published in volume one of the collected works, Gesamtausgabe, hereafter cited as GA followed by the volume and page or section number (indicated by §). In cases where an English translation is available, the English page references will follow the German page references.
School of Baden (of Emil Lask, Rickert, and Wilhelm Windelband, in particular), to problems of judgment, categories, and meaning: in short, problems of logic. A closer look at those early works, however, enables one to see how they in fact prepared the way for the type of questioning that eventually led to the publication of Being and Time by focusing on the status and origin of meaning as such. Where is the sphere or layer of meaning to be located? What should we attribute it to? What is it a matter for? Throughout his early period, Heidegger focuses on the question of judgment. Why judgment? Because it is through judgments or propositions that we know, and that the existing world makes sense: meaning is a prerequisite to knowledge. For Heidegger, logic is not the formal, symbolic logic of Frege and Russell – a conception that, in his mind, is too limited – but the study concerning “the conditions of knowing in general.” In other words, logic is the “theory of theory,” the “doctrine of science” (Wissenschaftslehre), or the science of the “primally theoretical” (Urtheoretisches) (GA 1, 23). Today, we would call it epistemology. Inasmuch as they deal with the conditions of knowledge, or truth, judgments constitute the “core” of logic, or its “archetype” (Urgebilde) (GA 1, 268). It is where meaning originates. Later on, as we shall see, Heidegger will reject that idea, and argue that life, not judgment, is the original source of meaning.

It is important to emphasize the fact that, following Husserl’s critique of psychologism in the Prolegomena to Logical Investigations, Heidegger understands judgments not as psychic acts, or subjective representations, but as purely logical acts. Naturally, Heidegger writes, judgments involve a synthesis of representations. As such, they can be seen as psychic acts: the act of judging is a fleeting lived experience (Erlebnis) that comes and goes. Yet what distinguishes judgments from other representations is their reference to the true–untrue distinction (GA 1, 30). Now this distinction is one that we can attribute to neither our representations nor our volitions: if judgments, or propositions, were to be true only so long as the act of judging lasted, then there would be no truth in the first place. If, following Scotus, we can rightly claim that the ens logicum is an ens rationis, or an ens in anima, we cannot reduce it to a psychic reality (GA 1, 277). Translated into Husserlian, phenomenological language, Scotus’s formulation means that the noematic sense or correlate of intentionality obviously cannot be distinguished from consciousness; equally, though, it means that it is not simply contained within consciousness, as a part is contained in a whole (GA 1, 277). What is expressed or intended in the judgment is something independent

of subjective experience. It is what §11 of Husserl’s First Investigation refers to as the meaning (Bedeutung) of the judgment, and what Scotus called its significatio (GA 1, 328).

We must distinguish, therefore, between two aspects of the judgment, which are always intertwined: the judgment as ideal unity, or as Bedeutung; and the real judgment, the actual proposition that we can hear or read. Whereas psychology may have something to say about the latter, it has nothing to say regarding the former, which requires the construction of a “doctrine of meaning” (Bedeutungslehre), or, to use the Scholastic terminology, a tractatus de modi significandi. A “pure” logic only, and not, for example, a psychology, or a metaphysics, as Scotus made amply clear, can fulfill such an aim: insofar as the ens logicum is an ens rationis, it is not an ens naturae, that is, a natural or real thing, whether sensible or supra-sensible. It is autonomous with respect to the subjective (psychological) as well as the objective (real or actual) sphere. “Meaning,” in that sense, refers neither to the psycho-physical act of judging – to the manner, that is, in which the act of knowledge is produced (for that is what psychology does) – nor to something real (das Wirkliche, die Existenz), but to what Husserl called the Sachverhalt (the content) of judgment, that is, its truth or cognitive character. This content, Heidegger goes on to explain, following this time Hermann Lotze, is what “holds” or “values” (gilt) objectively, or with binding “validity” (Geltung): it is an atemporal mode of being that expresses a truth independent of our time-bound existence, our statements and thoughts, and the objects that we usually discuss (GA 1, 22). We need to emphasize, at this point, the sharp distinction that Heidegger draws between “meaning,” “truth,” and “validity” as the object of logic, and “reality,” “existence,” and “actuality” as the object of the empirical sciences, and psychology in particular. The answer to the question regarding the meaning of being will require the convergence of those two opposed realms, and the reconciliation of logos and being in onto-logy.

Heidegger’s habilitation dissertation reveals two traits that will remain decisive for his entire thought. The first, borrowed from Hegel, whom Heidegger quotes at the outset, is that philosophy and the history of philosophy are not two separate disciplines. In fact, the history of philosophy is the only way into

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6. Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817–81) made important contributions to the emerging project of neo-Kantian epistemology, especially in connection with the concept of validity. In his Logik, book III, §316, Lotze establishes a key distinction between being (or actuality), becoming (or events), and valuing (which applies to judgments). Propositions are neither actual, existing beings, nor events, but validities. Validities are themselves purely logical entities, as opposed to psycho-physiological acts. As a result, many subsequent philosophers, including Heidegger, credited Lotze with helping to forge one of the earliest criticisms of psychologism.

philosophy itself. While philosophy is something for the present, there is something forever present about great thinkers of the past. The second trait concerns the status of logic, language, and meaning. What Heidegger saw in Scotus, and especially in the “speculative grammar” (*grammatica speculativa*) that, at the time, scholars (wrongly) attributed to Scotus, is an investigation into the conditions of possibility of language and sense in general. In other words, Heidegger read Scotus as a proto-Husserlian who had developed a “theory of the forms of meaning,” or a “logic of sense” very close to Husserl’s “pure logical grammar.” Scotus’s logic is not purely syllogistic, that is, concerned with the art of formal demonstration, as in Aristotle. Rather, it is akin to what Husserl characterizes as a “formal apophantic.” It is the part of logic that deals with the *a priori* laws of sense and that, as such, precedes the art of proof, or the logic of consequence (of reasoning). It is concerned with sense in its opposition to nonsense, and not to counter-sense. With the logic of sense, we arrive at the most primordial layer of logic, already developed by Husserl in his Fourth Investigation.

But before dealing with that logic in the second part of his habilitation, Heidegger deals with the doctrine of categories. In doing so, he comes closer to the question that will eventually shape his *magnum opus*. Toward the very beginning of the first chapter, he remarks that Scotus puts his finger on a decisive feature of our relation to the world in general, as a world made of objects, or things. Of an object in general, irrespective of the categories with which we can describe it, we can say that it is something, or that it *is*. No doubt influenced by Husserl’s Sixth Investigation, and by his account of categorial intuition, Heidegger notes how we have all experienced having before us something, being aware of a presence, before actually knowing whether it is a substance or an accident, before being able to attribute a more precise categorial determination to the thing in question. In other words, before our intellectual gaze has been able to identify what is actually given in experience, something *has been* given. This means that we grasp something intuitively, prior to any determination of a categorial nature, or, better said perhaps, that we have a categorial *intuition* of things. Scotus calls this “primary object” “being” (*Ens*): *Ens*, or being-ness, is what is common to all things (*primum objectum est ens ut commune omnibus*). *Ens*, therefore, characterizes the feature that remains throughout the objective sphere: it is the category of all categories, or the primal category (*Urkategorie*). It precedes even the categories of unity (being-as-one) and veracity (being-as-true), that is, the idea that for something to be, it has to be one, and for it to be truly something, it needs to be an object of knowledge, or a “validity” in the sense spoken of above. Such is the reason, also, why scholasticism, and Scotus himself, refer to *Ens* as the *Transcendens* pure and simple. But can we say anything more of this *Ens*, more, that is, than the fact that it characterizes what is common to everything? Of *Ens*, can we say something other than the fact that it is the most
general, and the most transcendent? Aristotle did not think so, and Scotus seems to agree with him: as soon as we ask something about this Ens, we ascribe to it something else; we understand it as being-ness in the sense of unity, veracity, goodness, and so on. In other words, we associate it with other Transcendentia (Unum, Verum, Bonum, etc.), which can be seen as quasi-properties of Ens, but which are not as originary as Ens itself. We clarify Ens, but we also lose it in its originarity. Even in the case of esse as verum esse, in the case of the copula as the vehicle of truth, the category does not coincide entirely with the object in its primitive or raw givenness. There has to be more to this Ens than meets the eye, and more than what the doctrine of categories has been able to express in its long history. There has to be a sense of Ens, or esse, that is not reducible to the senses of esse expressed in the categories. Yet what that excess might consist of, what that Urkategorie might be, is something that Heidegger is not in a position to discover in 1915.

It is only after engaging systematically and at length with Aristotle in the 1920s that Heidegger became fully aware of the nature of the problem, and came to terms with the metaphysical presuppositions underlying Scotus’s own position. Aristotle was on the right track when he identified ousia, or beingness, as the unifying sense of being. Ousia is the name forged after the present participle of the verb einai, to be; the Latin essentia (from the infinitive esse) translates it literally. In and of itself, this category does not designate much. It is only when it is interpreted further as parousia, or praes-ens, that it becomes meaningful. Presence, Aristotle argues, is the primordial meaning of being: what is first and foremost what is present. To the extent that this solution will influence an entire philosophical tradition, if not the whole of Western thought, Heidegger argues that the metaphysics inherited from Aristotle is a metaphysics of presence. But presence, he adds, is not the ultimate or most fundamental meaning of being. It actually presupposes a more hidden meaning, which it cannot access, namely, time. The meaning of being as presence presupposes the present as the origin of time. But this privileging of the present is precisely what metaphysics cannot think: it is the unthought of metaphysics, that is, its most fundamentally ingrained presupposition. Such is the reason why, in the end, Heidegger calls for the “deconstruction” (Destruktion, Abbau) of metaphysics, and for the reconstruction of philosophy as fundamental ontology. What metaphysics takes to be the origin of time, namely, the present, and the fundamental meaning of being, namely, presence, turns out to be only a secondary and derivative mode of what Heidegger calls the essence, or the temporalizing, of time. Time, in other words, is the key to solving the mystery of being or presence in general, the underlying and unifying phenomenon behind all the senses of being that Aristotle – and the entire philosophical tradition – sought (but failed) to discover in his Metaphysics. Time is the fundamental phenomenon, or the primordial event.
The first murmurs of Heidegger’s own voice, and of what will become his question, can be heard in the conclusion to the book on Scotus. There, he claims that problems of logic must be envisaged within a broader context. In the long term, he writes, philosophy cannot do without what is after all its proper domain, namely, “Metaphysics” (GA 1, 348). Is judgment the ultimate site of meaning and truth, the key to understanding the Aristotelian question regarding the many senses of being, or does philosophy need to develop a metalogic that would reveal the ground of logic itself? In the conclusion to his book, Heidegger hints at what that ground could be when he writes that philosophy is “without force” when it is cut off from “life” and when he calls for a “teleological and metaphysical interpretation of consciousness” (GA 1, 352). It is all quite vague and very programmatic, but the spirit in which those final comments are made will carry Heidegger all the way to the publication of Being and Time.

Between 1915 and 1919, Heidegger did not make much progress with respect to his earlier work. Those were the difficult years of the war. In 1916, Heidegger met Elfride Petri, a Protestant, whom he married in 1917, thus bringing the plans for priesthood to an effective end. In 1916, Husserl had arrived in Freiburg, and began to collaborate with the young philosopher only a year later, despite Heidegger’s eagerness to establish a working relationship with the founding father of phenomenology. That same year, Heidegger was called up for basic training as a reservist and received further training as airman in meteorology. He resumed his teaching in 1919.

II. FROM LOGIC TO ONTOLOGY (1919–23)

In 1919 Heidegger broke with what, in a letter to his friend from the early 1910s, Father Engelbert Krebs, he called “the system of Catholicism.” By that he meant the system of the Scholastics. Instead, he turned toward the more personal and passionate Christianity of Paul, Augustine, Luther, and Kierkegaard. In 1919, too, he became Husserl’s assistant, and began to lecture extensively on phenomenology in connection with questions of value, of intuition and expression; with religion and the religious life; with historical figures such as Descartes, Augustine, and the Neoplatonists or, more importantly still, Husserl himself (Logical Investigations) and Aristotle. It is the teaching on Aristotle that struck the greatest chord with his audience, and gave him a national reputation,

8. The letter in question can be found in Martin Heidegger, Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to “Being and Time” and Beyond, John van Buren (ed.) (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 69–70.
which resulted in an appointment as Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Marburg in 1923.

Theodore Kisiel, one of the most prominent interpreters of Heidegger, dates Heidegger’s first breakthrough to his topic from 1919, and specifically from the “war-emergency semester” lecture course (GA 56/57). In that lecture course, and very much as a response to claims made by others at the time, Heidegger begins by saying what philosophy is not. Contrary to what Jaspers argues, philosophy is not a worldview. And contrary to what the Marburg neo-Kantians, such as Ernst Cassirer, Herman Cohen, or Paul Natorp, argue, philosophy is not mere Erkenntnistheorie, or epistemology. In fact, the criticism aimed at the latter view is a criticism of Heidegger’s own, earlier position. To the first, Heidegger responds that philosophy is a rigorous science, and the primordial science. To the second, he says that philosophy is the science not of the theoretical, and of the existing theoretical sciences, but of the pretheoretical. As we saw, in his very early work, Heidegger himself began by restricting questions of truth and meaning to the theoretical sphere. He now grants that it is easier and more practical to analyze them in that context, where they are universally valid. Mostly, though, “preference for the theoretical is grounded in the conviction that this is the basic level that grounds all other spheres in a specific way and that is manifested when one speaks, for example, of moral, artistic, or religious ‘truth.’”

It is this assumption he now wants to challenge. The theoretical, it is assumed, colors all other domains of value, and does so all the more easily when it is itself conceived as a value, and the highest value. But, Heidegger claims, “this primacy of the theoretical must be broken, not in order to proclaim the primacy of the practical [in the sense of the ethical] … but because the theoretical itself and as such refers back to something pretheoretical.”

What, then, is this pretheoretical ground on which philosophy needs to focus? How can there be “meaning” at a pretheoretical, precategorial level? And how can that ground be accessed scientifically? Let me begin by addressing the latter question. What allows the discourse of the pretheoretical to be “scientific” is phenomenology. Since the scientificity of philosophy cannot be derived from the exact or natural sciences, or from the theoretical, which presuppose the very object philosophy sets out to analyze, it must be of its own making. Phenomenology, with its attentiveness to the things themselves, its methodological procedures and principle of “intuition,” which are not borrowed from the empirical sciences, or mathematics, is the ideal tool to develop such a science.

10. GA 56/57, 59/50.
11. Ibid.
It gives us eyes (or the conceptual tools) to “see” a lived experience in the very way in which it is lived, or experienced, that is, without adding to or subtracting anything from it, without transforming it in any way. Phenomenology, then, situates itself at the level at which the experience takes place.

As for the first set of questions, Heidegger sketches an answer in just one brief section (GA 56/57, §14) of his lecture course. It is remarkably programmatic, and can be seen as laying the ground for what will eventually become *Being and Time*. In that section, Heidegger no longer opposes “meaning” and “existence.” He now understands being, and the being of beings around us, in terms of meaning, and meaning itself in terms of our own living. It is no coincidence if, in that same lecture course, Heidegger, for the first time, raises the question of the “various senses” in which “there is” something (§13): “being” now refers to the various ways in which “beings” are present or manifest before they are understood theoretically. Heidegger invites his audience to undergo a phenomenological exercise by focusing on what they actually see, or on what he, as a lecturer, actually sees when looking at the lectern in the lecture hall. Do I see, he asks, “brown surfaces, at right angles to one another?” Or do I see “alargish box with another smaller one set upon it?” In fact, he replies, I see neither. What I see is “the lectern at which I am to speak,” and I see it right away, “in one fell swoop, so to speak.” I see it in “a certain orientation, an illumination, a background.” Naturally, he adds, “if a farmer from deep in the Black Forest” were to be led into the lecture room, he would have a different experience of the lectern. But he still would not see it “as a box, an arrangement of boards.” He would see it as the place where the lecturer stands, from which he teaches. In other words – and this is the decisive conclusion – he would see the object as “fraught with meaning.” Even someone culturally alien to the world of European universities, such as “a Negro from Senegal,” would still see the lectern as something meaningful. “Even if he saw the lectern simply as a bare something that is there, it would have a meaning for him, a moment of signification.” He would relate it immediately, and pretheoretically, to what he is familiar with. And even if he could not manage to make any sense of it, this would still testify to the fact that he, like everyone else, is caught up in a meaningful world. And that is the point: everything we see or experience, we see or experience as, or in terms of, something else – our own world, our own lived experience (*Erlebnis*), our own history, and so on. Meaning is first and foremost worldly, and not discursive. This “seeing as” is what, later on,¹² Heidegger will call the “hermeneutical as,” in order to distinguish it from the “apophantical,” or discursive “as,” which is the “as” he had been analyzing up until then in the context of his logical investigations. What is so crucial about it is the fact that it signals a layer of meaning,

and a primordial one, that precedes any judgment or proposition regarding the world. It signals an originary layer of meaning that falls outside the operation of *Geltung* in which he had been considering it hitherto. Meaning turns out to be something much more, and quite literally, mundane: it is a decisive feature of the world as *my* world (*Welt*), or my environment (*Umwelt*). Everything, Heidegger concludes in that section, “signifies.” And he adds, in what constitutes a remarkable revision of the position he held in his first two books: “It is everywhere the case that ‘it worlds’ [es *weltet*], which is something different from ‘it values’ [es *wertet*]” (§14). In other words, meaning is not so much a function of the judgments that we express about the world, and the “validities” they hold, as it is the result of our intimate and pretheoretical understanding of the world. There will be no turning back from that breakthrough.

What Heidegger calls the pretheoretical, therefore, is life (*Leben*) as it is lived and experienced (*Erlebnis*), or life as a meaningful nexus that is also a *world*. In that respect, every theoretical attitude, including that of the various natural and formal sciences, constitutes an abstraction from life and world thus understood. As such, it amounts to a process of de-vitalization, or de-vivication (*Ent-lebnis*) in which what is known is removed (*ent-fernt*), lifted out of the actual experience, and objectified (§15). The “reality” of the theoretical attitude is essentially different from that of philosophy: it is a reality of “mere things” with “thingly” qualities, such as color, hardness, extension, weight, and so on.13 “Thingliness” is precisely what can be abstracted from, or distilled out of, the environment and the world of living “significations.” This is how “significations” are turned into “things,” and how the primordial sphere of the “it worlds” becomes a collection of fixed and de-vitalized qualities (§17). In the face of such a transformation, which has permeated philosophy itself, the task of philosophy becomes one of returning to life in its continuity and unity, and of using phenomenology as a way of being in “absolute sympathy with life,”14 describing its basic features. If the operation of theory is described as a “process,” the life that is to become the theme of philosophy becomes an event (*Ereignis*), both in the sense of something dynamic and something that, because I am closest to it, because I am it, can be appropriated (*er-eignet*), but precisely not as an object (§15). The categories of philosophy must not reflect personal views or opinions about the world, but fundamental structures of existence (“existentials”) and actual, concrete possibilities of life. They are not abstract categories, empty generalities that we would somehow impose on life, or “logical forms” disconnected from the reality of factual life.

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13. In the 1920s, and in *Being and Time* especially, Heidegger will designate that reality as *Vorhandenheit*, or objective presence.
14. GA 56/57, 110/92.
From then onward, it becomes a question of describing that life, as rigorously and methodically as possible. This is what Heidegger does throughout the 1920s, sometimes directly, but often indirectly, through a series of interpretations of Aristotle, and using the resources of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Heidegger’s views from that period are perhaps most synthetically formulated in a short text from 1922, devoted to his “phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle,” and written at Natorp’s request for his appointment as an associate professor at the University of Marburg. “Phenomenology” and “hermeneutics” are now brought together to secure an access to the problem of life as the very problem of philosophy. To interpret, for Heidegger, is to engage in an activity of exegesis or explication (Auslegung) and comprehension (Vernehmen). The task of the interpreter is to see. And this seeing is directed toward a particular matter (Sache). Heidegger’s concept of hermeneutics is essentially intuitionist, and very close to the ideal formulated by Husserl. “Seeing” or, more generally, “intuition” is the access to the Sache, and the guarantee of its givenness: from a phenomenological perspective, a matter or a phenomenon is “given,” and so manifest as a phenomenon when it is grasped in an intuition. The ideal of intuition, and of hermeneutics, is transparency – not just, and not primarily, of philosophical texts, but of life itself. Following Wilhelm Dilthey, Heidegger claims that the ultimate goal of hermeneutics is to render the interpreter transparent to himself as life, and this means as a temporal, historical reality. Hermeneutics is directed toward the living present, or the “fundamental mobility” of life. The emphasis on seeing, intuition, and the living present means that hermeneutics is phenomenological through and through. Heidegger’s own version and practice of hermeneutics is inseparable from his commitment to phenomenology.

In the very first sentence of the so-called “Natorp Report,” Heidegger describes his investigations as a contribution “to the history of ontology and logic.” Ontology is now explicitly named as the object of philosophy, alongside logic. But the logic in question, Heidegger tells us, is no longer the logic of his early student years: it is now a “logic of the heart,” a “logic of philosophy,” or a “logic of thought” directed toward “pretheoretical and practical” existence. It is, in other words, a logic of concrete, “factual” life (das faktische Leben), or “existence” (Dasein). If ontology designates the nature and object of philosophy (the being of factual life as the source and foundation of knowledge in general), logic designates the concepts or categories with which we can grasp that object in its very vitality and facticity. Philosophy is now understood as fundamental ontology, and more specifically as “the phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity.”

15. Heidegger, Supplements, 111.
16. Ibid., 122.
17. Ibid., 121.
In that respect, Heidegger’s so-called “Natorp Report” can be seen as the first, embryonic version of *Being and Time*.

Factual life points, first of all, to the fact that we are always and from the start ex-posed to, or oriented toward, something (*das Aussein-auf-etwas*). This, according to Heidegger, is the fundamental meaning of intentionality. But because this primordial and irreducible relation is pretheoretical, and because there is no interiority into which it can withdraw, Heidegger no longer calls it “consciousness” (*Bewußtsein*), preferring instead to call it “existence” (*Dasein*). Dasein, Heidegger says in *Being and Time*, is essentially ecstatic: existence designates the essence of who we are (GA 2, 12). That toward which we are oriented or thrown is the “world” (*Welt*). It is only as factual life, or as being-in-the world, that human life can be distinguished from inert, lifeless presence, but also from the rest of biological life: on the one hand, my being is one that I must continue to be, it is an inescapable “having-to-be” (*Zu-sein*); on the other hand, it is a “being-able-to-be.” Whereas the former points to something like the necessity of existence (so long as I am, I must continue to be), the latter points to its freedom (my being is a *Sein-können*, or a “being-able-to-be”). The ecstatic nature of existence, he will go on to say in the 1920s, and in *Being and Time* especially, is revealed in the following fundamental traits, known as “existentials”: first, Dasein has the character of being thrown outside itself and into the world; second, Dasein is always ahead of itself, projecting itself into a world of possibilities, constantly anticipating itself; finally, Dasein is always alongside other beings, including other Dasein, and thus always in a world that is shared. “Thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*), “projection” (*Entwurf*), and “being-alongside” (*Sein bei*) are the three basic existentials.18

Heidegger describes the unity of factual life, or of the three existentials, as “concern,” or “care.” With this word, he wishes to characterize the “fundamental mobility” (*Grundbewegtheit*) of factual life.19 We human beings are in such a way that we are “concerned” about our own being. This amounts to saying that our being is always at issue in the fact and the manner of our own being. We are concerned with ourselves. The concern of life is directed toward life itself. Yet to the extent that life is essentially factual, that is, always open to something, its concern is directed at the world. As a result, the movement of caring is characterized by the fact that factual life goes about its dealings (*Umgang*) with the world. And the world itself is always there, in this or that way, as having been taken up or addressed and claimed (*logos*) in care in one way or another. There are many ways in which factual life can be concerned about the world: it cares about needs, jobs, peace, tranquility, survival, pleasures, practical as

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18. GA 2, §§12, 29, 31.
well as theoretical knowledge, and so on. Every way of caring about the world amounts to a certain understanding of it: life moves itself in a horizon that is already understood, transmitted, reworked, or reshaped. What Heidegger calls “circumspection” (Umsicht) is the way in which life for the most part “sees” its world: its world is already understood on the basis of perspectives, priorities, aspirations, and specific circumstances. From the start, the world is organized as an Umwelt, an environmental milieu, and not as a theoretical (especially mathematical) “reality” that stands opposed; this is to say, not as “nature” in the modern, scientific sense that we have come to take for granted, and which continues to inform today’s debates around realism and idealism, naturalism, and the philosophy of mind. No doubt the world can be envisaged from the point of view of its “look” (eidos), or “form” (idea), in which case it becomes an object of wonder and curiosity – an object of scientific investigation. At the most primordial level, though, the meaning of the world is pretheoretical: we do not understand and navigate the world as a result of its theoretical representation, but of our pragmatic comportment toward it. Our understanding (Verstehen) of the world is primarily practical.

Yet, precisely to the extent that the movement of caring is a living inclination toward the world, life tends to lose itself in the world, to be sucked into it. It takes the form of a propensity toward becoming absorbed in the world, and “forgetting” its own being (and freedom, as was suggested a moment ago) in this absorption. There is, in other words, a basic factual tendency in life toward falling away from itself (Abfallen), a fall through which life detaches itself from itself and falls into the world. Life is naturally decline (Verfallen) and falling into ruin or self-ruin (Zerfall seiner selbst). Terminologically, Heidegger writes, we can describe this basic characteristic of the movement of caring as “the inclination of factual life toward falling” or, in abbreviated form, simply as “falling into …” (Verfallen an). Verfallen is not a mere occurrence, something that happens occasionally to life. Rather, it is a how of life itself, a basic “intentional” modality, or a fundamental manner in which life is open to the world. In fact, this propensity (Hang) is “the most intimate fate [Verhängnis] that life factically has to endure within itself.” What does this mean? That this characteristic of movement is not an “evil feature of life” appearing from time to time, or structurally there as a result of some primordial sin, which, one day, we could hope to atone. We must resist diabolizing this natural declivity, despite its obvious biblical resonances (which were, most probably, an initial source of inspiration for Heidegger). This state of life does not point to a higher, more perfect “paradisiacal naturality,” whether in the old, biblical sense, or in the more recent, say

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20. See also GA 2, §§35–8.
Rousseauist, sense of a “natural state” of innocence and goodness among men before the introduction of culture and society. In short, it cannot be a question of eradicating life’s propensity toward falling. What it does mean, though, is that life tends to understand and interpret itself on the basis of its own fallen state, that is, on the basis of its own practical, concernful absorption in the world. This is a natural tendency, and an alienating (entfremdend) one, insofar as it drives life to avoid itself, that is, to pass by its other, more genuine possibilities (which Being and Time describes at length). At the same time, however, this tendency is reassuring and tranquilizing: it allows Dasein to carry on with its life without further questioning or complication. For the most part, life is habit (and in that sense not far from the life of other living beings). 22 Heidegger will want to contrast these circumstances, or this state of affairs (Lage), in which life is somehow lost in its own fallen state, with the situation (Situation) in which life makes itself transparent to itself in its own fallen state, takes a stance with respect to itself, cares about itself in a concrete manner, and takes itself up as a possible counter-movement to its fallen state.

What lies in the inclination toward falling is the fact that factical life, which is in each case the factical life of the individual, is for the most part not lived as such. It is lived, of course, but only as something else, as something other than life in its ownmost and most extreme possibility. It is only an average life. It moves itself within the averageness (Durchschnittlichkeit) that belongs to its caring, its going about its dealings, its circumspection, and its understanding of the world. This averageness is that of the publicness that reigns at any given time. It is the averageness of the entourage, the dominant trends and opinions, the “just like everyone else.” But this “everyone” is at the same time no one in particular, an anonymous “I” that factically lives the life of the individual: everyone is concerned about such and such, everyone sees it, judges it to be so, enjoys it, does it, asks about it, etc. For the most part, factical life is the life that is lived by “no one,” or by what Heidegger calls “the one” (das Man). 23 In this way of being (often considered a way of life), life conceals itself from itself in the world in which it is absorbed and in the averageness in which it goes about its dealings. In the tendency toward falling, Heidegger insists, it is as if life goes out of its way to avoid itself. 24

But what is it that life turns away from, or turns it back to, when it conceals and avoids itself in that way? With that question, Heidegger is on the verge of his major discovery, insofar as answering it will allow him to identify the meaning of the being of factical life, or existence, as well as – later on – the meaning of

22. Ibid., 116.
23. Ibid., 118; GA 2, §27.
24. Heidegger, Supplements, 118.
the being of all beings. With that question, he will finally be able to answer the question that, he claims, was guiding his philosophical curiosity from the start, namely, the question regarding the meaning of being. Let me reformulate the question slightly differently. What is it that Dasein is afraid of, such that it would want, or feel naturally inclined, to flee? We know that it is itself, as factical life – and not some “innerworldly” thing – that Dasein flees, and that this fleeing takes the form of an absorption into worldly concerns. But what does this “itself” consist in? What is Dasein’s ownmost self, the feature that separates it from other beings? Thus far, we have described life only negatively, as it were, as habitual, “fallen” life. We need to understand why Dasein avoids itself in that way, and what it is actually retreating from. Also, we need to find out if there is a distinct possibility for Dasein of grasping and appropriating itself as factical life, a possibility, that is, of becoming transparent to itself. Finally, we need to ask how time emerges as the answer to the question regarding the meaning of being. All those questions are intimately linked, and are given a preliminary, programmatic answer in the Natorp Report, which reveals death as a key phenomenon for accessing the meaning of the being of factical life. This may sound paradoxical, of course, as death is normally opposed to life. If anything, a concern with death is normally associated with a flight from life. Not so for Heidegger, who writes: “The forced absence of worry about death in the caring of life actualizes itself in a flight into worldly concerns and apprehensions.”25 Looking away from death does not mean grasping factical life, but evading what is most distinctive about it. Paradoxically, experiencing the phenomenon of death, and thinking about it, makes life itself “visible” and transparent to itself, and reveals its specific temporality. But what is death, and how does it manifest itself positively to Dasein, outside “fallenness”? This is a question that Heidegger leaves unanswered in 1922, but one to which he returns soon thereafter (GA 20, §§33–4), and thematizes most explicitly in Being and Time, Division Two, chapter one.

III. “BEING” AS “TIME” (1923–27)

It is what is usually referred to as the Marburg period that really marks Heidegger’s philosophical breakthrough, of which the publication of Being and Time in 1927 is the crowning achievement. For it is in that period that Heidegger is able to bring together being and time explicitly, and concretely, by thinking the distinct nature of death for Dasein.

There is indeed something quite distinctive about the death of Dasein. Naturally, there is nothing distinctive about dying as such. All living things die,

25. Ibid., 119.
or rather, perish. They all come to an end. Yet the death of Dasein is different, inasmuch as Dasein relates to its own death, not when it is actually taking place, not at the time of its death, but from the start. Dasein's death is distinctive in that it is not an event, or something that takes place in time, but a possibility, toward which Dasein is constantly projecting itself. Yet death is a possibility unlike other possibilities. First, it is Dasein's ownmost possibility, that is, the possibility that it cannot delegate, and of which it cannot be relieved. Second, it is the ultimate possibility, or the possibility of the impossibility of existence: we have the distinct sense, and even knowledge, that our being (Sein) qua potentiality (Seinkönnen) is not unlimited, and that our openness to the world is not absolute. Somehow, we know that there is a horizon that delimits our world, and therefore limits our possibilities. This limit or horizon is precisely death. Finally, it is a pure possibility, or a possibility that, unlike all other possibilities, can never be actualized (for as soon as it is actualized, Dasein is no longer): death is always “not yet” for Dasein. It testifies to the fact that, so long as Dasein continues to exist, there is something outstanding, something to come. In that respect, death keeps the world open, and allows possibilities to emerge. As such, it is the possibility of all possibilities, or the condition of possibility. By virtue of being “only” a possibility, however, it is not as if death were a remote possibility. On the contrary: Heidegger insists that it is always impending, always there in a way, threatening to bring to an end that which it opens up. Such is the paradox of death: it is both the condition of possibility and impossibility of the world. As the end toward which existence exists, death is at once the possibility of closure of existence and the horizon from which the world opens up and unfolds for Dasein, the limit from which “it worlds.” Such is the reason why Heidegger qualifies further the openness of existence, and the fundamental state of being-in-the-world, as “disclosedness” (Erschlossenheit): the openness and manifestness of the world presuppose a more originary closure.

Remarkably, the word Erschlossenheit is also Heidegger’s translation of the Greek, and especially Aristotelian, alêtheia (“truth”). By investigating the fundamental structure of life, and identifying death as its horizon, Heidegger is able to uncover the hidden and forgotten meaning of truth. It is no longer judgment (logos apophantikos), or even speech (logos semantikos), as he once thought, but existence, which is the place and origin of truth.26 The sense of being as truth (esse as verum esse), which Heidegger had tried to understand in his habilitation

26. This discovery emerges in the context of Heidegger's sustained phenomenological–hermeneutical interpretations of Aristotle. The Natorp Report provides an early, still-tentative version of it: “Hon os alethes [being as being true] is not the authentic being of true judgments and their domain of being or validity but rather beings themselves in the how (os) of their unveiled being-meant [seines unverhüllten Vermeintseins]” (ibid., 132); see also GA 19, §26; GA 2, 32–4.
thesis, and to which he returns time and again in his phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle, is now finally established. It presupposes a move from logic to its ontological, and specifically existential, ground. But it is not just the question regarding the sense of being as truth that is solved; it is also the question regarding the sense of sense, or the meaning of meaning – it is meaning itself that Heidegger now wrests from logic, by understanding it as an ontological a priori. “Meaning” now designates the transcendental x, or the horizon, on the basis of which something (in this instance, “being”) becomes intelligible.

Finally, and more importantly still, it is the meaning of being as time that Heidegger is now in a position to reveal. Traditionally, time was considered to originate in the present. The present was the primordial reality from which the rest of time flowed: the past was understood as what was no longer, and the future as what was not yet. As a result of this present-centrism, and as early as Plato and Aristotle, presence (parousia) defined the underlying meaning of being (ousia): to be always (implicitly) meant to be present. What Aristotle called ousia (essentia) was the fundamental, primordial meaning of being, from which all the other meanings (or “categories”) of being were derived. But, Heidegger claims, this understanding of being as presence stems from an inability to understand our own being as existence, and to draw the temporal consequences of that discovery. With Heidegger, “being” no longer means “presence,” but coming-into-presence (dis-closedness), and coming into presence itself presupposes an originary concealment (lethe), which, for Dasein, is death. As the extreme possibility toward which we find ourselves always oriented, death reveals existence as always ahead of itself, projecting itself in a world of projects and possibilities, anticipating itself. “Project” (Entwurf) and “anticipation” (Vorlauf) are fundamental features of factical life. But what those existentials reveal is the fact that life unfolds from the future, and that the future is its source. What we witness with Heidegger, then, is a decisive shift in the perception of where time originates: the center of gravity of temporality is no longer the present, as was the case in the philosophical tradition, but the future (die Zukunft). The future is the source or the origin from which time flows.

For the most part, though, Heidegger tells us, we do not see time (or ourselves) for what it is: we see the result of the event of time – presence, and not presencing. We see things at the end of the process, as things that we can use (or not), with a view to this or that, always in a certain light, without asking ourselves about the source of that light. As a result, we also tend to understand ourselves, our own being, on the basis of the being of those very things, on the basis, that is, of presence (whether practical or objective). We do that naturally, and the metaphysical conception of being is born of that natural tendency.

27. GA 2, 325.
From a phenomenological perspective, however, the question is one of knowing whether we ever encounter time itself, whether we ever experience ourselves on the basis of our own being. Now Heidegger claims that we do, for example in immediately tangible “moods” or “dispositions” (Stimmungen), such as anxiety, or boredom. In both instances, we experience a total withdrawal of the world, or, better said perhaps, of familiar, ordinary, worldly things. We come face to face with ourselves, with our own worldliness and temporality. In boredom especially, we feel very strongly that all “there is” is time, and that makes us feel uneasy. As a result, we look for a way back into the familiar, practical world in which we feel safe. The question, though, is one of knowing whether there is some kind of experience that could reveal our temporal being and bear witness to the temporal meaning of being in general and that we would not want to flee, but to embrace and sustain. Furthermore, could this experience, this “attunement,” reveal more precisely the way in which time unfolds or temporalizes itself? It is in the phenomenon that Being and Time describes as “anticipatory, resolute disclosedness” (vorlaufende Entschlossenheit) that Dasein is said to understand itself “authentically,” that is, on the basis of its own being-towards-death. This phenomenon reveals a distinct possibility of existence, one in which existence is disclosed to itself as disclosedness, or in its totality (as “care”). In resolute disclosedness, Dasein does not flee its own mortality and finitude, but anticipates it, that is, brings it to bear on its comportment toward the world. This means that Dasein does not look forward to its own death, or, worse still, that it anticipates its own death through suicide. Rather, it means that Dasein lives in the full awareness of its own finitude, and of the fact that time itself is finite. This, in turn, has an effect on the intensity with which it lives its life: possibilities are chosen, decisions are made, on the basis of such an awareness.

Even Dasein’s own past, and not just its present, is modified as a result of its ability to relate positively to its own end. We need to emphasize the point that, although Heidegger locates the source of time in the future, and understands life as projection (Entwurf), he also recognizes that existence is not entirely its own ground, and that it is always thrown (geworfen) into situations that are not of its choosing. This, after all, is what moods and dispositions reveal, namely, the irreducible passivity of life, the fact that thrownness (Geworfenheit) can never be erased. To understand itself as being-towards-death, “authentic” Dasein must also take over its thrownness. Now to take over one’s thrownness means nothing other than to be “authentically” or “properly” what one already was “inauthentically” or “improperly.” What Dasein can be is nothing other than what it already is, nothing other than its having-been (Gewesen). It is only in the anticipation

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28. On anxiety, see GA 2, §40; “What is Metaphysics?” On boredom, see GA 29/30, part one. 29. GA 2, §62.
of its end that Dasein can correspond to its original condition. Only insofar as Dasein ex-ists, that is, comes toward itself futurally, can it come back (zurückkommen) to itself and what it already is:

Anticipation of one’s ownmost and uttermost possibility is coming back understandingly to one’s ownmost “been.” Only so far as it is futural can Dasein be authentically as having-been. The “having been” [die Gewesenheit, and not die Vergangenheit, the past] arises, in a certain way, from the future.30

This is tantamount to saying that Dasein can be its past only insofar as it comes back to it on the basis of its own future. If the having-been arises from the future, it is because there can be facticity only within the horizon of a can-be (Seinkönnen). So, once again, the future, properly understood, is not a now that is not yet actual, but Dasein’s coming toward its ownmost can-be, which occurs in the anticipation of death. Likewise, because Dasein is not a pregiven entity, an entity present-at-hand, it is not, strictly speaking, “past,” but has always already been and is this very having-been: the “having been” (gewesen sein) is the original phenomenon of what we call the past. Traditionally, the past is what is no longer. But the temporal dimension associated with Dasein’s thrownness is not past in that sense. On the contrary, it is a dimension that persists and insists, although not as something present. Thrownness indicates that Dasein exists in the mode of having-been, a mode that is irreducible to a mere “modification” or variation of the present. What we normally call the present is not the founding moment of time. In fact, it is a derivative mode of time. For presence always arises out of the futurity and pastness of existence. Anticipatory resoluteness, in which existentiality is disclosed as essentially futural, also discloses the present. Indeed, anticipatory resoluteness reveals what Heidegger calls a “situation” by making present an entity. The present as a mode of temporality is originally a making present, or a presencing (ein Gegenwärtigen). Coming back to itself futurally, resoluteness makes present the beings that it encounters environmentally. This is the phenomenon Heidegger designates as temporality (Zeitlichkeit). It has the unity of a future that makes present in having-been (gewesend-gewärtigende Zukunft).

Our present is the effect of the way in which our having-been-ness (Gewesenheit) and our futurity (Zukünftigkeit) come together. Now, the present that is opened up in resolute disclosedness is radically different from that of this or that particular situation. It differs from the kind of present that is linked to a punctual and practical situation; in other words, from the mostly “concerned”

30. GA 2, 326.
and “absorbed” present of our everyday life, the present of needs and ordinary dealings with the world. Furthermore, it is also to be distinguished from the abstract present (the “now”) of the theoretical attitude, which we now unquestioningly consider to be the very form of the present, unaware of the spatial, and specifically linear, understanding of time such an attitude presupposes, the ontologico-existential ground of which we can trace back to the ordinary, fallen nature of our relation to the world in everyday life. Rather, the present that is at issue in the “moment” is the present in which existence is present to itself as the very operation of disclosure, or as the very there of being. In the “moment of vision,” or the Augen-blick, Dasein “brings itself before itself”: it sees itself for the first time for what it is, that is, the originary “clearing” (Lichtung) or the “truth” of being. Thus, the “moment” is not linked to the disclosure of a particular situation, but to the disclosure of situatedness as such: “The moment of vision is nothing other than the look of resolute disclosedness [Blick der Entschlossenheit] in which the full situation of an action opens itself and keeps itself open.”31 Thus, in the moment, Dasein has an eye for action in the most essential sense, insofar as the moment of vision is what makes Dasein possible as Da-sein, there-being. It is to this that the human must resolutely disclose itself. The human must first create “for himself once again a genuine knowing concerning that wherein whatever makes Dasein itself possible consists.”32 Thus, in the moment of vision, existence resolves itself to itself, to itself as Da-sein, thus allowing it to become free for the first time: free not to do this or that, at least not primarily, but free to be its own being, free to be in the most intense and generous sense, that is, free to be for its own freedom or its own ability to be.

Being and Time is the culmination of Heidegger’s early thought, which sets out to construe a fundamental ontology by revealing the unifying meaning of being as time. It corresponds to Heidegger’s first major effort to wrest being from inert substantiality and recover its forgotten origin as pure becoming. “Being and Time” really reads: “Being as Time.” But time itself, pure becoming, must be distinguished from the time of the world and of actuality, the fallen time, as Heidegger puts it, in which things and events seem to succeed one another in what amounts to a merely sequential order. Real time, on the other hand, is not the time of succession, or the linear, actual time in which events replace one another. Nor is it the time of eternity, of the absolute present, which events occupy for a while before vanishing into the past. And the past itself is not what is no-longer-present and held in reserve, waiting to be reactivated or brought back into the present. The present is only an effect of time, not its point of departure. To think time from the present alone, then, is to think abstractly,

32. GA 29/30, 247/165, emphasis added.
for it amounts to taking the effect for the cause, even if no actual cause can be associated with the unfolding, or the temporalizing of time. It also amounts to constructing time as a sequence of instants, which, in turn, can be represented as a line made of points and segments. In doing so, time is spatialized, and denied its own temporal essence. Heidegger’s concept of time, on the other hand, is precisely aimed at despatializing and de-reifying time in order to uncover its eventful or ontological power. Time, he says, “is” not, but temporalizes itself; there is no such thing as time, only a temporalizing, and from out of this primordial and ongoing event, everything takes place and finds its place, possibilities emerge, and a world begins to take shape. So when Heidegger claims that temporality is the meaning of care, we need to understand that only in the self-temporalizing of temporality does Dasein exist according to its own possibilities of being. As Heidegger emphasizes at the beginning of Being and Time §65, by “meaning” we need to understand that wherein the understandability of something lies. The meaning of something, therefore, is that which is necessarily presupposed in that thing for it to become understandable. In other words, it is the condition of possibility of that thing. In that respect, when we say that time is the meaning of care, we say that it is only on the basis of the temporalization of temporality that Dasein’s being as care can come to be understood. How are we to understand the temporalization of temporality? What does Heidegger mean by that? To say that time is essentially a temporalizing is tantamount to saying that time does not constitute the “internal sense” or the “interiority” of a “subject,” but that it is “the ekstatikon pure and simple,” “the original outside-of-itself in and for itself.” Heidegger borrows the term ekstatikon from Aristotle’s Physics, where it designates the nature of change (metabole). It is to be understood in its literal Greek sense as a coming out of oneself, and must hence be related to the notion of existence (or ek-sistence, as Heidegger will later begin to write). By defining the future, the having-been, and the present as the ecstasies of temporality, Heidegger emphasizes the temporalizing of temporality as a movement or an event, and not as the coming out of itself of a hitherto self-contained subject: “Temporality is not, prior to this, a being that first emerges from itself; its essence is a process of temporalizing in the unity of the ecstasies.”33 Thus temporality needs to be understood as an ekstatic unfolding, and not, as thought by the “ordinary understanding,” as a pure sequence of “nows,” without beginning and without end. Ek-sistence, then, as the event of being, is entirely outside: it is not an interiority that externalizes itself, but the outside as such, pure exteriority, pure throwing (pro- and retro-ject). It is only with the characterization of our being in terms of time that Heidegger is able to understand fully the meaning of factual life as being-outside-itself-and-toward-something.

33. GA 2, 329.
By way of summary, we can bring Heidegger’s analysis of originary temporality under four theses: (i) Insofar as time makes possible the constitution of the structure of care, time is the originary temporalizing of temporality. (ii) This implies that temporality does not refer to the interiority of a subject, but that it is essentially ekstatic. (iii) Temporality temporalizes itself primordially on the basis of a priority given to the future. (iv) Such an ekstatic–existential temporality characterizes primordial time as finite time. Time, in short, is horizontal, finite, futural, and ekstatic.

IV. AFTER BEING AND TIME (1928–30)

Despite this considerable achievement, Being and Time goes only so far in establishing time as the meaning of all beings (and not just that of the human being), and wresting philosophy from anthropology once and for all. We must bear in mind that the book contains only one of two parts initially planned, and only two of three divisions. This means that the third division of the first part, which was to reveal time as the meaning of the being of all beings, was never written, or at least not until 1962 (in a conference entitled “Time and Being”). But by then the project had been transformed so radically that it was no longer possible to envisage the lecture as the missing third division of Being and Time. What Being and Time planned to do – this is clearly stated in the Introduction (§8) – was to reveal time as the transcendental horizon for the question of being. In a way, this program is accomplished in the lecture course from 1927 that immediately followed the publication of Being and Time (GA 24). Yet what Heidegger does not manage to achieve, whether in Being and Time or in the lecture course, is to think the time or the temporality of being itself. He finds himself always drawn back into what Division Two of Being and Time had established, namely, “the interpretation of Dasein in terms of temporality” (GA 2, 40). In order to carry out his initial intention, and fulfill the program he had initially defined in the Introduction to Being and Time, namely, to reveal the meaning of being itself (as opposed to that of the human Dasein), Heidegger will have to transform his project radically, and abandon the project of a fundamental ontology rooted in human existence. Soon after the publication of Being and Time, Heidegger’s thought began to shift from a transcendental–horizontal conception of the meaning of being, in which being temporalizes itself in the ekstatic temporality of Dasein, to what we could call an aletheic–ekstatic conception of the truth of being, in which Dasein finds its stance and to which it co-responds. This turning marks the point where being is no longer temporal because it constitutes the horizontal unity of Dasein’s ekstatic temporality, but rather because it is historical in itself. There is a shift from historical time as rooted in the historicity...
of Dasein to history understood as a sending and a destiny that belongs to the truth of being itself. The conference “Time and Being” concludes by saying that instead of “being” and “time” we should now speak of “clearing” (*Lichtung*) and the presencing of “presence” (*Anwesenheit*).

In addition, soon after the publication of *Being and Time*, in a few enigmatic and complex pages devoted to a “Characterization of the Idea and Function of a Fundamental Ontology” (GA 26, 196–202), Heidegger suggests that in redefining the task of philosophy as fundamental ontology, one cannot remain content simply with revealing the sense of being as time. For insofar as this task is carried out as a possibility of Dasein itself, it must itself be submitted to the rigor of the ontological analysis. Thus, in what amounts to the ultimate phase of the project of fundamental ontology, the analysis is to turn back on the way in which the transcendence of Dasein is involved in the very elaboration of that project, back on the way in which this task is made possible and limited at the same time by the very way in which the factical existence of Dasein is folded into it. For what characterizes Dasein in its factical existence is precisely the fact that it is always and from the very start confronted with “nature,” or with the totality of beings. Heidegger introduces this problematic of *das Seiende-im-Ganzen*, or of “beings as a whole,” under the name metontology (*Metontologie*), and the latter constitutes the very heart of his reflection in the years 1929–30.34 It is only with the exposition of the way in which ontology runs back into the metaphysical ontic in which it is caught from the very start that philosophy radicalizes itself and is turned over into meta-ontology. Heidegger announces the programmatic nature of this fully developed concept of metaphysics toward the end of the *Kantbuch*, claiming that “fundamental ontology, however, is only the first level of the metaphysics of Dasein.”35 Whereas the 1928 lecture course still conceived of philosophy as a whole, including its last phase (metontology), under the name “fundamental ontology,” the texts and lecture courses written and delivered immediately thereafter identify fundamental ontology with only the first phase of what came to be characterized as metaphysics. Yet this metaphysics of Dasein, or this metontology, which led to fascinating developments in themselves, was itself abandoned, and replaced by yet another way into the question of being. This shift – known as the “turning” (*die Kehre*) – is apparent in Heidegger’s pivotal lecture course of 1929–30 (GA 29/30). In the first part of the lecture course, entitled “Awakening a Fundamental Attunement [*Grundstimmung*] in our Philosophizing,” Heidegger sets out to unveil the ground or the soil from out of which philosophizing might be possible. In other words, this first part is supposed to bring us to the very threshold of metaphysics.

34. See also “What is Metaphysics?” and “On the Essence of Ground,” and GA 29/30.
35. GA 3, 232.
and of its fundamental concepts by turning to the buried source of a concrete disposition of our existence (this is what Heidegger calls the ontical–existentiell level, which he distinguishes from the structural, or ontological–existential level). Thus, the preliminary task to which Heidegger devotes himself in that lecture course is the awakening within us of a metaphysical disposition that, as existents, is proper to us, and on the basis of which the entry into metaphysics should take place. But things will turn out to be more complicated. Indeed, the analysis of the fundamental disposition that is supposed to take us to the very threshold of metaphysics or, to be more precise, the historical diagnosis to which Heidegger submits this disposition, is introduced at the cost of a tension that the 1929–30 lecture course is not in a position to resolve. The solution to this tension will be found only when Heidegger will reformulate the project of the question concerning the meaning of being and transform it into the question concerning the history of being. In other words – and this constitutes the truly paradoxical nature of Heidegger’s enterprise – the progressively revealed access to the fundamental concepts of metaphysics is eventually inscribed in a context that itself is such as to call into question existence as the primal and originary source of metaphysics. Metaphysics itself will turn out to be grounded not in the transcendence of Dasein, but in history, understood as the history of being: metaphysics itself turns out to be an effect of history, and not just a possibility of Dasein.

**MAJOR WORKS**


Published in English as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translated by Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982. [Marburg lecture course of SS 1927.]


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Volume 3
I. RENEWAL OF THE QUESTION OF BEING

The question “what Being is” is “the question which was raised of old and is raised now and always, and is always irresolvable.”

(Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1028b)

Citing this passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, Jaspers takes up the question of Being as the perennially most fundamental question of philosophy. Coming to terms with its irresolvable nature, Jaspers thinks that the question requires not a radically new departure, but a fresh approach that draws on humanity’s experience of thought about it. Jaspers’s thinking constitutes a renewal of the question of Being, based on a reorientation whereby its possibility is clarified and its significance reconfirmed. The reorientation of the question of Being is the achievement of the first of his two main works, *Philosophy*. On the basis of the reorientation, Jaspers’s later main work, *Von der Wahrheit*, provided the

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2. Karl Theodor Jaspers (February 23, 1883–February 26, 1969; born in Oldenburg, Germany; died in Basel, Switzerland) was educated at the Humanistic Gymnasium Oldenburg (1892–1901) and universities in Berlin and Göttingen, and took his medical doctorate at the University of Heidelberg (1908). His influences included Husserl, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Max Weber, and held appointments at Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic (1909–15) and the University of Heidelberg Department of Psychology (1913–20) and Department of Philosophy (1920–48). He was forced to retire by the Nazi regime in 1937 because his wife was Jewish, and in 1945 was reinstated under US Army auspices. He was honorary University Senator of the University of Basel (1948–), and emeritus (1961).
elaboration in the form of a radical treatment. The two works are not separate departures, but two stages of Jaspers’s renewal of the question. Jaspers speaks mainly of “truth” rather than of “Being.” We do not confront Being per se, but only as it is “for us”: “Truth” is “Being for us.” Thus the question of truth coincides with Being for us. Most thought and action is valid by virtue of a specific truth or kind of truth, for example scientific inference, pragmatic expediency, justification by faith, representation of interest, formal deduction. The fundamental question of truth is distinct: it underlies any and all manner of “special truth,” it is the question of truth in its fundamental unity. The tradition of metaphysics assumed that the underlying fundamental truth has an object, and can be determinately grasped. Yet a system of Being, no matter how inclusive, is, by virtue of its determinate foundation, limited. Since thought is, as such, determinative, truth in its unity, transcending determination, is not present to it as an object. Therein lies the “irresolvability” of truth in its unity.

Yet the question of truth has been “raised of old and always.” In history it has been perennially significant because it concerns the source of meaningfulness of a thoughtful life and of a life of purposive action and endeavor. Hence the philosophical concern over truth that is the truth calls for “operating with this indeterminacy.” Accordingly, Jaspers’s philosophy culminates in the idea of the truth of Being as encompassing man’s temporal perspective.

II. THE FIRST STAGE: REORIENTING THE QUESTION OF BEING

The idea of Being and truth as “encompassing” is adumbrated in Jaspers’s earliest works. The adumbrated motives are taken up in the three volumes of Philosophy (1932). The focus there is on the question of Being. In light of those motives, the

3. See the methodological pluralism in General Psychopathology, J. Hoenig and Marian W. Hamilton (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963) and the phenomenology of Weltanschauungen in Psychologie der Weltanschauungen (Berlin: Springer, 1919).
4. Jaspers and Heidegger met at the observance of Husserl’s sixtieth birthday, and soon formed a close philosophical friendship. Jaspers was six years older than Heidegger, and, at that time, had more experience in thinking against the stream. In the 1920s, while writing their first major philosophical works, they met frequently for intense discussions. It is not known what they discussed. Although they went divergent ways, they found their contact challenging and fruitful. The fact that the first volume of Heidegger’s Being and Time was published several years before Jaspers’s complete three volumes of Philosophy does not mean that the latter was written in response to the former, as Heidegger hastily published his volume to qualify for a professorship. Neither knew what the other was writing, and when the respective works came out, neither of them understood nor appreciated that of the other. Both addressed the question of Being. After Being and Time, Heidegger would make attempts to envisage how it would be if “what calls for thinking” is “Being itself.” Jaspers, realizing that “Being itself” transcends man’s thought, would elaborate on the question of “Being for man in time.” Jaspers
“search after Being” is posed from the limited perspective of man’s historicity, that is, of man in his situation and within his temporality. From this perspective, Being ruptures into modes of Being. It is a kind of thinking that steps beyond the multiplicity of beings and kinds of Being, beyond the determinate objectivities of cognitive thought, and beyond the phenomena of which we are conscious. It is the basic operation of philosophical thought; Jaspers calls it “transcending.”

These themes determine the division of Philosophy into the three “books.” We first ask how Being presents itself as “world” within the confines of man’s situation and temporality; second, what are the characteristic phenomena of man, the being that exists thinkingly, such that they determine man’s search after Being; and finally, how man relates to the ground of Being that as such transcends man’s grasp.

**World-orientation**

The Being of the world shows itself to transcending thought not as it is in itself but according to man’s orientation within the world. Among the most prominent modes of world-orientation, Jaspers discusses “purposive action” in the world as well as knowledge about the world, in particular modern scientific thought.

The phenomenon of orientation divides into many modes. World-orientation is not a pursuit designed to lead to a closed and finished structure of the kind envisaged by, for example, idealism or positivism. Especially scientific world-orientation calls for a representation of knowledge achieved at any one time; it is at best an open, ever-changing systematic order, never a system. Systems such as positivism and idealism are the opposite of a systematic order, because they absolutize knowledge gained through a specific kind of world-orientation that, in its specificity, is relative.

**The perspective of man’s temporality**

The second book is a transcendental reflection on the being of man as Existenz. Dealing with its subject matter in a manner different from Heidegger’s fundamental-ontological analysis of Dasein, Jaspers characterizes the prominent phenomena of man’s being-in-time. This can be regarded as the basic text of modern existential philosophy. Its wider significance is determined by the context of the whole mentioned that in working on Von der Wahrheit, he had Heidegger in mind; he was referring to a theme of his later work, namely, that philosophy has political import. To him Heidegger’s (brief) alignment with the Nazi movement was an appalling and telling misstep. See Jaspers’s Notizen zu Martin Heidegger, Hans Saner (ed.) (Munich: Piper, 1978), as well as the posthumously published chapter “Heidegger,” Hans R. Rudnick (trans.), in The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, rev. 2nd ed., Paul. A. Schilpp (ed.) (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974).
Leonard H. Ehrlich

work, according to which the search for Being is thrown back to the question concerning the one who is searching. In this way one can prevent confusing Being with Being-as-it-is-for-man in his historicity. This is the primary concern and main achievement of this part of *Philosophy*, entitled “Illumination of Existenz.”

The modalities of the question of Being become actual and articulated to man, not in his being of and in the world but by existing self-consciously in his temporality. Existenz can be approached by transcendental phenomenology but not cognitively; it can be illumined, not in its actuality as a living person, but only as “possible Existenz.” In order to emphasize this, Jaspers often speaks in polarities reminiscent of Kierkegaard’s Anti-Climacus. This procedure stands in marked contrast to Heidegger’s phenomenology of the structures (*existentialia*) of the being of Dasein in *Being and Time*, written at the same time that Jaspers wrote *Philosophy*.

Accordingly, historicity and communication are the leading themes of Jaspers’s phenomenology of “possible Existenz.” In Jaspers’s conception, historicity refers to whatever becomes historic out of the ground of Being through the agency of thinking man. It refers not only to time, but to man’s temporality. It means not only history (what is realized in public time), but history as the realization of what a person is committed to, and for which he offers his temporality. Man finds himself tied to situations that challenge him to make choices and decisions. This involves the risk of offering up one’s limited temporality, as well as proving oneself with respect to what one regards to be one’s grounding in truth by virtue of fundamental convictions (faith). It entails the assumption of obligation for what is to be actualized, and responsibility for the success or failure of one’s action.

The truth of Being is not realized through action wholly and with finality. Instead, what is true within the bounds of one’s temporality is – not infallibly – decided in one’s original realizations. Moreover, man exists and acts with respect to fellow man; one stands essentially in communication, for one’s truth is not all the truth. Concern over one’s truth means to be engaged in a struggle for the truth with or against fellow man. Jaspers indicates the relevance of communication to realms of human realization that are wider than that of interpersonal transaction, including the political.

Obligation and responsibility call for a discussion of freedom as distinguished from free choice. Freedom cannot be grasped like a knowable object or an observable trait, which would reduce it to conditionality. Freedom is unconditional; it is a capacity drawn from the ground of Being by which man finds

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*5. For a discussion of Kierkegaard, see the essay by Alastair Hannay in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*.***
himself, and, finding himself, participates in the determination of truth for man in time.

The unconditionality of Existenz is at play in Jaspers's conception of other phenomena. Man's coming to be takes place in the context of cultural, biological, social, historical, and everyday situations; as mere Dasein, man's being is tenuous, is “never without struggle and suffering,”6 is inevitably entangled in obligation and guilt, experiences failure and shipwreck, and is confronted with death and having to die. While such limits are conditions of man's being, Jaspers points to their import when they are encountered as limit situations. They are limit situations not by setting limits, but in being confronted. Confronting “limit situations” can direct us to choices on which depend whatever truth can become actual within those limits.

Man does not merely function as the instrument – for example, of the World-Spirit (Hegel) – of actualizing whatever comes about through him, since one’s personal fate and destiny are involved no matter what cause, lord, or god one serves. Where man effects his actualization out of possibilities that are not cognitively derivable but require fundamental commitment and choice, he draws them from the ground in which he is rooted. Jaspers refers to this phenomenon of one's originality as absolute consciousness, in distinction from cognitive consciousness and from Hegel's mediating particularization of the Absolute Universal. Absolute consciousness is to be understood as daring to bring meanings and actualities to bear on the here-and-now that are not native to it. Jaspers recognizes absolute consciousness in the phenomena faith, love, and the creative imagination. By means of the illumination of those phenomena of “possible Existenz,” Jaspers provided the groundwork for reorienting the question of the search for Being by way of the question concerning the one who is searching.

The transcendence of the ground of Being

The question of the truth of Being is the fundamental topic of philosophy; it is therefore with respect to the enterprise of philosophy that Jaspers applies the most radical reorientation effected through the “illumination of Existenz.” While “Metaphysics” is the title of the third book of Philosophy, Jaspers's treatment of the subject is a departure from traditional metaphysics. He rejects metaphysical thought that lays claim to universal validity which, in his view, has been preempted by modern science. The question of the ground of Being must be thought as transcending determinacy – hence its unresolvability. In light of the reorientation, metaphysics is now regarded as the thinking being's relation to the ground of Being, rather than as the forms and traditions of objectification.

Consequently Jaspers’s treatment focuses on the ways of thought about metaphysical topics.

Jaspers raises the question: “Is that which had been the foundation of personalities and of singular creations an aberration. … would it be high time to extirpate it once and for all?” And he poses the opposite question, “is there within us a sense of forlornness and a longing for the retrieval of an experience of authentic Being?” In light of the critical distinction between cognitive–scientific and metaphysical thought, Jaspers says that if the latter is meant to refer to knowable objects, then it is illusory; however, it is actual for Existenz in its relation to the transcendent ground of Being, especially in light of the unconditionality of freedom and the originality of choice. For Existenz, metaphysical thought is historic, that is, actual in the exercise of one’s freedom.

To Jaspers, received testimonies of the relation to transcendence, such as scriptures, myths, theological treatises, texts of philosophy, and, in particular, of metaphysics, are the dry bones of the vital appearance of authentic Being for an Existenz in its freedom. Their significance for us consists in that, by studying them. These testimonies may, by assimilation or by rejection, awaken in us our own historic grounding in the truth of Being.

Jaspers elaborates on this significant aspect of traditional metaphysics under the heading “formal transcending.” On the surface, his is a critical examination of a thinking that has traditionally prevailed in metaphysics and systematic theology. The criticism is aimed at the supposition that formal thought, operating with categories of cognition, can produce valid and cogent knowledge concerning transcendent matters; in this sense Jaspers sees a reason to depart from traditional metaphysics. But his criticism also shows that metaphysical speculation, pursued without the pretense of cognition but with the courage to proceed with clarity of thought and the risk of shipwreck, can be an indicator that the relation to transcendence is actual in the historicity of Existenz. Traditional metaphysics can then gain a new significance.

The centerpiece of Jaspers’s metaphysics is his phenomenology of existential relations to transcendence, that is, what posture Existenz takes as it directs itself to transcendence. Jaspers explores four pairs of such postures. These are not alternatives, but in each case exhibit the tension of polar opposites. It is one of the most original parts of the work, spanning worldwide theological thought; I indicate them in brief.

Defiance and devotion (or piety) are postures taken when merely living one’s existence in the world and in everyday life becomes questionable, as in the

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8. What Jaspers means by Hingabe is difficult to render in English; “devotion” or “piety,” which I favor, come closer to the intended meaning than Ashton’s translation “surrender.”
confrontation with limit situations. It is the refusal to remain blind with respect to the questions of the meaningfulness, worth, justice, and justification of existence. Jaspers recalls Ivan Karamazov’s defiant protest against a world in which even one innocent child has to suffer. Like Job, Ivan wants to know. The will to know is a primary note of defiance. Devotion is the polar opposite, but not in the sense of surrendering the insistence on understanding what transcends comprehension. Instead, as with Job, it is a knowing piety, born of the knowledge of one's fundamental ignorance, and knowing that, even though one stands by oneself in one's freedom, one, as it were, did not create oneself; one is “not the ultimate.” In its knowing ignorance (as in Cusanus's docta ignorantia), devotion is the chance of accepting one's freedom and one's temporal existence in the world as a gift to be used for the actualization of what can be only through oneself.

The confines of time and temporality determine the second polarity, that of descent and ascent. Within temporality, the relation to transcendence is not a state but an ongoing process of uncertain outcome. It is a matter of invoking ideals of meaningfulness, aspirations, standards of responsible action, causes and purposes to be fulfilled. These are not determinants of our existence, for what we become is subject to our decisions. They function as measures with respect to which we prove ourselves or fail to do so. It is a way of descent to regard the truth to which one ascends as the only truth, without conceding the validity, for the other, of his other truth. Being in process within time, one is never whole; one is torn between the voice of the genius and the voice of the demon, the slide into abject nothingness and the realization of immortal Being.

The existential positions, which Jaspers characterizes with the metaphoric imagery law of day and passion for night, are a fundamental polarity reminiscent of the Greek cosmos and chaos. The position “law of day” obliges us to order, clarity, reason, hence to being loyal and dependable, to “actualization in the world, to building in time, to complete temporal existence on a never-ending path.”9 Thus to Jaspers the light of reason is not extraneous but fundamentally proper to Existenz. Yet “night,” the wholly other, also demands its due, for it is, like Schopenhauer’s cosmic will, a felt actuality that, blind to thought and reason, brings forth and destroys. It affects us in our coming forth out of the darkness of not-being, in this age, at this place on earth, and among these people; in the inevitability of our death and of the eventual ruin of all we have built. Truly a passion for night, it is active in us, most prominently in that “incomprehensible fetter” of eroticism beyond mere sexuality. Night is not evil; the distinction between good and evil prevails in day, and night is beyond good and evil.

The idea of transcendence as the One is the focus of the final pair of existential relations to transcendence, namely the “Wealth of the Many and the

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One.” Jaspers wonders about the perennial fascination with the One, beginning especially during times that Jaspers later identifies as the “axial times.” He recalls, for example, the idea of the one universal deity of Greek philosophy (Xenophanes, Plato), and of “the God of the Jewish prophets experienced in the soul’s solitude.”

What is at play is oneness as the existential relation to transcendence, which, in the testimony of untold generations, has been thought of as the divinity. Jaspers explains: if we decide by whim, or let ourselves be tossed about by the vicissitudes coming our way, then we fail to be an identity. It is different if we make choices and act out of what is fundamentally important to us, if we know where we stand and are true to ourselves. Yet the transcendent One on which one grounds oneself is in each case one’s own truth. It is not a matter of partaking in what one can know to be an all-embracing ultimate truth. My truth is not everybody’s truth. Even in mutual struggle one has to concede each other’s relation to God. While one’s God is subject to one’s choice and risk, the truly One is beyond one’s limit. “Authentic Existenz will not lose sight of the far God beyond one’s near God.”

_Ciphers of transcendence_

If the relation to transcendence is fundamentally existential, what is the meaning of the articulation of that relation, whether in images, myths, symbols, metaphysical systems, or religious doctrines? Jaspers takes up this question in the last chapter of _Philosophy_, “The Reading of the Cipher-Script.”

The basic thought is as follows: Transcendence to which one relates as one’s ground in Being cannot be encountered as an actuality in the world, nor thought in the manner of a cognitive object. Yet actual objects and determinate thoughts are the unavoidable means of articulating that relation. Thus transcendence is present only as mediated through one’s thoughts or in experienced actualities, and such thoughts or experiences are “ciphers” of transcendence. In ciphers one does not understand or hear but can be addressed by transcendence. Any thought, any experience, can be taken as expressive of that relation, but only to us in our “absolute consciousness,” not in our cognitive understanding. With regard to the inevitable objectification of ciphers, Jaspers distinguishes between the levels of immediate experience, of objective configuration, and of speculative elaboration.

10. _Ibid._, 124.


12. Although an original approach to metaphysics, it is rooted in the experience and history of thought, especially modern thought. Jaspers refers to Paul Tillich and Friedrich T. Vischer; but see also Ernst Cassirer (symbolic forms) and Emmanuel Levinas (Trace).

13. Jaspers speaks of “three languages” rather than levels.
To illustrate: In Golding’s *The Lord of the Flies*, schoolboys stranded on a deserted island kill a pig, sever its head, and triumphantly mount it on a pole. Fascinated by the ugly sight of flies swarming around the decaying head, one of the boys is overwhelmed by the display of what to him is the presence of an awesome and implacable happening beyond comprehension. This is the cipher at the level of existential immediacy. At the next level, immediacy is replaced by objectification, such as institutional religion, mythic imagery, art, doctrine. In such objectification, the cipher does not remain the vehicle of one’s personally exclusive relation to transcendence. It can be regarded by anyone; one can appreciate it without being addressed by it; it can be debated, criticized; it can attract or repel. It is then no more than a symbol; but to the extent that one can be addressed by it, the symbol is a cipher.

In the public domain, a cipher is a determinate object; its meaning can vary with the observer’s standpoint. But insofar as the cipher is expressive of one’s grounding, in freedom, on transcendence, it represents the indeterminacy of transcendence. The meaning it conveys is not verified by interpretation or speculation – the third level – but through one’s commitment and the difference it makes here and now. But personal verification is neither evidential inference nor conceptual finality. Transcendence is as such unfathomable to man thinking determinately and existing in time; the meanings of the cipher are multiple, and transcendence can manifest itself in other ways.

Jaspers’s conception of metaphysical (including theological) thought as the existential reading of the cipher script is the basis of his view of the foundation of religion. This view was challenged by proponents of revealed religion, to whom the tenets of faith are neither myths nor symbols but revealed accounts of mysterious occurrences. Jaspers has met the challenge, whether in the demythologizing controversy with Rudolf Bultmann, or in the confrontation of revealed faith with philosophical faith. In most of his works, we find his interpretations of testimonies of existential relations to transcendence as ciphers, such as religious doctrines, works of literature, myths, works of art, and traditional metaphysics. The last, while rejected as literal, cognitive thought, is seen by Jaspers, especially

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14. The Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann, inspired by Heidegger, proposed to demythologize the Bible by translating the myths of the New Testament into a nonmythical idiom, leaning on modern science. The only exception is the event of salvation, that is, Jesus’s death on the cross and his resurrection; this is to be accepted as literal fact by virtue of the kerygma. Jaspers countered that the truth of myths, symbols, and ciphers is translatable only into other myths, and verified not simply by confessing to it, but by its impact on the conduct of life. See Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Frage der Entmythologisierung* (Munich: Piper, 1954), published in English as *Myth and Christianity: An Inquiry into the Possibility of Religion Without Myth*, Norbert Guterman (trans.) (New York: Noonday Press, 1958). [*] For a discussion of Bultmann, see the essay by Andreas Grossman in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*. **
in his *The Great Philosophers*, in its significance as the cipher-like articulation of relations to transcendence.

Personal temporality as the pivotal factor in the reorientation of the question of Being and truth is especially at play where reading the cipher-script ends and culminates in the phenomenon of *shipwreck*. This is neither the deliberate pursuit of foundering, nor the nihilistic resignation from life seen as an exercise in futility. Instead, it is the actual *experience* of the inevitability of shipwreck by one engaged in realizing whatever Being and truth can humanly be realized.\(^{15}\) The ultimate cipher is the one where man, attempting to fathom meaning, runs aground. We cannot find life-giving meaning, for example, in memories lost that are the last repository of what has been achieved, realized, attained by way of Being for man in time. Being as such is the abyss at which thought fails.

The phenomenology of “reading the cipher script” shows that “the question ‘what Being is’ … is unresolvable.” Insofar as Being “calls for man’s thinking,” Being does not provide man with direction by his stepping back and “letting Being be,” as Heidegger suggests. Instead, we are turned to Being as it is for man bringing himself forth in time.

*The triple helix*

By virtue of the reorientation elaborated in *Philosophy*, Jaspers proceeds with the renewal of the question of Being with respect to the *unity of Being and truth*, the basic theme of *Von der Wahrheit*. Several undercurrents motivate Jaspers’s pursuit of the question in *Von der Wahrheit*.

One is the *unresolvability* of the question of Being: “We do not and we shall not possess the one truth, and yet the truth can only be one.”\(^{16}\) The question therefore turns on how the unity of the truth of Being can be regarded through thought determined by man’s temporality.

Another motive is the reference to the *testimony* of humanity’s concern over that question in the history of philosophy as well as in literature and religion. Jaspers’s leaning on this testimony is so programmatic a feature that parallel to his systematic elaboration of the testimony that informed the reorientation, Jaspers devoted much of his later years to a major and original conception of a “world history of philosophy,” which, by its conception, was integral to and intertwined with the philosophic elaboration of the second stage in *Von der Wahrheit*.

Finally, since truth for man in time is historic, there is no truth for man without testimony through choice, action, and responsibility. Authentic philosophy is


\(^{16}\) VdW, 839.
the practice of philosophy. Inasmuch as action affects others, action as testimony of one’s truth is potentially of political import. If we add to that the importance of communication for interpersonal transaction, we find that for Jaspers the question of the unity of truth carries with it a concern over the unity of the human community and of its challenges and tasks past and present, including the unity of the enterprise of research in the university, the meaning of history, and above all, the political motive. The concern over praxis is integral to and intertwined with the substance of the philosophic elaboration of Von der Wahrheit, and is the subject matter of major and minor works of Jaspers’s later years dealing with fundamental political thought, critical studies of current political topics, the criticism of modernity, philosophy of history, the future of scientific research, of the practice of medicine, of education, and the university. Consequent on the earlier reorientation, Jaspers’s thinking in each of the three strands is intertwined with the others, each informing the other. These are: the question of the unity of Being and Truth for man in time; regard for man’s experience with that question; and concern over the active realization of Truth. This triple helix of his thought – fundamental thought, history of testimony, testimony through praxis17 – more or less indicated in Philosophy, is deliberately at play in his later writings.

III. THE SECOND STAGE: BEING FOR MAN IN TIME

Being and its modes: the encompassing

In light of the reorientation we now have to ask how we can speak of Being from the perspective of the historicity of man. For man, Being in its oneness is absolutely transcendent, it surrounds man’s temporality, it is the “Encompassing.” For man, Being ruptures into modes, which are also encompassing as they appear to man. They are encompassing horizons in that they recede no matter how far we progress in realizing what is for man in time.

Pursuing a radical train of thought, Jaspers discloses such horizons, characterizes them, and shows the relations between them. Jaspers calls this a doctrine of the modes of encompassing Being, or “periechontology,”18 in distinction

17. The three strands are displayed in the list of Jaspers’s major works: “Fundamental philosophy”; “Philosophy of faith and religion”; “History of philosophy”; praxis: “Political philosophy,” “Philosophy of modernity and history,” “Psychiatry and psychology”.
18. Jaspers reached back to a similar use of the word in Aristotle’s Metaphysics; Aristotle reports that according to Anaximander the apeiron (the unbounded) cannot be a single thing but encompasses (periechein) single things, and cannot be something that is itself encompassed (periechomenon).
from traditional ontology, that is the doctrine of Being. Jaspers eschews both the constructive thinking (traditional metaphysics) and the antimetaphysical de-constructive phenomenology (Heidegger). Instead, he refers to the testimony of humanity’s hitherto achieved realization of Being and truth, the testimony of philosophy as well as that of language, literature, art, science, praxis, religion, and myth.

Jaspers meant his periechontology to be suited to the contemporary tasks and challenges of peoples meeting in what has irreversibly become one world since it provides an “open horizon” for them to meet in communication. He insists that his periechontology is a personal philosophical perception, not a claim to universal validity. The idea of periechontology is historic, hence open and modifiable. Jaspers does not regard it to be original with him, but at play in all great philosophers, beginning with Plato. It is the open space where people who are divided in their respective fundamental faith can meet in mutual tolerance.

The primary rupture of Being for man is the subject–object dichotomy. Whatever is for us is within this dichotomy. Being-as-such, encompassing both subject and object, is not amenable to being an object for us. Within the primary rupture, Jaspers distinguishes being-object as “Being itself,” and being-subject as “Being that we [human beings] are or can be.”

“Being that we are or can be” divides into several modes: being-there (Dasein), consciousness-as-such, spirit, and Existenz.

**Being-there.**

We are as Dasein, that is, we are there (da-sein means “being-there”) as beings in our environment, in and part of the spatiotemporal world, as life in the biological sense. Whatever else we are, we are actual in the concreteness of our being-there. Being-there is the arena of our actuality. The subject–object dichotomy with respect to being-there consists of the distinction of one’s personal life from one’s surrounding world, one’s environment.

**Consciousness-as-such.**

The term (Bewußtsein überhaupt) stems from Kant. It refers to thought-as-such in the sense that whatever else we human beings may be said to be, we are it thinkingly. Thought, Jaspers says, is a primal phenomenon; it accompanies all other phenomena. Being-thinking includes not only cognition, but also self-consciousness and the inner act of experiencing; hence the designation “consciousness-as-such.” It is by virtue of our being consciousness that Being for us is split into subject and object. Being thinking, we can transcend any being that is for us as object, and, thinking it, we think it in the

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form of objectivity. No mode of encompassing Being is for us except insofar as we think it. Even the fundamental (“pre-logical”) distinction of the modes of the Encompassing is the work of thought. However, it is cognition that is the proper fulfillment of thought. Hence the nature of thought merits an extensive treatise in Jaspers’s *Von der Wahrheit.*

**Spirit.** Jaspers reintroduces spirit into philosophic discourse as an encompassing mode of the being that we are. In his conception of the spirit, Jaspers, inclining toward Kant’s transcendental idea, stresses the articulation of spirit in the form of ideas. Ideas express transcendental wholenesses and serve as practical or theoretical measures, as motivating aspirations, and as configurations, metaphors, symbols, or ciphers of transcending thought. For example, over the decades Jaspers published three versions of “the idea of the university,” each containing the same core idea, but differing in its application to changing conditions; they are meant not as descriptions of extant universities, but as measures that existing universities might refer to in the realization of the idea. In the form of ideas Jaspers sees encompassing spirit as carrying the formidable weight of humanity’s directing itself to its tasks, to creativity, to investing life and reality with respect to meaning.

**Existenz: self-being.** We do not need to reiterate here Jaspers’s phenomenology of possible Existenz (freedom, historicity, communication, et al.). But Jaspers also speaks of “self-being.” Being oneself means being engaged in an unending task of becoming by virtue of the risk and responsibility of decisions and choices made in confrontation with challenges, choices out of possibilities that are not always at hand but are invoked from the ground of one’s being. It is for this reason that, with respect to man’s temporality, he speaks of self-being as Existenz, that is, as deliberately coming to be in time out of infinite possibility. Existenz is thus more than (transcends) the immanent modes. Jaspers says, “I am not merely there [being-there], not merely the subject of consciousness-as-such, not merely the place of spiritual movement and spiritual creation, but in all of them I can [either] be myself or be lost in them.”

Jaspers discusses the relations and distinctions between Existenz and the immanent modes extensively; we mention only one aspect concerning spirit, namely the question of time and historicity. To Hegel, human actualizations are the particular concretions of the spirit’s universality. But Existenz is not a

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22. See Jaspers’s early essay on “Kant’s Doctrine of Ideas” appended to his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen.*
23. VdW, 77. See also Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings, 154.
derivative and cannot be subsumed under a universal; Existenz is on its own responsibility, at its own risk. Existenz leans on spirit for its self-articulation; it is not an item of the world spirit’s comprehensive historical universality. For universal spirit, time is the panorama of its timeless wholeness. For Existenz, time is one’s own temporality on which one brings to bear timeless sources of possibility in a never-ending search for wholeness.

How can Existenz be discerned as a mode of man’s being that transcends the immanent modes? One indicator is the motive of immortality among peoples of all kinds, of all times. Jaspers does not mean immortality as “the continuation of life in another form”; he means a sense of being borne by an eternity (transcending temporality) that manifests itself in persistently filling one’s temporality with effective activity. In Jaspers’s words:

> We have but one actuality: here and now. What we miss by our evasion will never return, but we lose Being also if we squander ourselves. Each day is precious: a moment can be everything. We are remiss in our task if we lose ourselves in past or future. The timeless is accessible only by way of present actuality; only by taking hold of time do we get to where all time is extinguished.24

The subject–object dichotomy with respect to Existenz is the polar relation of Existenz to its other, to transcendence, as the “dark ground” and source of our being “out of which I encounter myself in freedom … [and] bring myself forth, yet am given to myself as a gift.”25 In this sense, Jaspers regards faith – as in Philosophy – as an expression of the fundamental certainty of Being.26

“The encompassing that is Being itself” appears as world and is, as transcendence, the ground of Being of Existenz. Jaspers takes a critical stance against the view that there is no indication of Being independently of being for us and radically other than the Being that we are. He takes particular issue with the Nietzschean view that all that is is interpretation originating with us as interpreters. Leaning on Kant, he points out that while we – never adequately, never with finality – bring forth the world and transcendence in their appearance to our thoughtful apprehension, we thereby do not bring forth Being in itself. Against German idealism Jaspers counters Hegel’s dictum: “Whatever might

26. In Philosophy Jaspers mentions faith, love, and creative imagination (Phantasie) as the forms of fundamental certainty. In the writings of the second stage, imagination makes its appearance as the ideas of the spirit by means of which we articulate our faith.
not be known by consciousness would have neither meaning for it nor power over it”:

What does not enter our consciousness is actual power even if unknown … The unknown is effective at the limit of even the most far-reaching consciousness. Without our knowledge it affects us, determines us, overwhelms us; it is discernible … at two limits: every encountered fact indicates Being that we are not and which, in its totality, we call “the world.” [And:] The Encompassing that we are cannot be comprehended out of itself, but indicates an other through which it is …

World. The world is neither an illusory backdrop to what is no more than subject to our interpretation, nor is it Being in itself, independent of man but adequately reflected in our knowledge. Instead, the world in its totality is an idea, cognitively inconceivable. What we do know is always in the world, always a perspective on the world, never the world. And even though we bring forth perspectives on the world in its appearance to our thinking being, we do not bring forth the being of the world. The being of the world, independently of its being known, intimates itself at the limit of our knowledge, in the unyielding givenness of encountered factualities.

What is the relation of world and the modes of being human? As being-there, we too are in and of the world; the expressions of meanings entertained in consciousness are events in the world, the effects of spirit are manifest in the concreteness of the world. Yet no mode of being that we are is reducible to the world; each in its own way is radically originary. There are, then, two aspects of the Encompassing of the world. It means the sheer endlessness of whatever can be an object of our cognition. And, the world is “the Encompassing that we are not, the simply other, that in its core is not present to us as our own essence.”

The world contains the conditions for our being-there, for our being consciousness, for our being spirit. If this were to mean that the being that we are is derived from the world, then man would be a microcosm of the cosmos, and the world, indwelling in us, would not be the unfathomable other. But Jaspers recalls that even Aristotle, who sees man within the natural continuum of living beings, regards nous as coming to man from outside. The world remains extraneous to what we are; encompassing whatever we can cognitively know, it remains a mysterious other. As the condition for our very being, it is that by which we are borne; and it is that which is utterly indifferent to our being.

27. VdW, 84. See also Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings, 159.
28. VdW, 87. See also Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings, 160.
The conception of the world is not unitary. It is always someone’s world, and every human being has her own world. One’s world is not only one’s physical environment, but differs according to how one acts in it, or makes use of it. It also differs according to how one shapes it, and consists of the different kinds of interpersonal transaction (social, political, etc.). Different still is the world as object of our understanding and cognition, such as history and scientific research. The world ruptures into many worlds; in each, in its own way, we encounter only factualities in the world. Jaspers cautions against absolutizing any one conception.

The realization of the world as encompassing is of weighty political import. Any particular world taken as the true world as such enables one to regard the world as at one’s disposal for ordering it in accordance with one’s vision. Breaking through every limited perspective on the world sheds light on the fathomless ground in which the world is for us and in which we are as beings who, in our historic originality, gain perspective on it. Thus, to Jaspers, our realization of the world as encompassing also points to our freedom in the following three senses:

- “We become free for the world”: that is, we are able to recover from any particular realization, and proceed in our never-ending quest for knowledge of and meaningfulness in the world.
- “We become free for ourselves in the world”: that is, we can discover, beyond our being of the world, the source of our own becoming within ourselves.29
- “We become free for ourselves in relation to transcendence”: that is, we proceed within the world free for our grounding on transcendence. This calls for our testimony in the form of finite cognition, specific actions, or of the difference we make in shaping the world and our lives.30

Transcendence. Existenz in its freedom is central in pointing to the actuality of transcendence. In Jaspers’s words: “Where I am truly myself, I know that I am given to myself [in the manner of a gift]. The more decisively I am conscious of my freedom, the more undisputed also is the transcendence through which I am.” And he adds, including a phrase from Kierkegaard: “I am Existenz only together with knowledge about transcendence as the power through which I am myself.”31 The reason is that only relatedness to transcendence can affirm

29. VdW, 104.
30. Ibid., 104–5.
31. Ibid., 110; in English in Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings, 175. Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Anti-Climacus, as orthodox Christian, says of the redeemed self: “in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that establishes it” (The Sickness unto Death, Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong [trans.] [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001], 14).

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one’s independence from the conditionality of world-being, and thus confirm one’s freedom.

The different ways of experiencing the – as such hidden – transcendence remain as characterized by Jaspers in the first stage, namely: formal transcending, the existential relations, the reading of the cipher-script. Now, however, Jaspers refers to some of the many names by which, in the history of man’s experience, transcendence has been referred to.

- **Being.** Within philosophy, Being has long been regarded as transcendence, especially in Scholastic thought. And Jaspers, as well as Heidegger, have renewed the question of Being, each in his own way. To Jaspers, Being is transcendence only for abstract thought. Hence – in keeping with the renewal of the question of Being – Jaspers turns to historically more concrete cipher-imagery.

- **Authentic actuality.** The conception of transcendence in this sense of Wirklichkeit (actuality that brings forth) has a long tradition, rooted in the biblical God as creator, in Plato’s demiourgos, and in Aristotle’s prime mover being pure energeia; it is reflected in the Scholastic idea of God as actus purus, and in later conceptions derived therefrom (Descartes, Leibniz). To Jaspers, transcendence as actuality is perceived as that which touches and involves us, to which we are drawn, which offers guidance.

- **Divinity** is the experience of transcendence as the actuality that governs us, that, surrounding us with its presence, addresses us and makes demands upon us.

- **God** is transcendence as person of concern to us as singular persons; God is experienced as the person-to-person relation to us as individuals. It is the idea of transcendence derived from the Hebrew Bible, determining the fundamental experience of transcendence in the West.

Jaspers traces the historical rise of man’s relation to transcendence. The decisive step is the realization of transcendence as “simply other”; the world is no longer regarded as Being as such, sufficient in itself. Akhenaten’s inspiration of the sun as the one fundamental divinity, although monotheistic, is merely a step in that direction. In the traceable history of humanity, taking that step is a feature in what Jaspers calls the axial times, the period he sees as the axis of history. He

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32. See e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, q. 3, a. 4.
34. See Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, q. 3, a. 2.
35. Paraphrasing “das uns … Angehende, das uns Anziehende, Haltgebende” (VdW, 111).
36. Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV), was an eighteenth-dynasty Pharaoh, and sponsor of the short-lived Amarna culture centered on the sun as predominant deity.
says: “Posing radical questions and confronting the abyss, [man] seeks liberation and salvation. Fully conscious of his limits, he sets himself the highest goals. He experiences unconditionality in the depth of his self-being and in the clarity of transcendence.”

In the Hebrew Bible, Jaspers sees one of the most decisive realizations of transcendence in the axial age. Interpreting the first two of the Ten Commandments as ciphers, Jaspers says,

*The one God*: Polytheism is in keeping with natural man and with all of us. … Man stands in contradiction with himself; by serving some gods he offends others. And then the power of Oneness appears with strange force.

*No image and no symbol*: Transcendence lies beyond all ciphers. Therein lies the truth of all philosophizing.

*Reason: the bond within us of all modes of the Encompassing*. In both stages of Jaspers’s renewal of the question of Being, we noted his perception of the rupture of Being into modes, and of the ruptures within the immanent modes. Jaspers raises the question of unity in connection with the rupture of Being into encompassing modes: “[The] source of the unrelenting urge to unity lies in the Encompassing that we are – not only the internal unity of each Encompassing but that of all modes of the Encompassing, that which we are and that which we encounter: *Unity is through Existenz and reason*.” While the motive of unity may arise as an existential concern over personal integrity, the driving force toward unity is a matter of *reason*.

In Jaspers’s phenomenology, reason is a deliberate bonding force: it is the will of reason to “reclaim whatever there is from … mutual indifference and to return it to a movement of belonging together.” Reason does not have any content specific to it, but by virtue of reason we direct ourselves to the content of the other modes of Being. Through reason we bring what is disparate, other and strange, incompatible and indifferent into relation, not to subdue one to the other, but to recognize and to be concerned that there is otherness that claims to be and to be true.

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39. VdW, 113, emphasis added; see also Karl Jaspers: *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 179.
40. VdW, 114; see also Karl Jaspers: *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 179–80.
Jaspers exemplifies the working of reason in the sciences, which, as such, seem to be purely a matter of the understanding. As the motivating force of unity, reason is the impetus of research, a never-ending process of testing and of interim solutions in the form of theoretical constructs. Never satisfied, reason impels us to further questioning and research. The task of reason is, then, not to bond segments of the ruptured wholeness of Being. Instead, it is a decisive force in the history of humanity concerned with the realization of truth, which is never at an end.

Reason is definitive of Jaspers’s conception of the axial age. It is not a coincidence that, together with tragic poetry and scriptural testimonies of man’s hearkening to a transcendent one and singular God who addresses man with demands and guidance, it was the time of the rise of philosophy. For transcending thought, concern over unity and restless questing of truth are the marks of both reason and philosophizing. In modernity, Jaspers sees humanity facing a fundamental challenge second only to that of the axial age. With science having preempted the realm of cogent knowledge, with the irreversible encounter of disparate fundamental truths, differing social norms, conflicting political ideologies, and incompatible cultural values, Jaspers regards reason as the taskmaster of humanity in meeting that challenge – albeit reason in a deliberately communicative mode. We find this at play in all the major aspects of Jaspers’s philosophical work that are the outgrowths of the culmination of his renewal of the question of Being in the philosophy of the Encompassing: the philosophy of modernity and history; the philosophy of science coupled with his idea of the research university; his conception of the statesman as a man of reason, and of politics as grounded in the supra-political; his consideration of the mutual encounter of religious beliefs, and his own encounter with revealed religion; his vision of a world philosophy to come; his project of a world history of philosophy.

IV. TRUTH FOR MAN IN TIME

In light of the reorientation, culminating in the disclosure of Being and its modes as encompassing, Jaspers approaches the question of truth with respect to unity. But truth in its unity, encompassing any human realization, is transcendent. Hence an inquiry into truth with respect to its unity can be only an illumination, with shafts of light that are finite and defined, of the encompassing truth within which we find ourselves.

While traditional theories of truth are valid within respective bounds, they stop short of addressing the question as now defined. In his discussion of the theories of validity of propositions, correspondence, and alētheia (Heidegger), Jaspers finds that they are directed to the rupture of Being. And the Scholastic
principle of *omne ens est verum, unum, bonum*, while addressing unity, eschews the perspective of human temporality.

Another theory of truth that Jaspers discusses is truth as origin and goal. A conception of truth with no recognizable historical precedent, it is proposed by Jaspers in opposition to the relativism of historicism current in the early twentieth century. Truth as origin and goal means that there is no fundamental determinant as to what is truth for man in time, for it encompasses time and temporality:

> Our will to truth is not satisfied with any [realized] truth. … [C]ertain that it is derived from a ground and on the way to a goal … no configuration of truth will satisfy as we are still on the way. … Even though this ultimate goal … is never reached in time, it can guide us … The idea of encompassing truth means … the rejection … of all false anticipation of redemption … We prefer open honesty, whatever its consequences, to a happy sense of security protected by means of blinders … [T]he thought of “being-true” as endless promotes the strength of carrying on the restless search.41

Accordingly, Jaspers sets himself the task of illuminating encompassing truth, and, with reference to the historical experience of thought, he does so in three ways, in a phenomenology spread over 600 pages of *Von der Wahrheit*, to which we cannot do justice in brief. The ways of illumination are distinct and are not derived from a common principle; nor do they function as elements or stages of a coherent construct. They merely intersect.

The first of these ways concerns “Truth and Falsehood.”42 The meaning of “being true” is here illuminated from the perspective that, for man, truth functions as a criterion rather than as an actuality. Measured against the criterion, however conceived, what man realizes is not fully truth but is, in fact, untruth. Truth in its encompassing unity is manifest, as it appears to man, as being less than truth. “Il n'y a point, pour nous, – êtres imparfaits, – de vérité parfaite,”43 Jean Paumen says. Not only are we deceived and deceptive; not only is realized untruth the path in our search for truth; not only is untruth, even lying, a deliberately chosen vehicle of human realization in thought, in action, and in interpersonal relations; but untruth is an indispensable mode of the very being of truth for man.

A familiar instance is the theological function of the symbol. The symbol is a falsehood in a sense in which the sign is not, that is, by representing what is never as such present to our consciousness. If the symbol or the analogy is meant as the presentation of transcendent actuality, it is a deception. The deceptiveness is reduced – not eliminated – by exposing the untruth of the symbol as the vehicle of the irreducible transcendence, for example of the divinity. The phenomenon of shipwreck of thought is, to Jaspers, a prime mode of exposing thought as inadequate to the realization of transcendent truth, thus dependent on the vehicle of untruth.

*Configurations of Truth* is the second way of illumination, as Jaspers turns to the forms in which truth in its unity can be discerned as a phenomenon of the concreteness of truth for man in time. Truth manifest to us is a matter of many truths and modes of truth. As we seek the unity of this multiplicity it becomes more elusive and obscure. The deity, however conceived, that might be posited as the fulfillment of unity, is present within received traditions functioning in the form of institutional structures, established orders, and cultural dispositions. Yet, since these do not only include but exclude, they dismantle the unity vouchsafed by our directedness toward the one God. Thus the very pursuit of the wholeness of truth brings into focus the fragmentation of truth.

We attain truth in time through inquiry or enactment, through the order we live in or try to establish, through the guidance we receive that may pit us against others in their truth. In any of these instances truth in time can be seen as limited and encompassed by truth in its transcendent unity. Truth in time does not take the place of truth in its encompassing unity, but the one truth functions within truth in time by breaking into its confines. Neither derivable nor expectable from the knowledge or power of human realization, it will burst into our lives and into human history, signaling a truth that encompasses man's truth. This can take many forms, but for Jaspers the main concrete configurations by which truth in its unity functions in its breakthrough for man in time are those of *authority* and the *exception*. They are polar opposites, but both are

45. Xavier Tilliette, Professor at the Gregoriana, shows how, in the broad sweep of Jaspers’s theory of truth, what is true for man in time is defined in its limitation over against the transcendence of truth in its oneness. Yet Tilliette looks for some cognitive assurance of the groundedness of man’s limitation in transcendence, which he fails to find in Jaspers. As a way to such assurance he suggests the theological doctrine of analogy. But what pertains to the symbol pertains to the theological use of analogy: the divine actuality that is inferred analogically differs from all other analogically inferred actualities in that it remains an inferred actuality. (With respect to proofs for the existence of God, Jaspers is wont to point out that an inferred God is not God; God in his transcendence is a matter of existential faith or not at all.) See Xavier Tilliette SJ, *Karl Jaspers: Théorie de la vérité, métaphysique des chiffres, foi philosophique* (Paris: Aubier, 1960), esp. 149ff.
indispensable intimations of the unity of truth in the face of the immanent fragmentation, disruption, and limitation of truth. The mark of authority is the sort of universality that, in its intention and potentiality, comprises and concerns all men. But human universality is itself limited, hence truth for man in its encompassing unity requires the challenge of the exception. Even as the truth of authority can become an atrophied caricature of truth unless breached by the exception, so man, in the exception of his truth, will intensify his own limitation unless nourished and challenged by authority.

To Jaspers, the ultimate configurations are not authority and exception but reason and catholicity, each functioning within authority as well as exception. Reason, perennially in search of unity, is not fulfilled in time. The position of the fulfillment of truth in time is the rival of the rule of communicative reason. Jaspers calls this rival – whether appearing in culture, politics, or religion – the position of catholicity. Although the impulse toward unity springs from reason in either case, there is a fundamental difference in executing this impulse, whether oneness of truth is a matter of communicative openness or a matter of realizing a vision of truth deemed to be valid for and binding on all.

The first two illuminations focus on more formal features of the question of truth; in the third illumination Jaspers means to approach the question from the perspective of man’s intimacy with what is true for him. The title of this approach is “Vollendung des Wahrseins” (“The Being of Truth in its Completion”). Radically speaking, the form in which truth is effectively complete is a matter of the singular Existenz; in philosophical abstraction we can only generalize about such forms. The two types of existentially effective completion that Jaspers characterizes are “original intuitions” and “philosophizing.”

He begins the discussion of original intuitions as follows: “It is characteristic of man as man to direct his gaze into the ground of truth. Truth is there for him at all times, and it is within him by means of some language, be it ever so rough or opaque.” Religion, art, and poetry are the ordinary designations of what, for Jaspers, are the intuitions that afford visions of the ground of truth. They are the life-founding completion of truth for man in time, and accomplish this in a manner that is original, that is, not primarily reflective, although their

49. Ibid., 915.

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expressions and traditions can reach pinnacles of spiritual sophistication in the form of scriptural legacies, mythic traditions, literary creations, iconic art, and so on.

Jaspers exemplifies the manner in which original intuitions have been effective as the completion of truth in time—particularly in light of inevitable limit situations and the phenomenon of foundering—by means of an essay on the tragic and its relation to the idea of redemption. To Jaspers, tragic knowledge is not the perception of the indifferent observer but the cognition of one who is affected at the limit of possibility, in the face of limit situations, where the realization of truth in thought and in deed experiences shipwreck. Jaspers sees Shakespeare's Hamlet as “steadfast in his will to truth …, fully committed to the here-and-now, who does not deny himself to the world but is excluded from it, who fully delivers himself to his destiny and, in his heroism, is devoid of pathos.” Tragic knowledge signals a man's transformation, leading either to rising beyond the tragic in the direction of redemptive grounding in the source of Being, or to a nihilism of aesthetic contemplation, detached, without grounding. Jaspers traces the conception of redemption to the axial times of the millennium before Christianity, when knowledge of the dire state of humanity no longer referred merely to the everyday facts of illness, old age, and death. It was now seen as the fundamental human condition.

Jaspers discusses redemption in Greek tragedy (Aeschylus, Sophocles; absent in Euripides), the dissolution of tragedy in Christian redemptive grace (Dante, Calderón), the philosophical tragedies of Goethe (Faust) and Lessing (Nathan the Wise), the perversion of tragic knowledge in tragic worldviews (Unamuno). Jaspers cautions that the tragic is not absolute, that there are limits to the interpretation of the tragic, that original intuition of the tragic must be maintained lest its significance be lost. In its true historic intuition, the tragic is “questioning and thinking … as well as the overcoming of the tragic, but not through doctrines and revelation, but with respect to order, right, love of fellow man; in trust, in not making final decisions, in the question that has no answer.”

Within philosophic reflection on the encompassing unity of truth, religion, as with the tragic, is identified in its absolute personal significance as the original intuition of the completion of truth in time. This is an additional basis for Jaspers's stand in regard to the demythologizing controversy, his idea of a “philosophic faith,” and the confrontation of revealed religion with faith philosophically conceived.

It is deliberate reflection that is the mark of distinction of the philosophic concern over the completion of truth in time for man. The stress is on

50. Ibid., 942–3.
51. Ibid., 959.
philosophizing – whichever form it takes – as the preeminent existentially effective completion of truth in time. Philosophizing is activity, neither doctrine nor a distinctive way of crafting a doctrine. Hence the key and culmination of Jaspers's exploration of the completion of truth is an essay on reason. Here the completion of truth in its unity is seen as impossible for man in time, but completion of truth in time is turned into the task of self-realization through exercising a will to total communication. And, conversely, communication is seen as the ultimate vehicle of the concretion of truth in time. Truth in time is, then, not something we can realize in its completeness, but its completion is the task of our temporal career. It is by virtue of communicative reason that, for Jaspers, philosophizing is the “ground and completion” of truth. It is that because communicative reason is present wherever there is testimony to one’s own finitude in the face of encompassing truth, testimony that consists in communicative openness to the other, no matter how crude and how far removed from the sophistication of the philosophic craftsman. In Jaspers, the problem of truth for man in time, although informed by the testimony of man’s experience, is turned to the enactments of human life, the everyday life as well as the bigger arenas such as politics, religion, the life of the spirit.

In each of the three illuminations of truth on the way between origin and goal, truth in its unity is seen as exceeding man's capacity, and thereby it is left in its encompassing transcendence. The transcendence of the truth does not reduce either man or man’s truths to insignificance. Through the transcendence of truth, the finitude that is man, in which he finds himself, which he confronts, shapes, and realizes, is the field of truth for man in time. Man is invested with the task of actualizing truth through the capacities given to him, most fundamentally communicative reason, and thereby of gaining the actualization of his freedom. But the measure of the truth of the various pursuits and ways is the unity of truth in its encompassing transcendence, a cipher functioning as a measure: in the first, in the sense of the perfection of truth; in the second, as truth in its wholeness; in the third, as truth in its completion.

Jaspers’s treatment in *Von der Wahrheit* of truth for man in time is a completion of what he began in *Philosophie*. The earlier work reopens the question of

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52. *Ibid.*, 960. Readers should not be led by this reference to “communicative reason” into thinking that Jaspers’s thought has had an influence on Jürgen Habermas. Habermas’s use of “reason” differs from Jaspers’s; what Habermas means by “reason” is what Jaspers means by the “understanding.” Also, what Habermas means by “communication” differs from Jaspers, as Jaspers’s “communication” falls within the area of what Buber means by “dialogue,” although there are significant differences between them. See “Dialogue and Communication – Buber and Jaspers,” in my *Karl Jaspers: Philosophy as Faith* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), 77–97.
Being and truth in its unity as an existential exigency, and the later work subjects the question to radical exploration.

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Fundamental philosophy**


**Philosophy of faith and religion**


**History of philosophy**


**Political philosophy**


Philosophy of modernity and history


Psychiatry and psychology

A full century has passed since Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) published his two-volume *Logical Investigations* (1900/1901), which set in motion the phenomenological movement as we know it. Bertrand Russell proposed to review this “monumental” work for the journal *Mind* in 1917, although the review was never completed and a friend later described the task as being “very much like trying to swallow a whale.”¹ The predicament of the reader one hundred years later has only worsened, since grasping the movement now requires digesting not only one whale but a whole pod – not only Husserl, but also Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61), Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), to name but a few of the most important and prolific – and to follow the philosophical currents set in motion by these thinkers whose intellectual heritage can be traced back to Husserl and phenomenology.

Some fifty years after the publication of the *Logical Investigations*, Merleau-Ponty lamented that the question “What is phenomenology?” had yet to be answered in a definitive way.² Ricoeur, also writing mid-century, suggested that we view Husserl as the knot tying the movement together; but he was also quick to note that what we count as phenomenology must include not only the various formulations of it in Husserl’s own writings, but also the “heresies” of those who

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¹. The remark comes from Constance Malleson, as reported by Ronald W. Clark in *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), 348. Russell’s review never appeared owing to a delay in the translation of the Sixth Investigation.

came after him. Herbert Spiegelberg, whose treatise on The Phenomenological Movement (1960) remains unsurpassed as an introduction to the thinkers and themes of this tradition, writes that it would be a “misconception” to think “that there is such a thing as a system or school called ‘phenomenology’ with a solid body of teachings.” This is so not because phenomenology has been unable to achieve an adequate level of clarity about its own task, but because it was substantially reinvented and reinvigorated by each successive generation of phenomenologists and, as a result, became one of the richest and most diverse movements in twentieth-century Western thought. This essay provides a historical introduction to the phenomenological movement and to the main developments within it. After considering the history of phenomenology in Germany, the essay traces its reception in France, and ends with a consideration of its status as an international movement and the question of its future.

I. HUSserL AND THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL CIRCLES AT MUNICH AND GÖTTINGEN

Husserl’s earliest writings cannot properly be considered phenomenological, although they were to lead him to problems that put him on the path to phenomenology as he ultimately came to understand it. His first book, The Philosophy of Arithmetic (1891), attempted to derive the fundamental concepts of mathematics by means of a descriptive psychology of acts of mathematical thinking. The attempt was roundly criticized by Gottlieb Frege, although the latter’s target was not Husserl alone but the “widespread philosophical sickness” of employing psychology to answer questions in logic. The planned second volume of Husserl’s

3. Quoted in Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction, 3rd rev. and enlarged ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 586. Ricoeur was the French translator of Husserl’s Ideas I and also published a line-by-line analysis of that work. Born in Provence, he was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. Ricoeur had a synthetic turn of mind and a sure grasp of the grand sweep of contemporary philosophy, both European and Anglo-American. He published important works in the philosophy of language and hermeneutics, on metaphor and narrative, on Freud and psychoanalysis, on phenomenology, and in his last works on subjectivity and ethics. [*] His work is discussed in the essay by Wayne J. Froman in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.


work on arithmetic never appeared and Husserl himself remarked that although the descriptive analyses he had attempted brought a certain clarity to the origin of subjective acts of mathematical thinking, he could discover no way to pass from the subjective connections between ideas to the distinctive objectivity and theoretical unity of mathematics as such. In effect, there was no way to “reconcile the objectivity of mathematics, and of all science in general, with a psychological foundation for logic.”

The first volume of the *Logical Investigations* was subsequently devoted to a thoroughgoing critique of psychologism in logic while the second volume, appearing a year later, contained six studies devoted respectively to expression and meaning, the problem of universals, the theory of parts and wholes, acts of meaning and the idea of a pure grammar, intentional experience, and the elements of a phenomenological account of knowledge.7

The elucidation of the intentional structure of consciousness remains a primary contribution of the *Logical Investigations* and of phenomenology generally. Franz Brentano (1838–1917), from whom Husserl takes the term “intentionality,” argued that all conscious experience is intentional, by which he meant that it is directed toward something: there is no perceiving without something perceived, no imagining without something imagined, no judging without something judged.8 Husserl uses intentionality in largely the same way to indicate that all consciousness is consciousness of something, although he also recognizes that some mental phenomena, such as sensations or sensation complexes, are not themselves intentional. Intentionality, as it is understood by Husserl and Brentano alike, is not to be understood in terms of the relation of a mental act to an extra-mental object or really existing thing. Imagining and hallucinating, for example, are both intentional acts but neither is directed toward objects that exist or are real in our usual sense of the term. In later works, Husserl will seek to clarify the status of the intentional object and to articulate more fully its relation to the intentional act, but what initially interested him was not the act–object relationship but the connections between different intentional acts or between different aspects of a single complex act. For example, the complex intentional act judging that “the cup is white” points back to, or in

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7. For a detailed discussion of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, see the essay by Thomas Nenon in this volume.

8. Brentano writes, “Every psychical phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional, (or sometimes the mental) inexistence of an object, and what we should like to call … the directedness (Richtung) toward an object (which in this context is not to be understood as something real)” (*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt I*, Buch II, Kapitel I §5, 125–6, quoted in Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement*, 36).
Husserl’s terms, is “founded,” in a prior act in which the whiteness of the cup is given in a “fulfilling” perception. This act of perception, in turn, has both complete and incomplete aspects: the back of the cup is only emptily intended in my perception of the front of the cup, although this empty intention can only be filled in by certain kinds of contents and not others. The idea that every act of consciousness – no matter how seemingly simple – is determined as a set of relations between “founded” and unfounded acts, and between “empty” or “merely signative” acts and “fulfilling” or “intuitive” acts becomes evident from a careful reflection on the nature of these acts considered ideally. A full, descriptive account of the structural relations governing the manner in which objects or states of affairs are given in consciousness was the central aim of Husserl’s early phenomenology.

Over the next decade, phenomenological circles inspired by Husserl’s work sprang up in both Munich and Göttingen. The Akademischer Verein für Psychologie, attended by the more advanced students of Theodore Lipps (1851–1914), was already in existence in Munich when the Logical Investigations appeared with Husserl’s extended attack on Lipps’s psychologism. Lipps defended his position before the group with the unexpected result that many of them became confirmed opponents of his position and converted, as it were, to phenomenology. This was the case for both Alexander Pfänder (1871–1941) and Johannes Daubert (1877–1947), who were the leading members of the group at the time. Several members of the Munich Circle went on to work as phenomenologists for the duration of their academic careers. Pfänder became one of Husserl’s collaborators on the Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung, as did Moritz Geiger (1880–1937), Max Scheler (1874–1928), and Adolf Reinach (1883–1917). The Jahrbuch would publish some of the most significant contributions to phenomenology, including the first volume of Husserl’s Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy (1913) and the first two divisions of Heidegger’s Being and Time (1927). Pfänder and Geiger made modest but noteworthy contributions to phenomenology during academic careers spent chiefly in Munich (although Geiger fled Germany during the Second World War and spent his last years as a professor at Vassar College in New York). Pfänder’s contribution was primarily in the domain of psychology, his work consisting mainly of descriptive analyses of various acts of willing, and of the structure of other-directed positive and

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9. An exceptionally clear and succinct discussion of Husserl’s thought, including its early phases, is to be found in Steven Galt Crowell, “Husserlian Phenomenology,” in A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (eds) (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).
negative sentiments (e.g. benevolence, friendliness, ill-will, or hostility). Geiger also made contributions to a phenomenologically based descriptive psychology, focusing like Pfänder on questions of the will, but he was better known for his contributions to a phenomenology of aesthetic acts and attitudes.

Max Scheler was a major figure in phenomenology and in the intellectual life of Germany during his lifetime. Scheler completed both his doctoral dissertation and his habilitation thesis (by the age of twenty-five) under the direction of Jena philosopher Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926). Eucken believed that the philosopher had a special role to play in measuring the practices and attitudes of contemporary society against the unchanging and transcendent moral values that could be discerned by philosophy. Scheler inherited Eucken's commitment to the idea of unchanging values as well as the latter's concern for contemporary life and society; what he sought from phenomenology was a method by which to discern transcendent values and to preserve their status independent of the workings of logic and cognition. By Scheler's own account, he met Husserl at a party in Halle in 1901 and found his ideas about nonsensuous or categorial intuition immediately useful to his own projects. Brilliant and charismatic, Scheler rose to prominence in both the Munich and Göttingen circles, writing major works on the notion of resentment and *The Nature of Sympathy* (1923). His most enduring phenomenological work was his *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Value* (1913), although he was better known to the general reading public for

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10. Pfänder's most significant contributions to phenomenology were still in fragmentary form at the time of his death, but have since been edited and published by his students. Of the works published during his lifetime, *Die Seele des Menschen* (1933) was undoubtedly the most mature expression of his views. A translation of his seminal essay, "Motive and Motivation," and of some of his early work on the will and on logic may be found in *Phenomenology of Willing and Motivation and Other Phaenomenologica*, Herbert Spiegelberg (ed.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

11. Klaus Berger reports that Geiger's lectures in aesthetics, given in Munich between 1909 and 1922, "were among the more important events at the University" (in Moritz Geiger, *The Significance of Art: A Phenomenological Approach to Aesthetics*, Klaus Berger [ed. and trans.] [Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1986], xvii). Geiger's *Zugange zur Ästhetik* was published in 1928, at which time he also announced plans for a major work in aesthetics. At the time of his death in 1937, an initial section of this book, looking at the foundations of value aesthetics, was fairly well developed although not in final form. A second section on the differentiated structures of various art forms was left in a very fragmentary state. Berger collected the more developed parts of this manuscript together with selections from Geiger's earlier work on aesthetics and published the whole under the title *The Significance of Art*.

12. Eucken lectured widely in Europe and America after the First World War, speaking of the unity of humankind and the need to overcome the self-destructive impulses that had fueled the war. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1908. An overview of Eucken's influence on Scheler's philosophy can be found in H. Bershady, "Introduction," in M. Scheler, *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings*, H. Bershady (ed.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
an essay that appeared on the eve of the First World War. There in “The Genius of War” he advocated going to war, arguing that a refined German spirit (Geist) could cure Europe of what ailed it, specifically the draining forces of autocracy in Russia, the dry and sterile rationalism of France, and the crude utilitarianism of England.13

Adolf Reinach, the fourth member of the Jahrbuch editorial team, may well be the least known of Husserl's early collaborators but he played a significant role in propagating a realist strain of phenomenology and did as much as anyone in the early years to promote the phenomenological movement. As a Privatdozent in Göttingen during Husserl's tenure there, Reinach14 had a profound influence on members of the Göttingen Circle, including Alexandre Koyré, Roman Ingarden, and Edith Stein.15 Koyré and Stein, for example, both

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*13. Scheler's work is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this volume.
14. Reinach was part of the "Munich invasion" of 1905, when a number of Lipps's students began coming regularly to Göttingen to attend Husserl's seminars. Daubert was among the first to come, and with him came Reinach. They would be followed by Geiger and Scheler, among others.
15. Koyré (1892–1964) studied with Husserl and the mathematician David Hilbert at the University of Göttingen (1908–11) before coming to Paris, where he followed Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France and studied with Léon Brunschvicg and Étienne Gilson at the Sorbonne (1912–14). After the First World War, he emigrated to Paris, where he taught at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (1922–32, 1950s), Fuad University (later Cairo University) (1932–34, 1935–38, 1940–41), Johns Hopkins University (1950s), and the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study (starting in 1956). Koyré was the first to introduce Bergson's work in Germany in 1911 at the Göttingen Circle and was the first to bring Husserl's phenomenology to France. His emphasis on phenomenology in the interpretation of Hegel was influential for the Hegelianism of Alexandre Kojève and Jean-Paul Sartre. While best known for his work on Descartes and Hegel, Koyré also made important contributions to the history of science. His most important text, Études galiléennes, was published in three volumes in 1939 (Vol. 1: A l’aube de la science classique; Vol. 2: La Loi de la chute des corps: Descartes et Galilée; Vol. 3: Galilée et la loi d’inertie) and was dedicated to Émile Meyerson (1859–1933), whose own work on epistemology played a significant role in Koyré's thinking. Some aspects of Koyré's role in bringing phenomenology to France are noted below. [*] His contribution to French Hegelianism is also discussed in an essay by John Russon in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.

Ingarden (1893–1970) studied with Husserl from 1912 to 1918 in Göttingen and remained in touch with Husserl by letter until the latter died in 1938. Ingarden is best known for his phenomenological investigations of works of art, including literature, music, and the plastic arts. He pursued painstaking descriptions of the various “strata” that make up the work of art, arguing that even the lowest, most material strata were imbued with cultural constructions. In a move that resonates well with reader-response theory in literature as well as with other contemporary theories of art, Ingarden argued that the work of art was not complete in and of itself and that its meaning emerged as it was concretized by the reader, viewer, or listener. Ingarden was also interested in essential methodological questions concerning the foundation of phenomenology and did not fully embrace Husserl's transcendental turn. His major works in phenomenological aesthetics include Das literarische Kunstwerk (1965; The
report that they learned phenomenology from Reinach rather than Husserl. It is no doubt under Reinach's influence that the group came to see phenomenology not only as a study of the essential structures of consciousness, but even more so as a universal philosophy of essences. And it was during this period that some in Germany began to equate phenomenological intuition with an untenable rebirth of Platonism. Husserl himself was inclined to dismiss some of the discussions of his students during this time as a “picture book phenomenology” overly concerned with the essences of everyday objects, perceptions, and states of affairs. But even as Husserl disavowed his own earlier characterization of phenomenology as a descriptive psychology, Reinach and many in the Göttingen Circle insisted on the legitimacy and fruitfulness of this understanding and of the inquiry into essences arrived at through careful and precise investigation or intuiting with respect to ideal cases. The Göttingen phase of phenomenology ended when Husserl moved to Freiburg in 1916, but there can be no doubt that Reinach's death in action in 1917 also spelled the end of an independent realist phenomenology.

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18. Schumann and Smith, “Adolf Reinach,” 20. Reinach was the managing editor of the first volume of the Jahrbuch, which appeared in 1913, containing the first part of Husserl’s Ideas as well as contributions by the other coeditors. It is around this time that he began to take his distance from Husserl's thought and its transcendental idealism.

II. HUSSERL’S TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Husserl's journals and personal correspondence from the Göttingen years paint a picture of the philosopher struggling to win clarity on the fundamental issue of the relation of the intentional act to its object.20 In his earlier work, Husserl had already branded the traditional epistemological problem of how subjective thoughts reach a world of external objects a pseudo-problem bred by lack of clarity. However, he remained puzzled by the “enigma” of cognition and particularly by the problem of how the really immanent components of the stream of conscious experience (this perception of whiteness) are related to the nonimmanent or transcendent meanings that make our experience an experience of something (a white cup). The solution to this problem was broached first in a short text on The Idea of Phenomenology (1907) and then in detail in Ideas I (1913). It involved the insight that the relation between transcendence and immanence was itself something that could be immanently given and thus made the object of a pure, phenomenological description. In setting out to develop a pure, presuppositionless critique of cognition, Husserl had to describe the manner in which cognition and its object are bound together, but this description could not use anything that was not self-evidently or intuitively given to consciousness.21 The famous transcendental–phenomenological reductions that make up the phenomenological method were developed precisely to secure the givenness of the phenomenological datum, in this case the relation of the intentional act and its object.

Like much else in Husserlian phenomenology, the reductions are reworked numerous times both in the published texts and in unpublished writings – of which there are forty thousand shorthand pages in Husserl’s Nachlass. A first kind of reduction to essences – an eidetic reduction – was already in use in the Logical Investigations, where Husserl recognized that the experience of an

21. Edmund Husserl, The Idea of Phenomenology, William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (trans.) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1964), 37. Eduard Marbach explains that for the Logical Investigations, “Only intentional acts, given in phenomenological reflection, count as presuppositionless epistemological data. The acts of cognition relevant for the basic epistemological question about truth are intentionally fulfilled acts in which the intended objects comes to intuitional self-givenness. Strictly speaking, nothing can be said about the object of cognition except that it is intended in an act that must be more closely determined. When, from the end of 1906 on, Husserl proceeded to designate as a phenomenologically evident datum not only the act but also the intentional correlate of this act, that is, the intentional object just as it is intended in this act, there followed very decisive consequences for carrying through the phenomenological theory of cognition” (Rudolf Bernet, Iso Kern, and Eduard Marbach, An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993], 55–6).
phenomenology at home and abroad

particular object will always be limited by contingent features of the subject's physical situation vis-à-vis the object and by her personal history and any associations she may connect with the object. Phenomenological reflection, in performing an eidetic reduction, abstracts from these contingent features (e.g. the dim light in which the cup is right now seen or the fact that it bears the logo of this particular café) and attends to universal and essential features of the cognizing act. Nor is this reduction limited to phenomenology; it is a standard feature of all kinds of conceptual and mathematical analyses.

The reductions that belong more particularly to the transcendental period of Husserl’s thought are the epochē and the full set of reductions that Husserl simply calls transcendental–phenomenological. The epochē concerns the possibility of suspending or bracketing presuppositions about the object that belong to our everyday or “natural” attitude. In the natural attitude, the subject takes for granted that the chair in which she sits or the paper on which she writes are really there in front of her with just these physical and perceptual properties. Likewise, the subject in the natural attitude takes for granted the results of various sciences and subscribes to various unquestioned beliefs handed down to her by her society or culture. The effect of the epochē and its accompanying transcendental–phenomenological reductions is not so much that the subject comes to doubt these beliefs, as that she suspends them or makes no use of them. The upshot for the critique of cognition is that one no longer worries whether or not the cup being perceived right now “really exists”; the question of existence is put into brackets or put out of play. Similarly bracketed is any account of perception that depends on an acquaintance with theories that come from biology, neuroscience, psychology, or any other science. The epochē is not like radical Cartesian doubt in which I lose the world temporarily in order later to regain my certainty about it. As long as I am engaged in phenomenological reflection, the epochē remains in play. Its function is only to make possible a pure presuppositionless description of the objective correlate of the intentional act as such. The “exclusion of Nature” is “the methodic means for initially making possible the turning of regard to transcendentally pure consciousness.”

The transcendental–phenomenological reductions go on to expose the remaining kinds of transcendencies (that is, those nonimmanent elements of conscious experience) that must be put out of play or bracketed in a phenomenological description. In Ideas I, Husserl writes that “it is immediately understandable” that the suspension of the natural world brings along with it a bracketing of “all sorts of cultural formations, all works of the technical and fine arts, of sciences” and “aesthetic and practical values of every form” including

our ideas of the reality of political states, moral customs, law, and religion.  
Again, the idea is not to doubt the reality of such things but to make no use of beliefs imported from these realms in developing pure descriptions of the operations or essential structures of different types of cognition and conscious experience. While the suspension of the natural and social sciences and all social and cultural values was, for Husserl, an obvious extension of the original reduction, he was less certain about whether (and to what extent) the ego could be reduced, and about whether a suspension of pure logic and of phenomenology itself was possible. Husserl would return to these topics in later writings and his struggles to win a truly presuppositionless starting-point for a critique of cognition would prove to be a lifetime concern. For Husserl, phenomenology was to be a rigorous philosophical science clarifying the epistemological norms governing every region of human consciousness, but the success of this project was directly dependent on whether the phenomenological datum – consciousness and its essential structures – could be given in a pure presuppositionless form.

When Husserl’s thought took its transcendental turn, it cost him many of his former students and thus he arrived in Freiburg in 1916 having to make a fresh start. It was there that he met Heidegger, a junior professor who would become his assistant and whose impact on phenomenology would be at least as important as Husserl’s own, even as it spelled the end of Husserl’s dream of phenomenology as a collectively pursued pure presuppositionless science of conscious experience.

### III. HEIDEGGER AND FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY

To what extent should Heidegger be considered a phenomenologist? Today few doubt his central place in the history of the movement, but it is noteworthy that scholars writing in the 1960s could earnestly debate this question. Early treatments of phenomenology in English, if they mention Heidegger at all, tend to emphasize the differences between Husserl and Heidegger and, depending on the camp, extol the rigor and scientific spirit of the former or the brilliance and originality of the latter. Husserlians, in particular, wanted to distance phenomenology from the seemingly impenetrable language of Heidegger’s philosophy and from its existential overtones. By contrast, Heideggerians were anxious to preserve the independence of the question of the meaning of Being and touted Heidegger’s work, as he did himself, not as phenomenology but as fundamental ontology. French accounts of phenomenology, then as now, were more inclined to see Husserl’s and Heidegger’s work as roughly continuous. Levinas, for

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example, who studied with both Husserl and Heidegger in Freiburg, thought of Heidegger’s work as “the fruition and flowering of Husserlian phenomenology,” although he readily acknowledges that Heidegger in no way proposed a transcendental phenomenology along the lines of Ideas I.

Although Heidegger seems to have had no early personal contact with Husserl or members of the phenomenological circles, his interest in phenomenology dates to his student days at Freiburg University. In a famous essay – “My Way to Phenomenology” (1963) – Heidegger reports having had Husserl’s Logical Investigations on his desk for two years in the student dormitories and having read it “again and again … without gaining sufficient insight into what fascinated me.” Of course, the other book that Heidegger speaks of as being “the chief help and guide of my first awkward attempt to penetrate into philosophy” was Brentano’s dissertation “On the Manifold Meaning of Being since Aristotle” (1862). The young Heidegger received this book from his high-school teacher and the story of this gift is often told as a reminder that, for Heidegger, prior to phenomenology there was the question of the meaning of Being. Theodore Kisiel convincingly proposes that Heidegger’s two principal influences – Aristotle’s account of the ways in which Being is said (the problem of the “categories”) and phenomenology’s account of the intentional structure of conscious experience – were knit together in an important way by the mediating influence of Emil Lask (1875–1915). Like Heidegger, Lask was a student of the neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936) and was also deeply influenced by Husserl’s thought. Lask was interested in what Fichte had described as facticity: our brute encounter with the world. But whereas for Fichte the factic is the “irrational par excellence … the ‘matter’ given to thought,” Lask maintained (pace Husserl) that the world is given not only in sensuous intuition but in categorial intuition as well: for Lask, there is “a precognitive moment in which the initial categories or forms first present themselves as simply given in experience before

25. In a lecture course from 1925, Heidegger is especially dismissive of the Munich tradition of phenomenology, saying that although the Logical Investigations influenced Lipps’s Munich students, the book “was regarded simply as an improved descriptive psychology.” Heidegger makes it clear that this is a misinterpretation, although one that Husserl himself briefly labored under. See Martin Heidegger, History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena, Theodore Kisiel (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 25.
27. Ibid.
they are known.”29 We “live” in this pretheoretical moment before we explicitly “know” anything of it and it is life in this sense that Lask claims is especially worthy of philosophical investigation: what is philosophically significant is “not brute factic life but rather the sphere of immediate experience replete with value, of life already made worthwhile.”30 This claim resonates with the fundamental task undertaken in Heidegger’s best-known work, Being and Time (1927), where the aim is an analysis of the complex and irreducible relationships that structure our everyday understanding of the world and remain concealed within the apparent immediacy of that understanding.

After writing his thesis on Duns Scotus (which Rickert suggested was more in thrall to Lask’s work than might be desirable), Heidegger joined the Freiburg faculty as a Privatdozent or junior professor. Husserl arrived the following year to fill Rickert’s Chair. Heidegger reports that it was only when he had a chance to work directly with Husserl that he came fully to understand the method of phenomenological “seeing.”31 He also remarks, however, that the better he came to understand phenomenology, the more he saw it as “fruitful for the interpretation of Aristotle’s writing” and the less able he was to separate his own thinking from that of Aristotle and the Greeks.32 As for their personal relationship, Heidegger served as Husserl’s assistant in Freiburg until 1923,33 regularly teaching a “Phenomenological Practicum” for beginners (usually in conjunction with a reading of either Aristotle or Descartes) while Husserl offered a corresponding seminar for more advanced students. In 1923, Heidegger left Freiburg for a position at Marburg and there began the most fruitful period of his career. As before, he taught courses on phenomenology and continued the tradition of

31. Ibid., 78. There were other decisive influences on Heidegger’s work as well as phenomenology and the Greeks. Early encounters with the writings of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Schelling, Hegel, Rilke, Trakl, and Dilthey were formative for the questions developed in Being and Time and for Heidegger’s later writings.
32. During the period from 1917 to 1919, Heidegger served for a time in the German military, completing basic training in May 1918 and then serving in the meteorological services until the end of the First World War. There has been some dispute about just when and where he served. Kisiel collects the relevant evidence in The Genesis of Heidegger’s “Being and Time,” 553 n.6. The period from 1917 to 1919 is also noteworthy as the time when Heidegger appears to have set aside his religious convictions. In a letter to Englebert Krebs, he writes of a “transformation of my fundamental standpoint” during this time which “made the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me” (quoted in ibid., 553 n.6).
33. Being and Time was rushed into publication when Heidegger was recommended by the faculty at Marburg for a full professorship. Husserl was instrumental in having the completed parts published in the Jahrbuch and also in a separate edition by Niemeyer. For Heidegger’s account of the publication history, see Heidegger, “My Way to Phenomenology,” 74–82.
offering a phenomenology “practicum” for beginning and advanced students. It was during the Marburg years that Husserl and Heidegger collaborated (with limited success) on an article on “Phenomenology” for the Encyclopaedia Britannica. It was also during this period that Heidegger wrote the bulk of Being and Time. In 1928, when Husserl retired, he named Heidegger as the only adequate successor to his Chair. Husserl seems to have recommended his younger colleague for this post without having read Being and Time, although he was instrumental in the publication of this work. Had he read Heidegger’s magnum opus, he might have been reluctant to see in his former assistant the successor to his own phenomenological project. Indeed, it is clear from later correspondence that he came to feel that Heidegger’s work neglected the fundamental importance of the phenomenological reductions, with the result that his thought ended up effecting a return to the anthropologism and psychologism Husserl had been at pains to eradicate from philosophy. While there was no formal break between the two men, it is striking that after his first semester back in Freiburg, Heidegger never again offered a course with phenomenology in the title (with the single exception of a seminar on Hegel’s thought).

Heidegger’s most intense engagement with phenomenology thus took place between 1916 and 1929, during which time it is fair to say that he both promoted the philosophical breakthrough achieved by Husserl and significantly reformulated the basic problems of phenomenology. Most importantly, while Heidegger applauded Husserl’s phenomenology for having shown that intentionality is the fundamental structure of all lived, conscious experience, he repeatedly stressed the inadequacy of the phenomenological characterization of intentionality to date. The guiding theme of the 1927 lecture course published as The Basic Problems of Phenomenology is the need to “conceive intentionality itself more radically.” Intentionality is there said to be “founded” in Dasein’s “transcendence” or “transposition” over to things. Transcendence, in turn, is identified with Dasein’s understanding itself “from a world” – the elucidation of the “world-concept” being for Heidegger one of the central problems of philosophy, inattention to which has involved the discipline in “remarkable insoluble aporia.”

34. Martin Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Albert Hofstadter (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 162.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 300.
37. Ibid., 164.
38. Ibid., 162.
39. Heidegger, Being and Time, §4. Dasein was translated into French as réalité-humaine (“human reality”) and left in the original German in English translations of Heidegger’s work. While neither choice is fully adequate, both are legitimate solutions to the translation problem posed by the unique manner in which Heidegger uses this term.
Time, Heidegger explicitly abandons the term “intentionality” and such corresponding concepts as “consciousness,” “ego,” and “subjectivity.” All, he argues, are inextricably mired in the problematic ontology of modern philosophy where the subject is envisioned as an inner sphere set over against the extant objects of the world. In opposition to this picture, which fails to capture the phenomena of lived conscious existence, Heidegger develops a rich description of what he terms Dasein’s being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-sein). In German, Dasein is an ordinary word meaning “existence”; in Heidegger’s work, by contrast, it functions as a technical term indicating human existing or that being which each of us is and that has an understanding of being as a definite characteristic of its being.40 This way of designating human subjectivity may seem willfully obscure unless we remember that Heidegger’s aim is to give a description of our factical existing, that is, of the manner in which the world is manifestly there for us and of the way in which we ourselves are in the world understandingly. For Heidegger, central to an adequate understanding of being-in-the-world is the recognition that it is lived and experienced in a unitary fashion. Although being-in-the-world is analyzed in Being and Time in terms of its constituent parts (Dasein, the worldhood of the world, and the mode of Dasein’s being-in), the aim of the work is to elucidate the unitary character of this overarching structure.

Heidegger’s analyses of things as present-to-hand and ready-to-hand, his elaboration of moods, of our average or everyday way of understanding and its dependence on undifferentiated public understandings, of anxiety, death, temporality, and other elements of being-in-the-world had an enormous influence on twentieth-century thought in fields as diverse as literature, sociology, psychology, art, history, and education. Heidegger also produced numerous students, including, most notably, Hannah Arendt and Gadamer, the latter of whom developed an important philosophical hermeneutics on the basis of Heidegger’s work.41 But the most immediate and possibly the most significant impact of Heidegger’s thought came in the form of French existentialism, to which we turn next.

IV. PHENOMENOLOGY IN FRANCE

Phenomenology crossed into France at the Alsatian border. Jean Hering (1889–1966), a professor at the University of Strasbourg, published his Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse (Phenomenology and religious philosophy) in 1925.

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40. Gadamer (1900–2002) was born in Marburg and grew up in Breslau (now Poland). He studied with Heidegger in Marburg from 1923 until 1928. [*] For further information, see the essay by Daniel L. Tate in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4, and the essay by Wayne J. Froman in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.

41. Levinas, Ethics and Infinity, 30.
He also encouraged a young Lithuanian student, Emmanuel Levinas, to travel from Strasbourg to Freiburg to study directly with Husserl. Levinas was initially greatly attracted to Henri Bergson’s account of intuition and when a friend gave him a copy of the *Logical Investigations*, containing Husserl’s account of nonsensuous intuition, he read it with great perseverance and interest but also, as he says himself, “without guide.”  

Levinas reports that the truth of Husserl’s perspective dawned on him slowly but surely and he determined to study directly with the philosopher himself. When Levinas arrived in Freiburg, Husserl had just retired but was still teaching, and Levinas attended his lectures on phenomenological psychology and the constitution of intersubjectivity. Later, Levinas would translate into French (and not altogether to Husserl’s satisfaction) the crucial fifth chapter of the *Cartesian Meditations*: the chapter in which Husserl takes up the problem of how the other person can be constituted as other for consciousness. The real discovery of Levinas’s study year abroad, however, was Heidegger, then even less well known in France than Husserl. In contrast to the “abstract” and “ponderous” approach of Husserl’s phenomenology, Heidegger, in Levinas’s view, “brought the phenomenological method to life and gave it a contemporary style and relevance.” Levinas subsequently wrote his dissertation in 1930 on *La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (*The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*), and it would be the first work in French wholly devoted to Husserl’s thought. Levinas’s presentation in this early book is admittedly influenced by Heidegger and criticizes Husserl for a certain “intellectualism,” by which Levinas means that Husserl uncritically maintains that a theoretical or “thetic” positing lies at the basis of all intentional acts. In Heidegger, by contrast, there is an emphasis on the practical and affective dimensions of our involvement in the world and an insistence that these modes of relating to things are not secondary to acts of representation, but primary and disclosive of the world itself.

Having published his book on Husserl, Levinas turned to writing a similarly expository work on Heidegger. He abandoned this project in 1934, however, when he learned that Heidegger had joined the Nazi Party. Those who would argue that it was not possible in the early 1930s to discern the direction National Socialism would take, or who excused Heidegger’s involvement on such grounds, need look no further than Levinas’s 1934 “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” to see that sharp eyes and a keen moral compass were

43. Levinas translated only the fifth chapter; the remainder of *Méditations cartésiennes: Introduction à la phénoménologie* was translated by Gabrielle Pfeiffer.
able to expose the racism of National Socialism and to predict that it harbored a threat to “the very humanity” of humankind. Levinas would lose his entire extended family in Lithuania to Nazi violence and was never able to exculpate or forgive Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism. Nonetheless, Levinas recognized *Being and Time* as among the four or five greatest works of Western philosophy and his own first attempts at developing an original philosophy were recognizably modeled on the existential analytic of *Being and Time*, although they were also meant as a corrective to that account. Specifically, Levinas revisits the ontological difference and inverts the Heideggerian schema that privileges Being over beings or existents. Levinas’s *De l’existence à l’existent* (1947) – whose translated title, *Existence and Existents*, fails to capture this inversion from Being to beings – looks to phenomena such as fatigue, indolence, and insomnia to disclose the suffocating immanence of Being, a horror in existing itself and not only an anxiety about human finitude. Levinas suggests that this immanence cannot be pierced or evaded by the usual forms of transcendence that ultimately rely on a world behind the world, a “place” to which one can flee: after all, such places still are and thus remain within Being. Being, as Levinas presented it in this very early work (and in *Time and the Other*, also published in 1947), is an encumbrance that cannot be shaken off or transcended except in the relation to an Other, l’Autrui, who is absolutely other. Levinas would spend the rest of his career pursuing this line of thought, which is indebted to Heidegger but also determined to “leave the climate of Heidegger’s thought.” Thirty years after his dissertation on Husserl, he published *Totality and Infinity* (1961), the first mature statement of his ethics, and then significantly revised his position in *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence* (1974). Today, these works are considered among the most significant challenges to Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and are credited with effecting an ethical turn in French philosophy. But, if Levinas played an important (and long unacknowledged) role in the reception of phenomenology and its promotion within the French philosophical tradition, it is a role that unfolded in several distinct phases and over the space of decades rather than years.

Other forces and persons contributed equally to the rise of phenomenology in France during the 1930s. The role of Koyré deserves special mention. A Russian emigré who studied Bergson’s intuitionism in Paris and then phenomenology as a member of the Göttingen Circle, Koyré moved back to Paris from Germany in 1912 and became an important conduit for the transmission of phenomenology

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*47. For a discussion of the role Levinas played in this ethical turn, see the essay by Robert Eaglestone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*. 

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to France. In 1931, Koyré founded the journal *Recherches philosophiques*, which regularly devoted space to phenomenological essays and reviews, publishing translations of works by Husserl, Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), and Heidegger, as well as phenomenological studies by budding French phenomenologists. Koyré’s seminar at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) also played a role in bringing phenomenology to France, attracting Georges Bataille (1897–1962) and Alexandre Kojève (1902–68), among others. Indeed, Koyré served as a kind of mentor to his Russian countryman Kojève (who was briefly married to Koyré’s former sister-in-law). It was at Koyré’s instigation that Kojève pursued a French doctorate and with Koyré’s recommendation that Kojève succeeded him at the EPHE in 1933. Kojève’s seminar at the EPHE between 1933 and 1939 developed a reading of Hegel that still casts its shadow on French thought.\(^4^8\) Reading Hegel line by line, translating it into French on the spot, Kojève fascinated his audience as he brought Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger, Einstein, and, most significantly, Marx to bear on Hegel’s text (and reciprocally read those figures through a Hegelian lens). The list of those who attended the seminar now reads like a who’s who of French philosophy, and Kojève’s interpretation of Heidegger no doubt had its influence on these thinkers. Bataille and Jacques Lacan (1901–81) were regulars at the seminar, while Raymond Aron (1905–83), André Breton (1896–1966), Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Eric Weil (1904–77), among others, were known to have attended at one time or another.\(^4^9\)

In France, the purest continuation of phenomenology may well have come in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). Like almost everyone else in his generation in France who came under the influence of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty initially reacted against the rationalism of Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944) by turning to Bergson’s intuitionism. (He would later accede to Bergson’s Chair at the prestigious Collège de France). Merleau-Ponty was introduced to phenomenology through Georges Gurvitch’s (1894–1965) seminar at the Sorbonne (from 1928 to 1930) and attended Husserl’s lectures at the Sorbonne in 1929 (although, by his own report, he spoke no German at the time). Interested in the relationship between consciousness and nature, Merleau-Ponty proposed to investigate the nature of perception as that which accomplishes our primary relation to the world. Initially he proposed to do this by returning to the insights of Gestalt psychology, although after his discovery of Husserl he saw phenomenology as the principal means by which perception could be described and analyzed, since phenomenology avoids both a

\(^4^8\) Kojève’s reading of Hegel is also discussed in the essay by John Russon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.

crude naturalism and an overly rationalist intellectualism. Husserl’s influence is evident when Merleau-Ponty writes,

Our task will be … to rediscover phenomena, the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us …; to reawaken perception and foil its trick of allowing us to forget it as a fact and as perception in the interest of the object which it presents to us and of the rational tradition to which it gives rise.⁵⁰

In reawakening an interest in perception as the original modality of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty also developed a rich and persuasive account of the role of the body and embodiment in the structure of experience. The body is neither a mere object in the world, nor the passive instrument of perception, but the unseen pathway or open-ended system by which we are in-the-world. Especially in Merleau-Ponty’s later work, the body is described as an “ensemble” of “routes” that prepare the possibility of consciousness without necessarily being conscious as such.⁵¹ Merleau-Ponty was only fifty-three years old when he died in 1961, but his thought has been exceptionally influential and is employed not only by those who continue the phenomenological tradition, but by philosophers of mind, philosophers of the body, and those interested generally in the philosophy of perception.⁵²

Merleau-Ponty’s schoolmate and sometimes friend Jean-Paul Sartre probably did more than anyone to popularize phenomenology in France. Simone de Beauvoir (1908–86) reports that Sartre became interested in phenomenology after a discussion with Aron in a cafe in 1932. Aron was just back from a year at the Institut français de Berlin where he had carried out research on the philosophy of history and had also read Husserl and Heidegger. Pointing to his drink, Aron announced that phenomenology made it possible to philosophize from the concrete things themselves and convinced Sartre that with phenomenology one could avoid Cartesian dualism while still crediting the irreducible difference between consciousness and the givenness of the world. In then looking for a book on phenomenology, Sartre came across Levinas’s book on Husserl and, deciding to study this new philosophy seriously, Sartre made the necessary arrangements to succeed his friend Aron at the Institut français. It is a puzzling fact about Sartre’s time in Germany that he never went to Freiburg to study directly with either Husserl or Heidegger and met the latter for the first time

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⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 57.
*⁵² For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.  

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only in 1952, by which time both men had moved significantly beyond their phenomenological beginnings and, as Ethan Kleinberg speculates, “had very little to talk about.”

Much like Heidegger, who transformed phenomenology rather than merely transmitting it, Sartre’s engagement with phenomenology was revolutionary. His early work The Transcendence of the Ego (1936/7) largely accepts Husserl’s project of a pure presuppositionless description of lived conscious experience and acknowledges the fundamentally intentional structure of consciousness, but rejects the idea of a transcendental ego remaining after the reductions have been carried out. In the consciousness of an object, the cogito is prereflective, Sartre argues, but the ego itself is constituted in reflection and thus is an object in the world like any other. This view not only dispenses with the threat of solipsism, but, more importantly for Sartre, it returns the ego to the world and subjects it to all the vicissitudes of existence. Phenomenology can be credited with having “plunged man back into the world,” but only if it lets go of the transcendental ego that would once more pull “a part of man out of the world” and set it up as the creator of all that is. For Sartre, intentionality heralds the idea that the world and the self or “me” are contemporaneous. This supposition is enough, says Sartre, to make the “subject–object duality, which is purely logical, definitively disappear from philosophical preoccupations.”

Much like Heidegger, then, Sartre understands phenomenology as tasked with producing a description of our being-in-the-world that does not fall back into the trap of positing the subject over against a world of objects. In his masterwork, Being and Nothingness (1943), Sartre distinguishes being-for-itself (l’être-pour-soi) or consciousness and being-in-itself (l’être-en-soi) or the being of phenomena. Being-in-itself simply is what it is: in itself it is solid and massive. Being-for-itself, by contrast, is “the locus of possibility, negativity, and lack.” Phenomena, in short, are identified with “thingness” while consciousness is fundamentally “nothingness.” Whereas Heidegger defines Dasein as that being for whom its own being is in question, Sartre defines Dasein or réalité-humaine as “a being such that in its Being, the Nothingness of its Being is in question.” To put this

55. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, 57.
idea in the famous slogan of existentialism, this is just to say that for human being or being-for-itself, existing precedes any essence. A human being is not a particular kind or type of existent object with a specific essence or excellence. Rather, as consciousness, human being or being-for-itself is a spontaneity and freedom through which nothingness comes into the world.\textsuperscript{60}

Sartre’s existentialism was developed on this ontological basis. For Sartre, we are factically existing beings – that is, we live in a situation that is in some respects given – but we have absolute freedom when it comes to how we regard our situation and the actions we undertake within that situation. To think otherwise and to blame one’s choices on the circumstantial constraints is a matter of bad faith. But bad faith is not just a condemnation of cowardice in the face of absolute freedom (and a correspondingly absolute responsibility). It plays the ontologically disclosive role of showing once again that human reality begins with an act of negation. In order to say that I am courageous when I am not, I have to have the power of negation. Similarly, this power is manifested when I deny that my act was courageous and say that I only did what anyone in the circumstances would do. As many have pointed out, in France at the end of the Second World War, when French society was coming to terms both with occupation and collaboration, Sartre’s existentialism showed how it was possible to move forward in hope without denying the moral failings and horror of the recent past.

Kleinberg explains that “Sartre’s use of Heidegger led to the widespread supposition in France that Heidegger was an existential humanist, and Sartre’s own political affiliations with various left-wing political groups led to the vague impression that Heidegger had similar concerns.”\textsuperscript{61} Neither supposition was borne out. As for the second, the intellectual Left in France was stunned when it learned of Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism, and the debate over whether and to what extent Heidegger’s philosophy is compatible with or contains Nazi sentiments lead to the so-called Heidegger Affair of 1946–47, when the issue was debated in newspapers and through academic journals such as Sartre’s \textit{Les Temps modernes}. The Affair has been revived several times since, both inside and outside France, each time reigniting the furor of the original tempest. As for the first supposition, it is widely known that Heidegger himself eschewed the title “existentialist.” Through a go-between, Heidegger was made aware of the influence of his thought in France and had the opportunity to read the major works of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. While deeply interested in Sartre’s work in particular, he felt that the young scholar had overemphasized the human agent and his freedom, thus falling prey, as did Husserl, to a repeti-

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{61} Kleinberg, \textit{Generation Existential}, 153.
tion of Cartesianism. Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism,” written in response to an invitation by Jean Beaufret (1907–82) to expand his thought in the direction of an ethics, was his most important effort in writing to correct what he felt was the misleading existentialist interpretation of his work in France. The force of this document on French letters and philosophy was exceptional and played an important role in the rise of French antihumanism as seen in the works of Lacan, Michel Foucault (1926–84), and Jacques Derrida.

The philosophical currents begun by these three philosophers enriched and enlivened French philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century. Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical philosophy, Lacan’s revivification of Freudian psychoanalysis, and Derrida’s deconstruction all owe a debt to phenomenology that must be recognized, although it cannot be explored in detail here. Instead, we turn to a final summation of the international status and future of the phenomenological movement.

V. PHENOMENOLOGY AS AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

Phenomenology has always been an international movement. Many of those who visited Husserl or studied with him came from abroad and were central in the spread of phenomenology. Notably, there was Ingarden from Poland, Koyré from Russia, Aron Gurwitsch from Lithuania, Alfred Schutz from Vienna, Marvin Farber, among others, from the United States, and José Ortega y Gasset from Spain, although the last was never a thoroughgoing phenomenologist.62 Jewish scholars fleeing Germany during the Second World War were also a

62. Gurwitsch (1901–73) spent a year studying with Husserl and Heidegger in the early 1920s and wrote his dissertation under Scheler and then, after Scheler’s death, Moritz Geiger. He was strongly attracted to Gestalt psychology and integrates insights from this tradition with his understanding of transcendental phenomenology. Gurwitsch fled Germany during the Second World War and spent seven years in France before moving to the United States. There he taught at Johns Hopkins University, Brandeis University, and, most famously, from 1959 to 1973 at the New School for Social Research. His major original work was The Field of Consciousness, published originally in French in 1957, then in English in 1964. His Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology contains excellent critical studies of key concepts in phenomenology as well as original essays reflecting his wide interests in philosophy and psychology. Schutz (1899–1959) was a native of Vienna introduced to Husserl by Felix Kaufmann in 1932. Picking up Husserl’s notion of the lifeworld, Schutz developed a phenomenology of the social world with particular attention to the identification of the various sub-worlds that make up the lifeworld and their structural interrelation. Representative works include Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt (The Phenomenology of the Social World).

Farber (1901–80) studied with Husserl in Freiburg in 1923–24 and wrote his dissertation on Husserl’s philosophy. In 1939 he founded the International Phenomenological Society and in 1940 the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research. He taught at the University of

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factor in establishing phenomenology in North America. Arendt as well as Felix Kaufmann, Fritz Kaufmann, Schutz, Gurwitsch, and Moritz Geiger all taught in the United States in the postwar years, many of them at the New School for Social Research in New York. After moving into France in the 1930s, phenomenology was exported worldwide first in the form of existentialism and later in the deconstruction of Derrida. Everywhere it has traveled, geographically and outside the discipline of philosophy, phenomenology has been mixed with local concerns and questions. In Latin America, phenomenology became a resource for liberation theology; in the United States and Canada, it has intersected with and informed the work of feminist philosophers as well as philosophers.

Buffalo and made it a leading center for phenomenological studies in the United States. He published his main work on Husserl, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*, in 1943.

José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) was a Spanish philosopher and public intellectual. He received his doctorate from Complutense University in Madrid in 1904 and spent the next few years studying in Germany at a number of different universities. He was appointed to a Chair in Metaphysics at his alma mater in 1909 and became a leading figure in Spanish philosophy and politics. He was not a phenomenologist *per se*, but visited Husserl in Freiburg in 1934 and impressed him greatly. Ortega played a leading role in the translation of contemporary German philosophy, including phenomenology, into Spanish and it was his students who effectively introduced phenomenology into Mexico and Latin America.

Arendt (1906–75) was born in Hanover and studied philosophy in Marburg with Heidegger and then with Jaspers in Heidelberg. She became one of the most influential and important political philosophers of the twentieth century, and both Heidegger, with whom she had a brief love affair, and Jaspers were crucial influences on her thought. Arendt fled Germany when the Nazis came to power in 1933, spending six years in Paris before she was again forced to flee, this time to the United States, where she spent the remainder of her life teaching at prestigious institutions such as the University of California, Berkeley, Princeton University, and finally the New School for Social Research. Major works include *The Human Condition* (1958), *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973), and *The Life of the Mind* (1978). [*] Arendt's work is discussed in detail in an essay by Peg Birmingham in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.

Felix Kaufmann (1895–1949) was interested in mathematics and physics as well as law and the social sciences. He visited Husserl repeatedly in Freiburg, after first contacting him by letter in 1922, and kept up a prodigious correspondence with him. In Vienna, Kaufmann was marginally connected with the Vienna Circle and tried to strengthen the relations between phenomenology and logical empiricism. In 1935, he organized a visit with Husserl in Vienna and was instrumental in trying to move the philosopher and his papers to Prague, although the attempt ultimately had to be abandoned. Fleeing to the United States, Kaufmann was the first of Husserl's students to teach at the New School for Social Research, offering courses beginning in 1939.

Fritz Kaufmann (1891–1958), no relation to Felix Kaufmann, began his studies with Husserl and Heidegger in Freiburg in 1919. He wrote his dissertation on "The Picture as Aesthetic Experience," and a book-length study of Thomas Mann. His main work was *Das Reich des Schönen: Bausteine zu einer Philosophie der Kunst* (1960). He fled Nazi Germany during the Second World War and spent twenty years teaching in the United States at Northwestern University and then the University of Buffalo, before returning to Europe at the end of his life.
of mind, and has had an important impact in psychology and sociology. It has
spawned numerous academic organizations worldwide (of which the Society for
Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in the United States is among the
largest) and has, of course, spawned a veritable industry of smaller conferences,
research circles, translations, publications, and the like. What phenomenology
has not had, however, at least not since the generation of Sartre and Levinas,
is a major reinterpretation based on its dual origin in Husserl and Heidegger.
This suggests perhaps that phenomenology is at risk of becoming a historical
curiosity: retaining its ability to philosophize about the “things themselves”
but failing to speak urgently to the central problems of human existing or of
philosophy in our time. Indeed, already in 1963, Heidegger remarked that the
“age of phenomenology seems to be over. It is already taken as something past
which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy.”64 But
this judgment is as premature now as it was in 1963. Heidegger suggests that
phenomenology is not a technique employed by a certain “school” of philoso-
phers. “It is,” he says, “the possibility of thinking” and even if the name disap-
ppears as such, wherever there is attention paid to what manifests itself and to
how it is given, we are in the vicinity of phenomenology.65 We may add to these
sentiments that we are far from having digested all that is given to be thought in
the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, and
others, and this suggests that the future of the phenomenological movement no
less than that of phenomenology in Heidegger’s sense remains invitingly open,
ready for renewal and reinvention.

64. Heidegger, “My Way to Phenomenology,” 82.
65. Ibid.
During the years leading up to and after 1890–1930, the continental conception of science had a far broader scope than the anglophone notion of science today. Even today, the German term *Wissenschaft* embraces not only the natural and the social sciences, including economics,\(^1\) but also the full panoply of the so-called humanities, including the theoretical study of art and theology, both important in the nineteenth century for, among other things, the formation of the life sciences.\(^2\) Philosophy itself was also counted as a science and was, in its phenomenological articulation, nothing less than the science of scientific origins or “original science” – the “Urwissenschaft” – as Martin Heidegger defined it in 1919,\(^3\) following his own intensive engagement with Edmund Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*.

It is also crucial for any discussion of continental philosophy of science between 1890 and 1930 to emphasize that these were, in Winston Churchill’s words, “precarious times,” times of technological and social change and of revolution, scientific and political. In a positive reflection on the transformations of

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this period, Heidegger refers, as will Husserl later, to the “crisis of philosophy as science,” noting in 1925 that all “sciences and groups of sciences are undergoing a great revolution of a productive kind that has opened up new modes of questioning, new possibilities, and new horizons.”

These same critical years also saw astonishing industrial innovations, yielding many of the still-familiar achievements of modern technology, from cars (the four-wheeled automobile in 1892), airplanes (1903), and even moving sidewalks (1893); from moving pictures (1895) to public radio broadcasting (in 1922, although Marconi first transmitted a radio signal in 1895) and television broadcasting (1929). Wilhelm Röntgen took the first X-rays in 1895, while the development of modern artillery began in 1897, and Robert Goddard launched the first liquid-fueled rockets in 1926.

Continental philosophy of science has always featured reflection not only on the technologies of scientific investigation but also on human perception and technological circumspection. Louis Basso’s 1925 essay, “Induction technique et science expérimentale” was central to Gaston Bachelard’s 1928 dissertation, *Essai sur la connaissance approchée*, because Basso raised the question of the industrial arts as involving an inherently encompassing coordination of mechanization and technique. Heidegger had already emphasized in 1927 the interaction between theoretical world-disclosure and scientific research equipment, points that continue in Patrick A. Heelan’s (1926– ) reflections on Werner Heisenberg’s (1901–76) physical philosophy and Heelan’s own subsequent elaboration of the phenomenology of perception as a phenomenology of laboratory discovery. A similar focus on the researcher’s art also characterizes Ernst

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Mach’s (1838–1916) philosophical reflections on science and can be said to drive Ludwik Fleck’s (1896–1961) philosophical sociology of medical science.\(^7\)

For his part, Heidegger’s critical reflections on science anticipate the turn to the history of science and indeed the social and historical studies of technology that increasingly inform science studies.\(^8\) Heidegger’s reflective critique of mathematics and science in his 1927 *Being and Time*, together with the questioning he undertakes with regard to thinking the essence of modern technology, provides the basis for his hermeneutic phenomenology of both scientific theory and practice. As he writes in the later 1930s, using what would turn out to be a timely example taken from the same experimental physics that would herald the development of the atom bomb in the mid-1940s, “Within the complex of machinery that is necessary to physics in order to carry out the smashing of the atom lies the whole of physics.”\(^9\)

Heidegger’s point is echoed in the argument Heelan makes in *Quantum Mechanics and Objectivity* with respect to Heisenberg’s perturbation theory of measurement in his 1925–27 contributions to quantum mechanics.\(^10\) Measurement, as Heelan points out with special emphasis on the technological instruments that are used to obtain such measurements – that is, what Heidegger calls “the complex of machinery” – makes all the difference for the “new scientific spirit” – using Bachelard’s terminology – of physics.\(^11\) For Heidegger, what is at issue is the *constitution* of modern technological and mathematizable (measurable, calculable, model-oriented) science, conceived in both the Husserlian phenomenological sense and the mechanically explicit sense of standardized manufacture and institutional technology.\(^12\) It is thus in this sense that

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8. For a discussion of science studies, see the essay by Dorothea Olkowski in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.


the Heidegger of the 1930s describes the trajectory of modern technology as a “humanism,” much as Friedrich Nietzsche in The Gay Science and in his posthumous notes characterizes mathematics and the sciences in general as what he named, in a Kantian voice, so many modalities of “humanization.”

I. LIMIT-CONCEPTS, METHOD, AND THE TENSIONS OF FRENCH PRAGMATISM

In his address in Paris to the 1900 World Congress of Mathematicians, David Hilbert (1862–1943) adumbrated his famous programmatic plan for mathematics, articulating his positive conviction that “However unapproachable these problems may seem to us and however helpless we stand before them, we have, nevertheless, the firm conviction that their solution must follow by a finite number of purely logical processes.”14 In 1930, Kurt Gödel (1906–78) would announce the results of his own research disproving Hilbert’s program at a congress on the epistemology of the exact sciences in Königsberg at which Hilbert himself gave the culminating public lecture of his life, publicly broadcast on the radio, and proclaiming in conclusion “We must know – we will know.”15 One did not, however, have to wait for Gödel. The crisis in the foundational program is coterminous with Hilbert’s project. It is already present in the neo-Kantianism that dominated continental thinking on science and mathematics in all its modalities from the empirio-criticism or environmental positivism of Richard Avenarius (1843–96) and Mach, in the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle that emerged from this tradition, in Henri Poincaré and Henri Bergson, and in Husserl and Heidegger.

To the question of foundations must be added the question of method. Heinrich Rickert’s The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science (1896–1902) distinguishes the different traditions of science as such, and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–111) extends this reflection to the human sciences. Inaugurating the then-influential turn to what was called Lebensphilosophie,16 Dilthey

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15. Contending that there is in mathematics no “Ignorabimus,” Hilbert refers to Emil du Bois-Reymond’s (1818–96) claim that there are limits to human knowledge; see Victor Vinnikov, “We Shall Know: Hilbert’s Apology,” Mathematical Intelligencer 21 (1999).
emphasized lived experience as central to the opposition between explanation and understanding. The same focus on method can be read in the reflections of social scientists such as Max Weber (1864–1920), as well as in the Existenzphilosophie of the physician turned philosopher, Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). Even Nietzsche emphasized that “the scientific spirit rests upon insight into method,”\(^\text{17}\) a claim that included classical philology and history as well as the physical sciences.\(^\text{18}\) Yet Nietzsche also argued that “the triumph of science distinguishes our 19th century less than does the triumph of scientific method over science.”\(^\text{19}\)

Although there were clear differences between them, Nietzsche shared Mach’s emphasis on the role of error in scientific rationality along with Mach’s opposition to atomism.\(^\text{20}\) Indeed, one commentator’s introductory assessment of the general reaction to Mach in this context should be compared to common responses to the conjunction of Nietzsche and science: “Mach’s viewpoint provides a basis only for destructive criticism, and tends to discourage the development of hypotheses that may turn out to be fruitful.”\(^\text{21}\)

It is Nietzsche’s critical thinking on the sciences and on logic and mathematics, conjoined with his influence on certain scientists and mathematicians, that constitutes one of the earliest instantiations of continental philosophy of science. During the period under discussion here, Nietzsche’s critical

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philosophical spirit, including his theory of eternal recurrence,\textsuperscript{22} influences not only literary and artistic traditions but also philosophical discussions of Darwinism, the debate on entropy and thermodynamics,\textsuperscript{23} and the tradition of Victorian relativity antedating Einstein, even if we set aside, for the moment, the impact of Nietzsche’s thinking on Heidegger’s early philosophy of science.

Highlighting Nietzsche’s practical emphases together with his skepticism, the Belgian philosopher René Berthelot in 1911 coordinates American pragmatist and continental philosophy of science, comparing Nietzsche not only to the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James but also to Poincaré.\textsuperscript{24} Linking the American pragmatists in this way with the work of scientists is no fluke. In fact, it is difficult to parse French philosophers of science during this period without referring to Peirce and, especially, to James, who was familiar with and shared a number of interests with Bergson.\textsuperscript{25} Bergson began his intellectual life with a prize essay in mathematics, and in addition to his reflections on evolution he contributed also to the philosophy of mathematics inasmuch as he undertook the critically important step at the turn of the twentieth century of

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  \item \textsuperscript{22} For a discussion of Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence, see the essay on Nietzsche by Daniel Conway in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2}.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Drawing on Henri Poincaré’s argument that a closed system of atoms must recur, in an infinitesimal approximation, to its initial state, infinitely many times, von Weizsäcker notes that Ernst “Zermelo in 1900 raised objection to the statistical interpretations of the second law of thermodynamics, the so-called Recurrence Objection” (“Nietzsche: Perceptions of Modernity,” 227). This objection against entropy seemed to provide support for Nietzsche’s and other theories of recurrence. For a discussion, including references to Nietzsche and Poincaré, see Stephen Brush, \textit{The Temperature of History: Phases of Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century} (New York: Bart Franklin, 1978); more recently, Péter Érdi cites the same tradition in \textit{Complexity Explained} (Frankfurt: Springer, 2007). For an overview, including a reference to Nietzsche, see Christopher Herbert on the tradition of relativity before Einstein in \textit{Victorian Relativity: Radical Thought and Scientific Discovery} (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
  \item \textsuperscript{24} See René Berthelot, \textit{Un Romantisme utilitaire: Etude sur le mouvement pragmatiste. 1, Le pragmatisme chez Nietzsche et chez Poincaré} (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1911). Peirce, it should be noted, was not pleased with this comparison.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} See Henri Bergson, “On the Pragmatism of William James: Truth and Reality,” Melissa McMahon (trans.), in \textit{Key Writings}, Keith Ansell-Pearson and John Mullarkey (eds) (New York: Continuum, 2002) as well as Émile Boutroux’s \textit{William James}, Archibald Henderson and Barbara Henderson (trans.) (New York: Longman’s, Green, 1912). Horace Kallen’s \textit{William James and Henri Bergson: A Study in Contrasting Theories of Life} (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1914) begins by focusing on the perceptual contrast between, and hence affinity of, the artist and the philosopher. It should not be supposed, however, that French philosophers of the turn of the century read the American pragmatists in the way they are read today, a difference still evident, for example, in Paul Ricoeur’s \textit{Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary}, Erazim Kohak (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966), where, in addition to a discussion of James and eidetic phenomenology, Ricoeur also compares James with Bergson and Jaspers.
\end{itemize}
“rereading both Kant’s philosophy and Riemann’s mathematics of the manifold and gave the term *intuition* a central place in his reasoning.”

II. THE MEDIEVAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN SCIENCE:
HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND IDEOLOGY

Contemporary analytic philosophy of science rests, implicitly or explicitly, on the crucial idea of the “scientific revolution”. In this same tradition of philosophy of science, it is well known that Pierre Duhem’s famous theoretical underdeterminism was influential for Einstein and Quine. What is less well known is that Duhem also wrote a key account of the story of Catholic (and Islamic and Jewish) science in the Middle Ages – the ten-volume *Le Système du monde* – undermining nothing less threatening to modern science’s conception of itself (in contrast with the medieval and ancient worlds) than the very idea of the scientific revolution. Most historians and philosophers of science are hard pressed to fit the conceptual traditions of medieval science into the developmental tradition of modern science, and ancient science presents an even more difficult task.


On the subject matter of ancient science, and challenging the ongoing presumption that supposes Aristotle incapable of observation, Paul Feyerabend reminds us of the stubbornly acontextual tendencies of the Vienna Circle. In accord with Duhem’s continuationist point vis-à-vis the scientific revolution, Feyerabend argues that the “Vienna Circle shares with the enlightenment an exaggerated faith in the powers of reason and an almost total ignorance concerning past achievements.” Like Nietzsche before him, Feyerabend calls for greater historical sensitivity, a hermeneutic attention to context that would increase the rigor of scientific historiography.

Duhem’s 1903 discovery of themes from Leonardo’s notebooks in a medieval manuscript (of one Jordanus Nemorarius) exemplifies this point. As one scholar notes, so far “from seeing Leonardo as the forerunner of modern science, Duhem fairly rooted him in the then-hitherto unexplored context of late medieval scholastic thought.” Using a metaphor borrowed from Nietzsche to speak of the Greeks’ unique discoveries, Ernst Cassirer has drawn our attention to the detail of Duhem’s account of “how Leonardo received a great number of problems immediately from the hands of Cusanus and how he took them up precisely at the point Cusanus had left them.” As Duhem further details, Domingo de Soto (1494–1570) had described free fall eighty years before Galileo in his 1551 commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics.* Duhem’s approach became the basis for an important change in the history of science. As Jeanne Peiffer explains, “Duhem exploited long-neglected sources and enlarged the body of knowledge concerned with scholastic mathematics and philosophy. He defended the thesis that, through an uninterrupted sequence of barely perceptible improvements, modern science arose from doctrines taught in the medieval schools.”

Together with a focus on interpretation and context, hermeneutic and phenomenological philosophy of science also attends to the kind of historical

31. Here Feyerabend repudiates “the historical illiteracy of most contemporary philosophers and of their low standards of hero worship” (Science in a Free Society, 59).
32. Ibid.
specificity or perspective emphasized by Herbert Butterfield, as does Nietzsche, and later still Foucault and Georges Canguilhem. Mainstream history of science by contrast continues to tend toward “leaving things out,” perhaps in the interest of minimizing complexity, which may be why it prefers the more neutral “presentist” to Butterfield’s “whig” terminology. But the language of “presentism” exemplifies the problem of presentism. Thus Butterfield argues that:

behind the Whig interpretation – the theory that we study the past for the sake of the present – is one that is really introduced for the purpose of facilitating the abridgment of history; and its effect is to provide us with a handy rule of thumb by which we can easily discover what was important in the past, for the simple reason that, by definition, we mean what is important “from our point of view.”

III. BEYOND PHYSICS: EXEMPLARS OF SCIENCE

(i) Grounding physical science: geology and deep time

A relatively new science that developed in the nineteenth century, geology is a science typically neglected in mainstream discussions of the philosophy of science. Like evolution and paleontology, geology counts as a “paleoetiological” science in William Whewell’s language that has had a correspondingly diverse range of influences, not least in the mid-nineteenth century via Charles Lyell’s influence on Darwin. The Scottish physicist William Thomson (1824–1907), who later became Lord Kelvin, challenged the Hutton–Lyell “uniformitarian” theory of geology in the 1860s. Although his challenge to uniformitarian

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*39. For a discussion of Foucault and Canguilhem in this regard, see the essay by Pierre Cassou-Noguès in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
44. The uniformitarian theory of geology, as the name suggests, assumes the constancy of the earth’s relative position in the solar system and the stability of the geological features of the earth itself over long periods of time.
theories of the age of the earth was well founded, Lord Kelvin’s own simple or “elegant” mathematical model failed to represent the complex dynamics of the earth’s geological evolution (and indeed its present), and hence his estimate of the age of the earth, for all its mathematical “correctness,” was nonetheless erroneous.\textsuperscript{45} Incorporated in the second law of thermodynamics as expressed in 1865 by Rudolf Clausius (1822–88), Thomson’s challenge, although not itself productive for geology per se, was enormously influential and culminated in the concept of entropy, one of the most profoundly philosophical scientific notions of the nineteenth century. This vision in turn inspired Poincaré’s recurrence theorem, which stated that in a closed or bounded system all events return, infinitely many times, to their initial state, much as Nietzsche also argued with his own theory of the eternal recurrence of the same.\textsuperscript{46} In the spirit of “deep time,” both Poincaré’s and Nietzsche’s articulations highlight an already-consummate past.

Beyond its nineteenth-century preludes and in addition to thermodynamics and evolution, geology saw further important innovations in the polar explorer and geologist Alfred Lothar Wegener’s (1880–1930) 1912 theory of continental drift.\textsuperscript{47} Quintessentially revolutionary, Wegener’s discovery dramatizes some of the difficulties of paradigm change, as it was ridiculed for nearly fifty years (indeed, it was still the object of ridicule by professors of earth science when this author was at university) before being finally accepted as today relevant for the sciences of ecology, evolution, and climate change. Wegener is thus a paradigmatic example for the obstacles faced by any revolutionary theory.\textsuperscript{48} Both for theoretical as well as contextually hermeneutic reasons, including the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{45} See, for a discussion, in a context attuned to both geology and mathematical modeling in science, Orrin H. Pilkey and Linda Pilkey Jarvis, \textit{Useless Arithmetic: Why Environmental Scientists Can’t Predict the Future} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 27ff.
\bibitem{46} For a discussion of the nineteenth-century context, relevant to Poincaré as well as Nietzsche, see Brush, \textit{The Temperature of History}, as well as Milič Čapek, \textit{The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics} (New York: Van Nostrand-Reinhold, 1961). For a discussion of Poincaré, see the first part of Barry Gower, “Cassirer, Schlick, and ‘Structural’ Realism: The Philosophy of the Exact Sciences in the Background to Early Logical Empiricism,” \textit{British Journal for the History of Philosophy} 8(1) (2000), esp. 80–86, as well as Érdi, \textit{Complexity Explained}. See also Eli Zahar, \textit{Poincaré’s Philosophy: From Conventionalism to Phenomenology} (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2001), esp. ch. 4.
\bibitem{47} Alfred Wegener, “Die Entstehung der Kontinente,” \textit{Geologische Rundschau} 3 (1912).
\end{thebibliography}
development of nuclear weapons, but also given new interest in environmental philosophy, geology continues to be relevant for continental philosophy of science to this day.

(ii) Chemistry contra physics

Like the reductionist tendency to translate continental philosophy into analytic philosophy, all other sciences are thought, at least in theory, to be amenable to a translation into the terms of physics. This presupposition is inherently problematic in chemistry, even though chemistry, unlike biology or psychology, can appear to be the most physics-like of the nonphysics natural sciences. This point is exemplified by the writings of a chemist whose work is increasingly relevant in the philosophy of chemistry today, Friedrich Adolf Paneth (1887–1958).


51. See Eric Scerri, The Periodic Table: Its Story and its Significance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) for a discussion of the conceptual and theoretical implications of Paneth’s work for the philosophy of chemistry. Although the discussion to follow will highlight Paneth’s work, we have already cited several chemists, notably Bachelard but also Duhem and Berthelot. To these names, Bensaud-Vincent adds Émile Meyerson (1859–1933), who began his career as a German trained chemist, and Hélène Metzger (1889–1944) (“Chemistry in the French Tradition,” 634–5). For Bensaud-Vincent, the considerations of feminist philosophy and history of science are indispensable because philosophers and historians of science tend to overlook otherwise significant scientific work owing to a double prejudice against women that extends to those who lack the “prestigious diplomas” and not less (and this is the contrast as Bensaud-Vincent notes with Myerson) the crucial academic appointments that make all the difference for scholarly recognition (ibid., 644). To Metzger’s name in chemistry may be added in physics the name of Mileva Marić or Marity (1875–1948), Albert Einstein’s first wife and his mathematical and scientific collaborator, controversially listed as the coauthor of his 1905 “Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper,” received by the Swiss journal Annalen der Physik on June 30, 1905, signed Einstein–Marity. Alberto Martínez argues the mainstream view contra the significance of Mileva Marity–Einstein, but cites the Russian physicist Abram Joffe’s 1955 account in ”Handling Evidence in History: The Case of Einstein’s Wife,” School Science Review
As a scientist, Paneth is known for his work on isotopes, collaborating in 1921 on the use of radium D as a tracer with the Hungarian chemist George de Hevesy (1885–1966). Paneth is also well known for theorizing the natural scientific limit-concept of the chemical element as such. Paneth underlines the dangers of the reductionist tradition of representing chemistry on the model of physics, writing that “As a rule, chemistry is presented by the philosophers as a science which is well on the way to transforming itself into physics, and to which, therefore, the same considerations will apply in due course.” But where Paneth sought to make these points from the perspective of the philosophy of chemistry in the 1930s, response, as Jaap van Brackel details, has been either utterly absent or glacially slow in mainstream philosophy of science. Indeed, as Joachim Schummer argues, the “one-sided picture of science tailored to physics” has often meant that analytic philosophers of science are unaware of the philosophy of chemistry in terms of the specific differences between chemistry and physics rather than the way they are generally unaware of the philosophy of biology or the philosophy of economics in spite of the important work of continental scientists and theorists such as Friedrich von Hayek and Michael Polanyi.

Duhem, himself a physical chemist, would emphasize the exceptionality of chemistry in the same way, pointing to Kant’s observation that “the theory of bodies can only become a science of nature when mathematics is applied to it.” The point of drawing a parallel with chemistry (like other sciences such as geology, as noted above) has been to underline the fact that analytic philosophers

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86(316) (March 2005), 51–2. Inasmuch as the original manuscript has vanished, no resolution is in fact possible.

52. Hevesy, an independent researcher, won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1943 for work that grew out of this earlier collaboration with Paneth. Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) was Hevesy’s assistant in Budapest in 1919 before returning to Germany where he had studied physical chemistry.


56. Pierre Duhem, *German Science: Some Reflections on German Science and German Virtues*, J. Lyon (trans.) (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991), 31. Duhem goes on to cite Adolphe Wurtz,
of science ignore both chemistry and the philosophy of chemistry rather in the way continental philosophy of science is similarly discounted.

But the parallel runs deeper. Paneth’s own work is itself steeped in the early continental tradition of the philosophy of science. Thus Paneth’s theoretical reflections on the nature of the chemical element cannot be read apart from his engagement with the epistemological reflections of Rickert’s limit-concepts or the philosopher Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), or Meyerson’s own chemical insights or Polanyi’s, or of Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), the father of experimental psychology so important for cognitive science. Additional influences on Paneth’s thinking include the theoretical insights of Hermann Weyl (1885–1955) and the physicalist and phenomenological reflections of the 1902 Nobel prize-winning chemist Emil Fischer (1852–1919).

In his “On the Epistemological Status of the Chemical Concept of Element,” Paneth repudiates the reduction of chemistry to physics for the very phenomenological and critical reason that the aim of physics is ultimately to reduce “sensory qualities to quantitative determinations.”\(^\text{57}\) Like Duhem, Paneth cites Kant’s mathematical conventionality as justifying the exclusion of chemistry as a science. By contrast, Paneth argues that inasmuch as “chemistry is essentially non-mathematical,”\(^\text{58}\) it was the “chemist, unhampered by mathematics or indeed almost any theory, who discovered the majority of all chemical elements on the basis of the most primitive concept of substance!”\(^\text{59}\) The effectively unchanged basis of chemistry, that is, the basic schema of the periodic table itself in the wake of relativity and quantum theory, offers a corroboration, as Paneth underscores: “already in the seventies of the last century, the elements had been arranged by the chemists into a scheme, the so-called ‘natural system of the elements’”\(^\text{60}\) – a system thus unchanged in its character by the innovations of twentieth-century atomic theory.

\(^\text{Dictionnaire de chimie: Pure et appliquée (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1874): “Chemistry is a French science.”}\)

\(^\text{57. Paneth, “The Epistemological Status,” 16.}\)

\(^\text{58. Ibid., 118. In a related but ultimately different point, some philosophers of science have argued that the difference between chemists and physicists can be found in the central role of the “thought experiment” in physics just where it is conspicuously absent in chemistry.}\)


\(^\text{60. Scerri notes that the French geologist Alexandre-Émile Béguyer de Chancourtois (1820–86) was the first to propose a periodic arrangement of the elements according to atomic weights. Others include the English chemist John Alexander Reina Newlands (1837–98) and the German chemist Julius Lothar Meyer (1830–95) in addition to Dmitri Mendeleev (1834–1907). Mendeleev is celebrated as the first to use the table to predict elements as yet undiscovered.}\)
Speaking here of substance as either basic (nonobservable, theoretical, or, in some philosophic expressions, constructed) or simple (observable), Paneth seeks to explain the notion of an element as such: “the whole body of chemical theory lies in the assumption that the substances which produce the phenomenon of ‘simple substances’ serve in the quality-less, objectively real sphere of nature as ‘basic substances.”61 Rather than progressing toward a more mathematized chemical science on the model of physics, one would do well to return to the philosophical origins of the concept of the “elemental” (and Paneth means such a return in earnest as he invokes the ancient atomists but also the Epicurean notion of “mixing”), in order to avoid the dangers of equivocation when speaking of either the permanence of substance as such or the signal chemical and even alchemical achievement that is the “creation of a new substance by mixing two known ones.”62

In other words, chemical synthesis generates new compounds, and what we understand by “substance” (here regarded as much philosophically as scientifically) matters for a phenomenological understanding of such new compounds. If Paneth refers to Karl Joel’s 1906 allusion to the “genesis of nature philosophy in the spirit of mysticism,”63 Bensaud-Vincent reminds us that “the challenge posed by chemistry is that its irrationals are incorporated in matter: they are everywhere, in a glass of sugared water or in the kitchen salt that we use every day.”64

62. Paneth, “The Epistemological Status,” 123. Bensaud-Vincent cites Duhem’s discussion of the very idea of a new chemical compound by way of his revival of the Aristotelian term “mixt” and other related concepts contra “the prevailing atomist and mechanistic views” (“Chemistry in the French Tradition,” 637). Thus Duhem, in Le Mixte et la combinaison chimique, argues that in “this mixt, the elements no longer have any actual existence. They exist there only potentially because on destruction the mixt can regenerate them” (cited in Bensaud-Vincent, “Chemistry in the French Tradition,” 637).
64. Bensaud-Vicent, “Chemistry in the French Tradition,” 646. The distinction between physics and chemistry, a political order of rank, seems to have made all the political, theoretical difference for the scientific estimation and investigation of the first reports of cold fusion inasmuch as these reports were made by scientists who happened to be not physicists but chemists. Mainstream philosophy of science continues to regard cold fusion as an example either of pseudo-science or straightforward fraud. See Jean-Paul Biberian, “Condensed Matter Nuclear Science (Cold Fusion): An Update,” International Journal of Nuclear Energy Science and Technology 3(1) (2007).

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IV. THE THINGS THEMSELVES: HUSSERL’S
PHENOMENOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

We have noted that Husserl’s philosophy of science must be set into the wider scope of Hilbert’s foundational program. For Husserl, this is the concern of philosophy as a rigorous science but that is only inasmuch as philosophy is concerned with truth (and not only with what is upheld as what is as good as truth).65 Indeed, Husserl was associated with nearly every key mathematician of the day, from Georg Cantor (1845–1918), Husserl’s friend and colleague at the University of Halle between 1890 and 1910,66 and Gottlob Frege to Hilbert, Weyl, L. E. J. Brouwer, and Gödel.67 For this reason, Husserl’s *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, which first appeared in 1891, is key to the period of continental philosophy of science under discussion.68 Heelan uses both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s reflections to develop a philosophical reflection on objectivity, particularly in Niels Bohr’s and Heisenberg’s theoretical interpretations, thereby suggesting that phenomenology offers an indispensable route to a clarification of quantum mechanics. Others have highlighted Einstein’s role in Husserl’s philosophy of science, while yet others emphasize the coordination of Poincaré with Husserl’s

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65. See, however, on Husserl and pragmatism, the work of Richard Cobb-Stevens and others.

66. It has been argued that Cantor was an important influence on Husserl; see Clair Ortiz Hill, “Did Georg Cantor Influence Edmund Husserl?” *Synthese* 113 (1997) and David Woodruff Smith, “What is ‘Logical’ in Husserl’s Logical Investigations? The Copenhagen Interpretation,” in *One Hundred Years of Phenomenology: Husserl’s Logical Investigations Revisited*, Dan Zahavi and Frederik Stjernfelt (eds) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002). But see also David Bell, “A Brentanian Philosophy of Arithmetic,” *Brentano Studien: Internationales Jahrbuch der Franz Brentano Forschung* 2 (1989), who argues that Husserl was principally influenced by Brentano. Alain Badiou likewise alludes to this influence with his own claim that Husserl reads Galilean science on a par with (post-Cantor) set theory in *Being and Event*, Oliver Feltham (trans.) (London: Continuum, 2005), 3.

67. Even Einstein is said to have been tempted to name his theory of relativity “*Invariantentheorie*,” in an explicit echo of Husserl’s phenomenological method; see Richard Tieszen, *Phenomenology, Logic, and the Philosophy of Mathematics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 87.

68. In addition to Heelan’s *Quantum Mechanics and Objectivity* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965) (which remains important for its emphasis on the crucial role of continental philosophers in their theoretical engagement with scientists, and thereby with Heelan’s analysis of the hermeneutics of natural science within the experimental practice of the sciences themselves), and his *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), a book on, among other things, Husserl and the metrics of vision from Luneberg to Marr, see Thomas Ryckman, *The Reign of Relativity: Philosophy in Physics 1915–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) for an account attuned to the history of science (on Husserl and Weyl as well as Einstein, Schlick, Reichenbach, and Eddington); see also Tieszen, *Phenomenology, Logic, and the Philosophy of Mathematics* (on Husserl and Gödel as well as on Cantor and Brouwer, Heyting and Poincaré).
criticisms of logicism and formalism. Where Ryckman and Clair Ortiz Hill point to the decades Husserl spent in Halle (and the importance of Cantor), Heelan highlights, as do others, the significance of Husserl's tenure in Göttingen during the dynamic years of Hilbert's foundational program in mathematics.

Echoing René Descartes's remark in his *Discourse on Method*, Einstein famously quipped that we should attend to what scientists do, not to what they say. Richard Tieszen thus commends the value of Husserl's "philosophy of mathematics" as it bears witness to the attempt "to do justice to mathematics as it is actually given and practiced." Such a coordinated reference to the history and practice of science exemplifies both phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches to the philosophy of science, and we have seen its relevance for Nietzsche. In this spirit, Ryckman can refer to Husserl's claim to be the "true positivist," a claim that Steven Crowell likewise cites as being "only" slightly ironic.

For Descartes, as for the entire Enlightenment order of philosophizing about cognition and perception, what the mind knows is mind. Thought must be submitted to logical analysis to gain any sure knowledge of it, which leaves the gap between mind and world, thought and object. What Eugene Wigner (1902–95) would describe in a later recollection of this early period, and with patent reference to both Hilbert and Gödel, as the "unreasonable effectiveness" of mathematics in the natural sciences reflects a number of theoretically (if not to be sure "effectively" or "practically") unbridgeable chasms. While this is the traditional issue of objective versus subjective logic for both Husserl and Heidegger, Husserl's account of intentionality sidesteps just this separation insofar as "the


intentional object of a presentation is the same as its actual object. What is known by any intentional act is the intentional object or “noematic” correlate, hence the directive direction of Husserl’s classic cry: “zu den Sachen selbst” (to the things themselves).

Following the error of what Husserl calls “Galilean science” and Rickert had named “positivist” science, the worldview of modern science inaugurates the opposition between pragmaticism and realism that still stands for many as the central problem of the philosophy of science today. Modern science limits or reduces reality to its scientifically measurable, calculable, or quantifiable properties, taking reality here in the common-sense (but still counter-intuitive) meaning of scientific realism. As Husserl saw it, the technological, practical, and theoretical mathematical projects articulating the essence of modern science are fundamentally rather than incidentally opposed to one another. Galilean science (Heidegger’s calculative rationality) substitutes “the mathematically substructed world of identities for the only real world,” and in this way, so Husserl suggests, Galilean science itself comes to stand in the place of the world “that is actually given through perception … [that is,] our everyday life-world.”

The Galilean distinction between primary and secondary properties privileges the measurable as primary, so that what began as a convenience led with Descartes to the division of subjective experience (mind) and objective world (body). And in the end, only the objective or measurable world became the real world, with the subjective and leftover worlds of “meaning” and “value,” “mind” or “spirit,” correspondingly eliminated or “reduced” to the domain of the unreal as mere phenomena. As Husserl writes in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, the scientific worldview “excluded in principle precisely the questions which man, given over in our unhappy times to the

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75. In this way, Husserl extended the concept of the life-world beyond its Romantic origins to connect the worlds of science and mathematics to the world we inhabit, a project continued in Heidegger’s philosophical reflections on the worldview of science and technology and further revitalized and ultimately radicalized in Maurice Merleau-Ponty; see Heelan’s discussion of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl in Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science, and for a discussion of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida with respect to Husserl, see Leonard Lawlor, “The Legacy of Husserl’s ‘Urprung der Geometrie’: The Limits of Phenomenology in Merleau-Ponty and Derrida,” in Merleau-Ponty’s Reading of Husserl, Ted Toadvine and Lester Embree (eds) (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003). Florence Caeymaex also traces the connection between Merleau-Ponty and Husserl via Bergson in her Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Bergson: Les Phénoménologies existentialistes et leur héritage bergsonien (Hildesheim: Olms, 2005).


77. Ibid., 49.
most portentous upheavals, finds the most burning: questions of the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole of this hard existence.”

The greatest threat for Husserl is thus the devaluation of consciousness, the loss of spirit or meaning.

V. HEIDEGGER: HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY OF SCIENCE

If, as Theodore Kisiel argues, “the Husserlian approach to science is strikingly evident in the early pages of Being and Time,” Joseph J. Kockelmans (1923–2008) emphasizes that “in most of his publications Heidegger deals explicitly with problems which pertain specifically to the realm of philosophy of science.”

Like Nietzsche, Heidegger argues that beyond theoretical reflection or scientific analysis, philosophy is an explicitly active questioning, especially so in the case of the philosophy of science and modern technology. It is in terms of the importance of reflection in philosophy that Heidegger argues that “all science is perhaps only a servant with respect to philosophy.”

The critical spirit of this early account of the specific difference of philosophical reflection and scientific theorizing finds its most famous expression in the later Heidegger’s provocative dictum “science does not think,” a claim that is already to be heard in his 1927 Being and Time: “ontological inquiry is more primordial or original than the ontic inquiry of the positive sciences.”

Opposing sense-oriented reflection [Besinnung] to the calculative project of Western technologically articulated and advancing science, Heidegger varies but

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78. Ibid.
he does not alter his early discussion of the relation between science and philosophy in *Being and Time*, writing that “all scientific thought is merely a derived form of philosophical thinking.”84 With this claim, Heidegger maintains that with respect to science, philosophy “is prior in rank.”85 In *Being and Time*, this priority is characterized as a “productive logic”86 that leaps ahead “into some area of Being, discloses it for the first time, in the constitution of its Being, and, after thus arriving at the structures within it, makes these available to the positive sciences as transparent assignments for their inquiry.”87 Heidegger thus opposes the creatively foundational activity of philosophic reflection to the then popular articulations of epistemological investigations into the sciences of his era as the kind of “logic” (Heidegger sets this off in quotes) following after science, “limping along in its wake, investigating the status of [any given] science as it chances to find it in order to discover its ‘method’.”88

“What is decisive” for Heidegger – who here writes in Husserl’s critical foundational spirit – in the development of mathematical physics is “the mathematical project of nature itself” inasmuch as the project “discovers in advance something constantly objectively present (matter) and opens the horizon for the scientific perspective on its quantitatively definable moments (motion, force, location, and time).”89 The “founding” of “factual science” is “possible only because the researcher understood that there are in principle no ‘bare facts,’”90 that, in other words, the material project of nature must be given in advance, a priori. Only then is it possible for a science to be “capable of a crisis in its basic concepts.”91

Heidegger, who remained committed to phenomenology throughout his life, emphasizes that beyond any superficially obvious call “to the things themselves,”92 phenomenology “presupposed life.”93 To understand Heidegger here requires a specific and hermeneutic attention to the biological transformation that was then under way. Including and exceeding Claude Bernard’s *milieu intérieur*, as the evolution beyond Cartesian mechanism, Heidegger’s reference was critically ecological, radically environmental: “Life is that kind of reality which is in the

90. *Ibid*.
world and indeed in such a way that it has a world. Every living creature has its environing world not as something extant next to it but as something that is there [da ist] for it as disclosed, uncovered.”\(^9\) And in 1925, Heidegger emphasized that “for a primitive animal, the world can be very simple,” explaining that we run the risk of missing “the essential thing here if we don’t see that the animal has a world.”\(^9\) Heidegger’s original continuum of complexity and/or simplicity must be added to contemporary readings of Heidegger’s subsequent discussions of the world-poverty of the animal in terms of indigence.

In his 1929–30 lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger alluded to the work of Hans Driesch (1867–1941), who theorized chemical gradients in embryological development.\(^9\) In that same course, Heidegger also invokes the theoretical biologist Jakob von Uexküll’s (1864–1944) 1909 expression of the “*Umwelt*,” citing the Czech biologist Emanuel Rádl (1873–1942) on the significance of animal phototropism\(^9\) in order to emphasize the gulf (Abgrund) between human and animal,\(^9\) but also as a biologicist contrast to the Cartesian tendency of modern scientific biology to define both animals and human beings in mechanistic terms. This tendency remains in modern experimental biology, underlying its reliance on “models,” specifically in animal experimentation.\(^9\) Here Heidegger reprises his hermeneutico-phenomenological case for the interpretive ontology of the human being as an animal bound to world-invention, or what Heidegger called, in an ecological modality, world-making.\(^1\) In this way, Heidegger had earlier cited Nietzsche’s perspectival sense of the human as the “yet to be finished animal.”\(^1\) It is in this projective, that is, yet-unfinished but to-be-finished, sense that “The world that is closest to us is one of practical concern. The environing world [Umwelt] and its objects are in space, but the space of the world is not that of geometry.”\(^1\) Historically, the mechanistic conception of life would return to triumph over the notion of “vital movement” nascent in Driesch (although it is an error to reduce Driesch’s concerns to sheer vitalism, as is evident in his emphasis on

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94. Ibid., 163.
95. Ibid.
97. Ibid., 242ff., esp. 244.
98. Ibid., 264.
electrochemical gradients), whereas Heidegger explored the living trajectory of life as opposed to its “calculable” course.\footnote{See Keith Ansell-Pearson, Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition (London: Routledge, 1997) for an innovative exploration of this theme with reference to Bergson and others.}

Heidegger’s focus on life also recurs in his reference to chemistry in 1929 in order to speak of the biological and organic sciences, to underline how little is said about “the living being” when we “define it in terms of the organic as opposed to the inorganic.”\footnote{Heidegger, The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, 212.} Echoing Nietzsche’s contrastive differentiation of reductively identical kinds in chemistry,\footnote{Nietzsche repudiates the notion that there is “nothing unchanging in chemistry” as “a scholastic prejudice. We have dragged in the unchanging, my physicist friends, deriving it from metaphysics as always. To assert that diamond, graphite, and coal are identical is to read off the facts naively from the surface. Why? Merely because no loss in substance can be shown on the scales?” (KSA, vol. 13, 374).} Heidegger reminds us to consider the example of “organic and inorganic chemistry” precisely inasmuch as “organic chemistry is anything but a science of the organic in the sense of the living being as such. It is called organic chemistry precisely because the organic in the sense of the living being remains inaccessible to it in principle.”\footnote{Heidegger, The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, 212.}

Heidegger began Being and Time with a reference to the crisis in the sciences and arguing for the importance of philosophical reflection. Each particular science articulates its own regional ontology in terms of its basic constitution (Grundverfassung),\footnote{Heidegger, Being and Time, 29.} beginning with the example of the foundational controversy of mathematics in his (and still in our own) day, “between the formalists and the intuitionists.”\footnote{Ibid., 30. Cf. 121–2.} Thus Heidegger adds, in good Husserlian fashion, that what is at stake in this debate turns on “obtaining and securing the primary way of access to what are supposedly the objects”\footnote{Ibid.} of mathematical science. Heidegger articulates the same foundational revolution in physics as he invokes the theory of relativity. This means that science begins with or alongside its own fundamental concepts, and inquiry into these foundations is not then a matter of scientific research, for such research is possible only on the basis of such concepts. Hence philosophical inquiry, or what Heidegger calls “ontological inquiry,” can only be “more primordial, as over against the ontical inquiry of the positive sciences.”\footnote{Ibid., 31. Cf. 91.}

For Heidegger, philosophy is, and can be, in Husserl’s terminology, the science of science not because of a venerable tradition of so regarding philosophy but
because specifically philosophical research must and “can,” as Heidegger claims, “run ahead of the positive sciences.”¹¹¹ Thus, as Heidegger clarifies this point, the contribution of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason “lies in what it has contributed towards the working out of what belongs to any Nature whatsoever.”¹¹² Rather than epistemology, Kant’s “transcendental logic is an a priori logic for the subject matter of that region of Being called ‘Nature.”¹¹³

In this productive, disclosing sense, which Heidegger also expresses as the constitutional eventuality of aletheic truth as discovery or “uncovering,” the scientist effectively opens up the truth of nature. In the alethic context of such a specifically scientific disclosure, it can be said that before “Newton’s laws were discovered, they were not ‘true.”¹¹⁴ By way of Dasein’s “being in the truth,”¹¹⁵ the laws of Newtonian physics only first “became true.” “Newton’s laws, the principle of contradiction, any truth whatever – these are true only as long as Dasein is.”¹¹⁶ But to say this is also to say that through “Newton the laws became true: and with them entities became accessible in themselves to Dasein. Once entities have been uncovered, they show themselves as the entities which beforehand they already were. Such uncovering is the kind of Being which belongs to ‘truth.’”¹¹⁷

VI. GÖDEL: MATHEMATICS, TIME, AND THE COLLAPSE OF DIALOGUE

At the outset, we noted the importance of Hilbert’s 1900 program to set mathematics on the “completed” path of a science, expressed as Hilbert’s “conviction (which every mathematician shares, but which no one has as yet supported by a proof) that every definite mathematical problem must necessarily be susceptible of an exact settlement.”¹¹⁸ And we have already noted that thirty years later, Hilbert’s conviction would be proven unfounded by a young mathematician who initially thought himself to be taking up Hilbert’s program.¹¹⁹ As is already evident in the title of Gödel’s 1931 first incompleteness theorem, “On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and Related Systems, “all consistent formulations of such formal systems as number theory include

¹¹¹. Ibid., 30.
¹¹². Ibid., 31.
¹¹⁴. Heidegger, Being and Time, 269.
¹¹⁵. Ibid.
¹¹⁶. Ibid.
¹¹⁷. Ibid., translation modified.
¹¹⁹. Although Gödel and Hilbert never met (this is not surprising given the difference in age and, indeed, prestige), they were not unconnected given Gödel’s friendship with Hilbert’s assistant, Paul Bernays (1888–1977).
undecidable statements (unentscheidbare Sätze).\textsuperscript{120} As such, Gödel’s incompleteness theorem undermines Hilbert’s ideal of axiomatic consummation. The second incompleteness theorem states that the consistency of arithmetic cannot be proved in arithmetic itself or on its own terms, using the methods of first-order predicate calculus. As Jean Cavaillès (1903–44) has articulated Gödel’s second theorem, “noncontradiction of a theory can be demonstrated only within a more powerful theory.”\textsuperscript{121} But this means that consistency can be proven only if the formal system is inconsistent, and insofar as one needs a higher-order or more powerful system in order to prove consistency, this too falls short of the foundationalist ideal of a complete axiomatic system.

The significance of Gödel’s work for mathematics and logic has been widely acknowledged. As Cavaillès\textsuperscript{122} notes, the “result of Gödel’s work is well-known: every theory containing the arithmetic of whole numbers is necessarily non-saturated. A proposition can be asserted within them which is neither the consequence of the axioms nor in contradiction with them.”\textsuperscript{123} Which is to say, no formal system can be both consistent and complete. And beyond his engagement with Hilbert and contributions to mathematics, there is also a case to be made for the relevance of Gödel’s incompleteness theorem for Heisenberg’s quantum mechanics and the most promising discussions look to John von Neumann (1903–57) and his quantum measurement theory.\textsuperscript{124} Yet while Gödel’s contributions are readily acknowledged by many, there is significant debate in the literature regarding Gödel’s philosophical accomplishments in the field of logic, and many scholars like to claim that it is easy to overstate the consequences of Gödel’s incompleteness theorems.\textsuperscript{125}

This is noteworthy because beyond his work in mathematical logic, Gödel’s ambitions were philosophical. As he wrote to the phenomenologically oriented mathematician and philosopher Gian-Carlo Rota (1932–99), “Transcendental

\textsuperscript{125} The one unifying characteristic of both popular and more reconclite books on Gödel seems to be impatience with other treatments of Gödel in philosophical literature, cultural studies, and in other books on Gödel and mathematics.
philosophy … carried through, would be nothing more nor less than Kant’s critique of pure reason transformed into an exact science.”\textsuperscript{126} In particular, Gödel’s interest in time was expressed in the same Kantian spirit, as Gödel believed, in Palle Yourgrau’s paraphrase, that “the attempt to discover what is fundamental about our thinking about time can receive no assistance from physics which, he argued, combines concepts without analyzing them.”\textsuperscript{127} We have instead to “reconstruct the original nature of our thinking.”\textsuperscript{128}

It is regrettable, but unremarkable, given the differences between Anglo-American and continental styles of philosophizing, that throughout his life Gödel himself would be excluded from mainstream debate on the philosophical reflections on the problems of physics and mathematical logic, and especially on the philosophy of time. Yourgrau outlines one such example in detail: Gödel’s contribution to Paul Schilpp’s 1949 \textit{Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist} was judged to be mistaken, a judgment Yourgrau argues as seemingly made “on principle” insofar as the presumption of error was not the \textit{result of} but made in \textit{advance of} debate.\textsuperscript{129} Even in the long course of the more than half century of scholarship to follow, Yourgrau observes, “Gödel’s contribution to the Schilpp volume had almost no impact on the community of philosophers.”\textsuperscript{130} In his view, Gödel was judged to lack the credentials needed to theorize as a philosopher and, as a consequence, Gödel’s reflective efforts were denied a proper reception, a refusal that continues within analytic philosophy to this day.\textsuperscript{131}

The phenomenon of such academic exclusion is the common, all-too-political, academic tendency to refuse what is not expressed in the style of the “profession”: just as Gödel failed to employ the then-current writing style of analytic philosophy, and failed to refer to the “right” names in American analytic philosophy, his own contributions to philosophy were refused access to the conversation. In this sense, Gödel stands as an example, one among many, of the closed nature of certain domains within academic discourse and the unwillingness to allow dissenting voices and voices coming from other traditions to have a share in the conversation of philosophy. Sadly, this has been as true of philosophy of science as it has been in the more “obviously” politicized discourses of social, ethical, and political philosophy.

\begin{thebibliography}{130}
\bibitem{126} Citation in Yourgrau, \textit{A World without Time}, 107.
\bibitem{127} \textit{Ibid.}, cf. Heidegger, \textit{History of the Concept of Time}.
\bibitem{128} Yourgrau, \textit{A World without Time}, 170.
\bibitem{129} \textit{Ibid.}, 119–20.
\bibitem{130} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{131} \textit{Ibid.}, 121.
\end{thebibliography}
The nature of men, however various and subject to change, must possess some generic character if it is to be called human at all. This holds … of differences between entire cultures. There is a limit beyond which we can no longer understand what a given creature is at; what kinds of rules it follows in its behavior; what its gestures mean. In such situations, when the possibility of communication breaks down, we speak of derangement, of incomplete humanity.

(Isaiah Berlin, The Crooked Timber of Humanity)

Brilliant, intense, socially inept, and preoccupied with his sins, Wittgenstein continues to nourish our appetite for tales of tortured genius. Likewise, his fragmented, agonistic prose has generated considerable literary interest. Nevertheless, these biographical and stylistic peculiarities are not without philosophical import, for they reflect the awkward terrain of his “long and involved journeyings.” Wittgenstein’s various journeyings have, of course, impacted

2. Ludwig Wittgenstein (April 26, 1889–April 28, 1951; born in Vienna; died in Cambridge) was educated at the Technische Hochschule, Berlin (1906–8), the University of Manchester (1908–11), and the University of Cambridge (1911–13, 1929–30). His influences included Boltzmann, Frege, Hertz, Kierkegaard, Kraus, Loos, Moore, Russell, Schopenhauer, Spengler, Straffa, Tolstoy, and Weininger, and he held appointments at the University of Cambridge (1930–36, 1939–41, 1944–47).
most conspicuously on the development of the analytic philosophical tradi-
tion. But even here his influence has not been unanimously welcomed. Indeed,
Wittgenstein’s later descriptive, therapeutic approach has often been seen as a
lamentable diversion for academic (and now highly professionalized) philosophy.
Although many analytic philosophers continue to appeal to “ordinary language,”
few, if any, think that philosophical questions are really grammatical confusions
waiting to be “dissolved … like a lump of sugar in water.”4 Instead, Wittgenstein’s
writings have been excavated for serviceable arguments and theses. Given that his
later work was never intended for publication, this interpretive methodology has
obvious pedagogical advantages, but only by understating Wittgenstein’s broader
metaphilosophical aims: namely, the dissolution of philosophy itself.

What then about the relation between Wittgenstein and so-called continental
philosophy? This is even less clear. For while he mentions Hegel, Schopenhauer,
Kierkegaard, and Heidegger, these allusions remain tangential; Dostoevsky and
Tolstoy were closer to Wittgenstein’s heart. Moreover, he has received little
sustained attention from continental thinkers. Despite all of this, we are going
to outline a few possible correlations between Wittgenstein and the continental
tradition; specifically, Nietzsche, Schutz, Lyotard, and Levinas. (Obviously, these
correlations are not exhaustive.) Before doing so, however, we shall begin by
laying out some of the basic theses of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus that
provide the background for introducing the contrasting set of concepts central
to Wittgenstein’s later philosophy; namely, “language games,” “grammatical
investigation,” “forms of life,” and “family resemblance.”

I. THE TRACTATUS

One way of understanding the profound shift in Wittgenstein’s thought from the
Tractatus to Philosophical Investigations and On Certainty is to see his account of
linguistic meaning as transitioning from the former to the latter notions in the
following series of oppositions: abstract–concrete, general–particular, one–many,
monism–pluralism, theory–practice, necessary–contingent, essence–accident,
individual–social, atomism–holism, logical-analysis–grammatical-description,
and theoretical–therapeutic. That is, if the Tractatus conceives of linguistic
meaning as atomistic, abstract, and general, as necessarily having a monistic
essence expressible in the pure, crystalline (PI §108) formalism of first-
order logic, Philosophical Investigations and On Certainty, by describing the

4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951, James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann
(eds) (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993), 183. Hereafter cited as PO followed by the page
number.
multifarious ways in which language is concretely used in the context of purpo-
sive activity, present a pluralist, particular-case-oriented, context-specific, and
practical action-embedded account.

The *Tractatus* was, at least on Wittgenstein’s own reckoning, the culmination
of the project of early analytic philosophy started by Frege and Russell. The basic
assumption of the program is that natural language is a deceptive medium that
conceals the true meaning of its sentences and sub-sentential expressions, and in
so doing is responsible for a host of philosophical problems, such as the mean-
ingfulness of nonreferring singular terms, the possibility of true negative exist-
tential claims, the informativeness of true contingent identity statements, and
so on. What is needed is logical analysis (thus the name “analytic philosophy”),
which involves parsing the sentences of ordinary language into the forms and
expressive resources of first-order quantification theory, the logic that Frege,
Russell, and early Wittgenstein were developing. Doing so reveals their true
underlying logical form, that is, what their correct meaning consists in, and
once this is revealed, the philosophical problems surrounding them evaporate.

A paradigm of such logical analysis was the logical atomism of the *Tractatus*,
in which sentences of ordinary language are analyzable into elementary propo-
sitions that are in turn ultimately analyzable into combinations of simple names
that mean by virtue of picking out simple objects. These simple names come
with their possibilities for combining with other simple names built into them;
such a possible combination of simple names constitutes an elementary propo-
sition and the totality of such combinatorial possibilities of simple names with
each other (the totality of elementary propositions) delimits the expanse of
logical space, that is, of all that can be meaningful (meaningfully true or false).
As possibilities, some may be realized (and become true propositions) while
others may not (and express false propositions); thus false statements can be
meaningful and statements denying the existence of something can be mean-
ingful and true (they say that a certain possible arrangement of simple objects,
which exist, is not actualized). The problem of nonreferring singular terms is
dealt with in a similar way. Such terms are understood to be complex, that is,
composed of simple names that do refer, which ensures their meaningfulness.
It is just that the particular combination of simple names that is the complex
name in question does not pick out anything actual, so the term, while mean-
ingful, is nonreferring. In this way, simple objects referred to by simple names
must exist for such sentences and terms to have any determinate meaning at
all, and logical analysis into simple names corresponding to simple objects (the
true logical form of ordinary names and sentences) solves outstanding phil-
osophical problems. The job of philosophy is clearly demarcated: to furnish
such logical analyses, that is, to map the workings of natural language onto the
abstract, universally applicable formalism of first-order logic.
The notion of a language game and the examples of language games introduced in the early sections of *Philosophical Investigations* (e.g. the builders’ and grocer’s language games) are clearly meant to contrast fundamentally with this earlier model of language.5 As the word “game” brings out, the concept of a language game highlights the fact that for the later Wittgenstein linguistic meaning is inextricably linked with the concrete, practical activities of speakers in their particular natural and social environments. Importantly, with the introduction of language games, the unit of semantic concern is not the declarative sentence but the utterance (e.g. of a desire, “I want five red apples,” or a command, “Bring me a slab”), that is, a social – involving a speaker and hearer – use of language embedded in some practical activity. Thus, the object of investigation is not a symbolic structure excised from its practical context, something whose meaning is then amenable to expression in the abstract formalism of first-order logic; rather, it is a speech act that takes place at a particular time and place, in the context of purposive social activity (buying produce from a vendor, building a structure as part of a work crew), and thus something that involves others and that has a particular practical goal or purpose in view. By foregrounding language’s embeddedness in the practical, social activities of our everyday lives, the focus on language games moves from an approach to meaning that sees it in terms of its ability to be modeled in some abstract logical formalism to one in which the meaning of a speech act is particularized to what is, in the context of the activity in question, the purpose of the speech act. The meaning of “slab” in the language game of the builders is just what someone who understands the term in this context understands by it, as manifested by responding appropriately (in the way established by the language game as correct) to the utterance – which in this example would be bringing a particular shape of stone (a slab rather than a block, beam, or pillar) to a designated place (PI §§2, 8–10, 19–20). It is “what happens before and after” the speech act (PI §35), the whole surrounding context, the pattern of activity within which it is embedded, that determines its meaning. Change this background in certain ways (imagine the workman is not laboring as part of a work crew but is ostensively instructing his child in the names for the various building materials, e.g. pointing to a particular shape of stone and saying “slab”) and the meaning of the utterance will change: for example from a demand for certain building materials to an identifying

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reference to a particular object, for the language game now being played is one of identifying or ostensively defining masonry items and not constructing a building.

Interestingly, the emphasis on the actual use of ordinary language in practical contexts does not mean that Wittgenstein now believes that the “surface grammar” (PI §664) of natural language provides a transparent medium in which to read off the meaning of natural language expressions. Indeed, a deep commonality in early and late Wittgenstein is the belief in the capacity of ordinary language to disguise through misleading surface similarities the disparate uses of seemingly similar expressions of natural language. What is different in the later work is that the remedy for these confusions is not logical analysis, but in-depth investigation and description of ordinary-language locutions in the contexts of their use. For the later Wittgenstein, then, if ordinary language is the source of confusions, it – and not logical analysis – is also the resource for overcoming them. The confusions created by ordinary language are to be remedied by looking into the detailed workings of the concrete, context-specific, multifarious but indeterminate phenomenon of language-in-use, by attending carefully to how particular words function in particular contexts of use in the everyday lives of speakers engaged in particular practical activities (i.e. language games). One does this by painstakingly describing the range of particular, concrete uses of a word, not by trying to constrain such uses by imposing on them some decontextualized logical form. This kind of context-specific immersion in, and description of, our ordinary uses of language is what Wittgenstein means by a “grammatical investigation” (PI §90). *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* are thus collections of such grammatical investigations that examine a domain of language that has become the source of philosophical confusion or myth, for example how names, mathematical expressions, and sensation terms get their meaning, or when it does and does not make sense to claim to know something, doubt it, be certain of it, and so on.

In Wittgenstein’s usage, “grammar” is not a syntactic notion that refers to some Chomsky-like innate, universal schema or set of transformational rules, and nor, of course, is it the notion of logical form; rather, it refers to the patterns of the actual uses of particular words in specific practical situations. Attending to these patterns of use involves, *inter alia*: considering how we teach children certain expressions (e.g. arithmetic terms, sensation words, epistemic terms like “know,” “doubt,” “justify”); thinking about how we would teach them to linguistic aliens who had no prior use for them; exploring whether certain of their uses would still occur if certain facts about ourselves and the world were different, and so on. The focus on language games and the technique of grammatical investigation, then, does not aim for a systemization of the determinate set of rules that govern all uses of all words in all
circumstances – as the project of arriving at the logical form of language does – but at laying out the distinctive patterns of use that characterize the actual employment of them. Thus the account of meaning grammatical investigations ushers in is one that replaces the former monism of logical form with the pluralism of patterns of use.

A related notion is “form of life” (PI 226). Like the idea of language games, Wittgenstein’s notion of forms of life contrasts with the Tractarian conception of language as an abstract, formal system of signs. And just as the former notion emphasizes that language is something that is used by speakers in the context of their nonlinguistic activities in the natural and social worlds, so forms of life, which are made up of language games and the nonlinguistic activities that they are embedded in, also view language as something that is enmeshed in the lives of human agents and their significant activities. “Life,” then, is not understood merely as a naturalistic–biological category but also as a cultural one. It refers to the shared set of linguistic and nonlinguistic practices and traditions that determine what is correct and incorrect, what appropriate and inappropriate, in what a historical group of individuals says and does, and in so doing constitutes their culture. To be sure, a form of life is based in biological facts and capacities (PI 230), but insofar as it is structured by normatively rich practices of instruction, evaluation, criticism, correction, and so on, it is not reducible to them but is deeply cultural or meaning laden. In his notion of a form of life, then, Wittgenstein naturalizes the normative without naturalistically reducing it, for a form of life is not independent of natural facts but neither is it thereby identified with such facts. “Form of life” is his term for that nonreductive complex involving natural facts about us and the world we live in as well as the normative practices of language, customs, and traditions that give a community its identity.

The descriptive, particularist, and pluralist character of language games, forms of life, and grammatical investigations dovetails with another important

6. Thus there is a marked similarity between the Wittgensteinian concept of “form of life” and Husserl’s notion of “life-world,” which underwrites the similarity between Schutz and Wittgenstein that we will later discuss. The life-world for Husserl concerns the sociocultural structure of meanings or senses established and inculcated in the linguistic and nonlinguistic practices of a community, which delimits the bounds of comprehensibility for the community. As with a form of life, a life-world may well be based on general natural facts and be founded evolutionarily, but it is importantly a cultural entity: the meaning-laden structures that constitute a community’s worldview, the norms of meaningfulness that condition the way it understands itself, the world and others. Hence it is a life-world that individuals from different communities must to some extent share if it is to be possible for them to understand each other.

7. For more on Wittgenstein’s nonreductive brand of naturalism, see the discussion in the next section as well as the essay by John Fennell in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.*
notion of the later Wittgenstein: family resemblance. Wittgenstein initially introduces this notion by considering the language game of the term “game” itself. He argues that if we examine the actual uses of the term “game,” we do not find any single property or set of properties, any common essence, to the activities we rightly call “games.” Some games are amusing and do not necessarily involve any element of competition, of there being a winner or a loser; others are more about competition and less about fun; some others involve skill and not that much luck, while others luck and not that much skill, and in those that require skill there may be very different kinds of skill involved, and so on. The conclusion he draws is that the use of the term “game” does not come with a sharply circumscribed set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for its correct application, such that the term does not apply if the conditions are lacked, but does if they are satisfied; rather, attending to actual use shows “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail” (PI §66). However, for all that, the term “game” has a perfectly good use, and thus a perfectly serviceable meaning. To be sure, it does not have determinate rules for its correct application, rules that would determine its application in all possible future contexts; but Wittgenstein’s point is that it does not need such universalist, determinate rules to have a use and thus be meaningful. He therefore cautions, “Don’t say: ‘There must be something in common, or they would not be called “games”’ – but look and see whether there is anything common at all” (PI §66). This is a warning not to be tempted, as Wittgenstein himself was in the Tractatus, by the thought that unless there is complete determinacy of meaning there is no meaning at all, which is at the heart of his argument for the necessity of simples. A priori arguments for the necessity of the determinacy of meaning in his early work give way to empirical, “look and see” descriptions of the actual use of terms in specific circumstances in his later work. And what these descriptions show is that in order to have a legitimate use and meaning, terms need not have a strictly determinate meaning-essence. The family resemblances obtaining between uses that emerge from grammatical investigations into the actual uses of words in specific contexts, then, do not issue in conclusions that generalize to the essence of all linguistic meaning; their particularist, context-specific character ensures that any conclusions reached about the meaning of a certain kind of term are highly contingent and provisional: contingent on certain environmental features and social practices of speakers remaining the same, such that if they were to change so might the patterns of use, and thus the grammar (meaning) of the expressions involved. Nevertheless, as long as the range of a term’s applications displays some recognizable continuity, similarity, or family resemblance, however loose this may be, a use is determined for the term, and thus a meaning.
III. RELATIVISM, NATURALISM, AND GRAMMATICAL PROPOSITIONS

Although the notion of family resemblance introduces a certain looseness or anti-essentialism into the later Wittgenstein’s picture of meaning, he does not think that this entails that words have no meaning (meaning indeterminacy) nor that they can mean anything at all, that however we use a word is consonant with its meaning (meaning relativism). Regarding the potential threat of meaning indeterminacy, as we have just seen, all the looseness shows is that absolutely determinate meaning is not necessary for meaning. With regard to the problem of meaning relativism, the later Wittgenstein has two resources at his disposal: his “naturalism,” and the category of grammatical (as opposed to empirical) propositions. We shall explain these notions in turn.

By naturalism, we mean Wittgenstein’s insistence that language games, and the family resemblances among uses of terms that emerge in them, are underpinned by a shared human nature possessed by all human beings and a common natural world that we all live in, no matter what the historical, cultural, and individual differences between us. (As we shall see later, this idea is developed in Zettel and “Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough.”) The kind of common nature that Wittgenstein has in mind here consists of very general facts of nature, such as our mortality and biological needs for food and to reproduce, as well as very general facts about our environment, such as that it does not rain gold filigree, that trees do not speak Latin, or that human beings cannot fly or breathe under water unaided. Such general facts of nature to do with us (where “us” here means “us human beings,” not, say, “us early twenty-first-century postmoderns”) and our world act as boundary conditions for what is comprehensible to us, what language games are possible for creatures like us, what uses our words can enter into, and so on. While allowing for some differences between conceptual schemes, such general natural facts do place boundary constraints on the scope of difference. In this way these natural facts permit a plurality of language games, novel extensions of extant language games and differences in the assessment of claims made within them, while at the same time providing a bulwark against an “anything goes” conceptual relativism by placing limits (albeit minimal and general) on what it is possible for us to think, say, and understand. Put another way, they insure that other ways of thinking and using language cannot be completely, radically, other. The radical other must be somewhat familiar, for our nature simply does not allow the truly radically other to be intelligible to us. (We shall return to this later in our discussion of Levinas.) Of course this is a very weak form of naturalism since it does not entail any commitment to reductionism: it is merely the claim that what forms of life and language games are comprehensible to us arise out of general facts of nature, not that they are reducible to them; that such normative practices are not independent of natural facts but nor are they identifiable.
with them. The present point is that although minimal, this form of naturalism still forestalls strong versions of relativism. What it leaves us with is a plurality of language games within certain kinds of boundary conditions; not an “anything goes” relativism but an “a lot of things go” pluralism, where the parameters for what goes and what does not go are not determined a priori by logic but empirically by contingent, general facts of nature. At least this is part of the story.

Not only are there external constraints on the plurality of language games imposed by general facts of nature, but there are internal constraints inside particular language games that limit the intelligibility of claims made within them. These internal constraints on intelligibility are expressed by “grammatical truths” (which are contrasted with empirical claims). This notion is introduced in the discussion of the meter stick (PI §50) and “bedrock” propositions (PI §217), and gets extensive treatment in On Certainty. The idea is that certain statements inside a language game have the special role of acting as conditions for the possibility of other statements in the language game being meaningful. For example, in the language game of measuring objects in meters, the statement that “The standard meter stick is a meter long” does not have the same status as the statement “My desk is a meter long.” The latter is an empirical statement, the former a grammatical one: rather than representing some object as being a certain length in meters, in expressing the standard for what it is to be a meter long, it is what makes all such representations of objects’ lengths in meters possible and so cannot itself be represented in the language game of representing the lengths of objects in meters. To say of the meter stick that it is a meter long in this language game is in effect to say that the meter stick has the same length as the meter stick. That is, it is analogous to an empty tautology, and as with other tautologies – for example “Either it is raining or it is not raining” – which do not describe, represent, or tell us something about the world (it does not say that it is raining, nor does it say that it is not raining), so this does not make an empirical claim about the length of some object but is a condition for other claims doing so. As the repeated reference to the “language game of representing the length of objects in meters” in the foregoing should make clear, its role as a grammatical statement is language-game specific. That it is rather like a tautology or necessary truth in that language game – in other words, that it is a presupposition for other statements to be meaningful in that language game – does not mean that it universally has this status. In another language game, for example the language game of assessing the accuracy of standards of measurement, the statement that the standard meter is a meter long is an empirical claim that attributes a length to a particular object and so stands in need of verification.8

8. Indeed, its being taken as such resulted in its being replaced; at present, the standard is the distance travelled by light through a vacuum in a certain, very small, fraction of a second.
In *On Certainty*, which is discussed in greater depth below, Wittgenstein makes the same point, but this time with regard to the language game of philosophical skepticism and anti-skepticism and the use of the terms “knowledge,” “doubt,” and “certainty.” There Wittgenstein points out that Moorean propositions such as “Here is one hand, here is another,” “My name is LW,” “I have never been far from the surface of the earth,” and so on are grammatical propositions in the language game of ordinary knowledge claims. As such they are statements that have no justification, indeed, they do not need such justification; to think that they do (as the skeptic does) is to misunderstand their grammatical role in the language game (or grammar) of justification – namely, that justification has to end somewhere (with them, as it turns out). Thus, they are epistemic primitives, the justificatory “bedrock” where our epistemic “spade is turned” (PI §217). The important point here is that one cannot be a pluralist about such grammatical propositions and continue to “play” the language game in question: reject them and one is opting out of the specific language game (e.g. moving from the language game of representing the lengths in meters of objects to the language game of assessing standards of measurement, or moving from the language game of ordinary knowledge claims into paranoia or madness⁹). Grammatical propositions “hold fast” (OC §173), at least for the language game in question. Disagreement about them is not possible inside the language game they govern; it bespeaks a misunderstanding, not a different understanding of the concepts involved, and in this way grammatical propositions also act to constrain the possibilities for difference or “otherness.”

**IV. METAPHILOSOPHY**

With this family of concepts (language games, grammatical investigations, forms of life, family resemblance), Wittgenstein is not so much objecting to this or that semantic theory – for example the truth-conditional account of sentential meaning, the referentialist account of names, and so on – with the aim of replacing it with another theory of meaning, namely, the so-called “use theory” of meaning. The use *theory* of meaning often attributed to the later Wittgenstein is a misnomer. His move to looking at how words are actually used in particular social situations given certain natural facts about us and the world is not directed toward installing another, different *philosophical* theory of meaning (the use theory) in place of these other theories. It is better seen as the rejection of

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the whole “will-to-theorizing” about linguistic meaning characteristic of philosophy; the rejection of the quintessentially philosophical drive to get “behind” or “beneath” actual linguistic usage and arrive at a theory that would explain once and for all what linguistic meaning consists in. In other words, his concentration on actual use is expressive of an antitheory, meta-philosophical attitude. For Wittgenstein, philosophy should consist of piecemeal, particular descriptions of actual concrete uses of language in specific practical situations and under certain natural world conditions. When so practiced, traditional philosophical problems, like the problem of knowledge, the meaningfulness of nonreferring singular terms, the determinacy of the meaning of mathematical expressions, and so on, are not so much answered as do not even arise. Philosophical problems will not be solved but dissolved: they will not even be formable in the first place. Philosophy so practiced will therefore be therapeutic (PI §133); it will not supply the single, unified explanatory theory of how words mean, but will instead cure us of the disease of thinking that we need such a theory.

This conception of philosophy as therapy foregrounds an important aspect of Wittgenstein’s later work, namely, his conception of what philosophy should be. This normative dimension is important because Wittgenstein’s methodological commitment to leave “everything as it is” (PI §124) does not extend to traditional philosophical practice itself. Indeed, he repeatedly characterizes philosophers as idiotic, deranged, and infantile. For Wittgenstein, then, philosophy ought to be therapeutically oriented toward attaining “[t]houghts that are at peace.” He therefore describes philosophical puzzlement as an illness or disease, and his own practice as the requisite treatment (PI §255, §593). This therapeutic analogy is crucial, for just as there is no intrinsic value in medicine, there is no intrinsic value in philosophy; both are valuable relative to their curative capacities. (In this sense, Wittgenstein’s later method might be described as broadly ethical in orientation.) Philosophers should therefore eschew theorizing, as this merely intensifies conceptual suffering. Rather, philosophy’s task lies in “clearing up the ground of language” (PI §118), thereby leaving one “capable of stopping doing philosophy” (PI §133).

Although Wittgenstein is a deeply anti-philosophical thinker, his metaphilosophy is not wholly idiosyncratic. For while he cared little for the history of philosophy, Wittgenstein’s approach has significant resonances with ancient Pyrrhonism, Franz Rosenzweig, and Nietzsche. Indeed, despite his concerns about psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein explicitly aligns himself with Freud to the extent that both are engaged in “persuasion” or “making propaganda for one

style of thinking.” Why? Because what the patient requires is a wholesale perspectival shift: something akin to a conversion.

Beset by dogmatism, superstition, and an impulse to theorize (notably about language), philosophers routinely employ preconceived ideas of that “to which reality must correspond” (PI §131), as Wittgenstein himself had done in the *Tractatus*. All this he offsets in his later work with the “weighing of linguistic facts” and “description alone” (PI §109). So, whenever philosophers talk of “knowledge,” “being,” “object,” “I,” “proposition,” and “name,” and thereby “try to grasp the essence of the thing,” we should ask: “is the word ever actually used in this way in the language game that is its original home?” What Wittgenstein attempts to do then is “bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI §116), for our confusions are generated by surface similarities “between the forms of expression in different regions of language” (PI §90). Philosophy can neither interfere with how language is actually used, nor provide it with a foundation. Rather, philosophers’ task is to “only describe” (PI §124).

Notwithstanding his criticisms of philosophy, Wittgenstein does not think that our conceptual illnesses are created by philosophers. Rather, language itself routinely misleads us (CV 18). For example, because the “verb ‘to be’ … seems to function like ‘to eat’ and ‘to drink’” (because we habitually talk of a “flow of time and an expanse of space,” etc.), we continually “bump up against the same mysterious difficulties” (PO 185–7). Although philosophers certainly exacerbate such confusions, they do not generate them ex nihilo. Our battle is therefore against the seductions of language itself, and not least our “urge to misunderstand” (PI §109). Because it is often as hard to avoid using certain expressions – just as it is hard to “hold back tears, or an outburst of anger” (PO 161) – neither the force of “grammatical illusions” (PI §110) nor the demands of Wittgenstein’s therapy should be underestimated or thought to trivialize philosophy.

At this juncture, we should note Nietzsche’s own warning against the seduction of words. Just as Wittgenstein counters our essentialist urges by introducing language games and family resemblances, Nietzsche similarly cautions that the “unity of the word is no guarantee of the unity of the thing.” Not only are we routinely misled by the “similarity of words and concepts,” but the

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latter are inherited from more primitive times. Although he would not share Nietzsche’s haughtiness regarding “primitive mankind” (see our later discussion of “Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*”), Wittgenstein concedes that “our language has remained the same and seduces us into asking the same questions over and over” (PO 185). Likewise, his caution that an “entire mythology is laid down in our language” (PO 199) is prefigured by Nietzsche’s own warning: “A philosophical mythology lies concealed in language.” Illustrating how the deepest philosophical prejudices are already contained within language, Nietzsche thus directs our attention to the supposition that “the subject ‘I’ is the condition of the predicate ‘think,’” for the “inference here is in accordance with the habit of grammar: ‘thinking is an activity, to every activity pertains one who acts, consequently.’” Both Wittgenstein and Nietzsche thus highlight the manifold dangers of getting “tangled up in the snares of grammar.” Indeed, on this point at least, it is hard to know where Nietzsche ends and Wittgenstein begins.

For Wittgenstein, then, ordinary language is both the source of our confusions and where these confusions are remedied. But his later therapeutic method might be arduous for other reasons. Recalling Wittgenstein’s allusion to our “urge” to misunderstand, in *Culture and Value* he conjectures: “It is sometimes said that a man’s philosophy is a matter of temperament, and there is something in this. A preference for certain similes could be called a matter of temperament and it underlies far more disagreements than you might think” (CV 20). Again, this has striking Nietzschean resonances, for Nietzsche similarly describes the tendency of philosophers to cast their rivals as “anarchists, unbelievers, opponents of authority” in terms of those instincts that are “active behind all ... pure theoreticians.” In other words, philosophers have, “under the spell of the instincts, gone fatalistically for something that was ‘truth’ for them ...” As such, the rancor between philosophical systems and “epistemological scruples” is really just a “conflict between quite definite instincts.”

That philosophers rarely ask what instincts motivate them is hardly surprising, for this would undermine their universalist, aprioristic pretensions. But here Nietzsche happily blurs the line between philosophy and autobiography:

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21. Heller suspects that Wittgenstein’s preoccupation with “everyday” or “natural” language was, in part, due to a “‘Tolstoyan belief in the virtue of the simple life’” (*The Importance of Nietzsche*, 155).
What happens ... is that a prejudice, a notion, an “inspiration,” generally a desire of the heart sifted and made abstract, is defended ... with reasons sought after the event ... It has gradually become clearer to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir ... [a] decisive testimony to who he is ...²⁴

When considering even the philosopher’s most abstract metaphysical claims, we should therefore ask: what “morality” does he or she aim at? Here there is nothing “impersonal”;²⁵ indeed, for Nietzsche, even the laws of logic merely express an empirical human “inability,” and thereby function as “imperative[s] concerning that which should count as true.”²⁶ Although less radical than Nietzsche, Wittgenstein would probably agree that philosophy “creates the world in its own image,”²⁷ and rarely (if ever) for purely rational considerations.

V. THE ORDINARY, KNOWLEDGE, AND TRUST

As will have become clear from our discussion thus far, appeals to the “ordinary” play a crucial methodological role in Wittgenstein’s later work. To dissolve our perplexities and cure philosophical disease, language must be returned “home” from its metaphysical to its everyday usage (PI §116). In short, problems arise “when language goes on holiday” (PI §38). Here Wittgenstein thus seems to polarize two realms: one of safe familiarity, the other of hazardous disorientation. But might one not object that Wittgenstein himself has here been seduced by “forms of expression”; namely, the picture of being-at-home in the “ordinary”? As we have seen, such a conclusion would be hasty insofar as ordinary language is both curse and cure (the “things that are most important” are “hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity” [PI §129]). Still, it is worth exploring other aspects of the ordinary.

In the Investigations, Wittgenstein remarks: “What has to be accepted, the given, is ... forms of life” (PI 226). Precisely what this encompasses remains unclear – not least for Wittgenstein himself – but as we saw above, he uses “forms of life” to refer alternatively to a collection of interwoven language games, to the practical dimension of language games, and even to human life in both its natural–biological and normatively rich aspects. We have referred to “forms

²⁴. Ibid., §§5–6.
²⁵. Ibid., §6.
²⁷. Ibid., §9.
of life” here to highlight two things about the ordinary: (i) When Wittgenstein insists that forms of life are *given*, and thereby must be accepted, he is countering the urge to uncover some esoteric, hidden reality (PI §126). The philosopher’s rightful task is instead to describe how language actually works *in situ*. Moreover, one has to accept *something* as “given.” In philosophy, no less than history, geography, physics and even our prephilosophical life, at some point one’s “spade is turned” (PI §217). What are given are our mundane language games, embedded in more complex forms of life, and expressed by the propositions that are grammatical for them. Thus we are similarly instructed to accept language games “as the *primary* thing” (PI §656), for they require “no justification” (PI 200). In *On Certainty*, then, Wittgenstein claims that the language game is “something unpredictable”; that is to say, it is “not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life” (OC §559). (ii) Wittgenstein’s various appeals to the ordinary function as a methodological constraint. He has no aspiration to intrude on other disciplines (e.g. evolutionary theory), for he is doing neither natural science nor natural history. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, his “interest certainly includes the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us)” (PI 230). This is important, for Wittgenstein’s orientation (like Nietzsche’s) is deeply naturalistic. As such, his conception of the ordinary cannot be divorced from those general facts of nature only within which human life is truly *human* life. Our language games are therefore to be understood as being “as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing” (PI §25).

Wittgenstein once claimed that he could imagine philosophy written entirely as jokes. Although “making a joke” is included in his inventory of language games (PI §23), it is not obvious why Wittgenstein thought joking to be *philosophically* important. An answer to this is suggested in the *Investigations*:

> The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language. – Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)

(PI §111)

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28. See OC §§162, 206, 234, 600, 608.
The depth of grammatical jokes (e.g. “I have a pain in my pocket”\textsuperscript{31}) thus corresponds to Wittgenstein’s insistence that confusions arise when language goes “on holiday.” That such jokes might provide therapeutic “reminders” (PI §127) of how language ordinarily works is clear. Nevertheless, we would like to pursue this topic further.

Wittgenstein’s introduction of language games foregrounds that the “speaking of language is part of an activity” (PI §23), a more complex “form of life” that includes nonlinguistic activities. Because the ordinary encompasses typical human behaviors, only of what “resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious” (PI §281). As we will see later, these behaviors are crucial for understanding Wittgenstein’s relevance to ethics. For the moment, we simply need to note that Wittgenstein is not only concerned with everyday ways of speaking, but with how concepts such as “pain” function in the complex “weave of our life” (PI 174). For, as he insists, it is the “common behavior of mankind” that provides the “system of reference” for understanding others – even those of an “unknown country” (PI §206).

According to Wittgenstein, then, if we attend to our actual use of language, what is “hidden” is of “no interest” (PI §126). But in one sense he is interested in something hidden, albeit due to its mundane “familiarity” (PI §129). For what Wittgenstein finds “mysterious” and unable to express is the “background against which whatever I could express has its meaning” (CV §16). Although this may sound distinctly Tractarian, the “background” against which life ordinarily functions is a recurrent theme throughout Wittgenstein’s work. As already noted, the horizon of normal human actions remains elusive because of its extreme proximity. To get a clearer sense of this, let us return to Wittgenstein’s \textit{On Certainty}.

As was pointed out earlier, in these last notebooks Wittgenstein focuses on Moore’s common-sense examples of things he knows to be true\textsuperscript{32} – most famously: “‘Here is one hand, and here is another.’”\textsuperscript{33} What troubles Wittgenstein here is not Moore’s general antiskepticism, but rather his specific claims to knowledge. Why? Because if we attend to how “know” functions in ordinary life, free from philosophers’ “metaphysical emphasis” (OC §482), we find that “I know” entails the possibility of providing further justification, proof, or supporting evidence. In short, “I know” is conditional or “restricted” (OC §554). More specifically, “know” and “doubt” are mutually parasitic, for “I know” implies that “I doubt” \textit{makes sense}. Wittgenstein thus inquires: “How does someone judge

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\textsuperscript{31} This example is taken from Raimond Gaita, \textit{The Philosopher’s Dog: Friendship with Animals} (New York: Routledge, 2003), 53, 56.


which is his right and which his left hand? How do I know that my judgment
will agree with someone else’s?” and continues: “If I don’t trust *myself* here, why
should I trust anyone else’s judgment? Is there a why? Must I not begin to trust
somewhere? That is to say: somewhere I must begin with not-doubting; and that
is not, so to speak, hasty but excusable: it is part of judging” (OC §150). To the
question “Why don’t you satisfy yourself that you have two feet?” one cannot
provide evidence more certain than what is in doubt; hence Wittgenstein’s own
response: “There is no why. I simply don’t. This is how I act” (OC §148). What
therefore remains interesting about Moore’s propositions is that they neither
require nor permit epistemic bolstering – they are, one might say, more funda-
mental than epistemology. Subsuming these claims under the rubric of “know-
ledge” therefore trivializes them, and even perhaps generates comic incongruity
(OC §§463–4).

It is crucial to note here that Wittgenstein does not simply rebuff Moore. For
although Moore “does not *know* what he asserts he knows,” it nevertheless
“stands fast” (OC §151) for both him and Wittgenstein (not to mention the rest
of us). Indeed, if Moore’s propositions were knowable, and thereby open to criti-
cal interrogation, then “a doubt would … drag everything with it and plunge
it into chaos” (OC §613). Wittgenstein thus undercuts the entire skeptic/anti-
skeptic debate by suggesting that “know” and “doubt” are two sides of the same
conceptual–linguistic coin. But this requires clarification, for he also insists
that the “game of doubting itself presupposes certainty” (OC §115). In short,
while “know” and “doubt” are inextricably connected, the entire knowledge/
doubt language game is underpinned by certainty. So, Wittgenstein is not only
concerned with describing the knowledge/doubt language game, but also inter-
ested in what underpins *all* our language games; hence his allusions to “some-
thing universal” (OC §440), “something animal” (OC §359), and even (rather
oddly) “the human language-game” (OC §554). Wittgenstein patently struggles
to articulate this background certainty without employing the vocabulary of
“knowledge” and “doubt.”34 Because the latter generate “misfiring attempt[s] to
express what can’t be expressed like that” (OC §37), he alludes instead to trust: “I
really want to say that a language-game is only possible if one trusts something.
(I did not say ‘can trust something’)” (OC §509). The parenthetical qualification
here is important, for such trust is not deliberative or hypothetical, but rather
“trust … without any reservation” (OC §337). Such trust is “primitive” in that
it is both unconditional and manifest (shown) in our ordinary linguistic and

34. This shifting vocabulary is most apparent where Wittgenstein discusses learning a whole
“world-picture” (OC §§95, 162, 167) or “system of propositions” (OC §141). It should be
noted that Moore himself struggles to articulate his certitude; see Moore, “A Defense of
nonlinguistic behavior.\textsuperscript{35} Insofar as trust is “anchored in all my questions and answers, so anchored that I cannot touch it” (OC §103), it thus resists explicit articulation. Indeed, even in our most theoretical and/or skeptical moments we do not evade trust, and as such any metadiscourse on trust (Wittgenstein’s included) itself presupposes such trust. This then is why Moore’s “Here is one hand, and here is another” contributes only philosophical confusion to the course of daily life in which hands ordinarily have a role.

Mindful of this, just as Wittgenstein’s conceptual vocabulary shifts throughout On Certainty, we find a similar array of descriptions in Alfred Schutz’s discussions of what is taken for granted in the “everyday life-world.”\textsuperscript{36} Like Wittgenstein, Schutz similarly seems to struggle to articulate this “unquestioned background.”\textsuperscript{37} But, as we shall see shortly, what is especially interesting is how Schutz’s phenomenology of the life-world highlights problems he appears to share with Wittgenstein.

Although Schutz maintains that the pretheoretical attitude of common sense is dominated by the pragmatic know-how involved in pursuing concrete objectives, most of our worldly knowledge is received from our sociocultural heritage. This inherited stock of knowledge is not static, however; “radical surprises”\textsuperscript{38} sometimes occur, which are either subsumed into our existent body of knowledge or undermine our hitherto “unquestioned course of experience.”\textsuperscript{39} At what point such anomalies endanger one’s stock of knowledge is not possible to determine in advance because the latter provides the criteria for what is relevant in one’s “biographically determined situation”\textsuperscript{40} and what counts as a genuine problem. Like Wittgenstein, Schutz thus thinks that the taken-for-granted world constitutes the realm in which doubting and questioning become possible, and as such lies at the “foundation of any possible doubt.”\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, intersubjectivity permeates the life-world. Not only is the taken-for-granted world essentially sociocultural; even one’s pragmatic dealings with objects refer to past, present, and futural activities of human beings. Indeed, while face-to-face encounters

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} Schutz, The Structures of the Life-World, 169.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Alfred Schutz, Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, Richard M. Zaner (ed.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 69.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid. I, 74.
\end{itemize}
are immediate, here one takes for granted not only the bodily reality of one's fellow human beings (including their conscious life and possibility of mutual understanding), but also the interchangeability of our respective standpoints, namely, that “I and my fellow-man would have typically the same experiences of the common world if we changed places.”

However reassuring all this may sound, Schutz's work is haunted by a persistent ambiguity. Like specific passages in On Certainty (especially OC §§162, 167, 608–12), Schutz's life-world often sounds relativistic. A tension thus emerges between “relative-natural world view[s],” on the one hand, and “the fundamental structures of … the life-world” on the other, and likewise between “the life-world” and “our life-world” – where the “our” pertains to a historically and culturally specific community. In a similar vein, Schutz refers to others being so radically different that we do not have “any principles of interpretation”; their world lies “beyond the grasp” of our understanding. (Indeed, he even suggests that not even the “so-called biological needs for food, shelter, and sex” are basic enough to support a “theory of the equality of men grounded on the equal needs of mankind.”) We have begun to see – and will discuss further later – how Wittgenstein's apparent relativism is tempered by his naturalism, but does Schutz have similar resources available? It seems to us that he does. For Wittgenstein, we will recall, the “common behavior of mankind” provides our hermeneutic “system of reference” (PI §206). Only with this background in place can we possibly understand others. As such, this common behavior binds us across history, culture, and our respective stocks of knowledge. Despite the fact that Schutz seems to think that sociocultural groups can be unintelligible to one another, partaking in mutually untranslatable (incommensurable) forms of life, he nevertheless maintains that “Certain features … are common to all social worlds because they are rooted in the human condition.” Every situation is therefore “limited’ through the prior givenness of my body” and the given “ontological structure of the world.” Together these impose a limit on

43. Schutz, Collected Papers I, 313.
44. Ibid., 12.
45. Ibid., 315–16.
48. Ibid., 119.
50. Ibid., 230.
51. Ibid., 229.
53. Ibid., 114.
historical, cultural, and individual difference.\textsuperscript{54} Accordingly, these features are universal; they are “on hand for everyone; they are the same in whatever relativ-natural world view [one is] … socialized.”\textsuperscript{55} As such, the other is “in principle ‘understandable’ to me.”\textsuperscript{56} Putting this in Wittgensteinian terms, then, difference is confined by “very general facts of nature” (PI 230) pertaining to “the natural history of human beings” (PI §415).

VI. ETHICS, THE BODY, AND “OTHERNESS”

Discussing Wittgenstein’s relevance for ethics may seem odd. For when he laments “the harm philosophers do in ethics,”\textsuperscript{57} he is not objecting to specific positions in moral philosophy, but to the philosophical treatment of ethics as such. Wittgenstein thus insists that we should “put an end to all the idle talk about Ethics – whether there be knowledge, whether there be values, whether the Good can be defined, etc.”\textsuperscript{58} In short, our tendency to talk about ethics is ultimately hopeless (PO 44).

Wittgenstein’s broader treatment of ethics seems similarly discouraging. In the Investigations he simply (and unsurprisingly) notes that the word “good” has a “family of meanings” (PI §77) rather than any determinable essence. Elsewhere he suggests that between different moral principles there cannot be “argument and proof,” and that context is all-important when trying to understand moral concepts.\textsuperscript{59} In keeping with these latter suggestions, in On Certainty Wittgenstein imagines encountering another culture. For us the propositions of physics constitute good grounds (OC §608), but how are we to judge those who instead consult an oracle (and for which we “consider them primitive”)? If we think it is wrong or mistaken for their actions to be guided in this way, would we not be merely “using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?” (OC §609). Wittgenstein thus proceeds to caution:

Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and heretic

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 18.
... I said I would “combat” the other man, – but wouldn’t I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes persuasion. (Think what happens when missionaries convert natives.) (OC §§611–12)

So, if such principles can be radically divergent (and reasons must terminate somewhere [OC §§34, 192, 204, 262]), then noncoercive interaction becomes problematic. Reading Wittgenstein as endorsing a radical incommensurability thesis is doubtless tempting, but as we have begun to see, it is far from unproblematic. Still, we would like to pursue this idea a little further, with reference first to Lyotard, and then to Levinas.

Mindful of the above passages from On Certainty, if there is no site of arbitration outside all language games (no God’s-eye view), then any inter-game judgment will inevitably be framed in the conceptual vocabulary of a specific language game, thereby generating conflict. These broadly Wittgensteinian concerns preoccupy Lyotard insofar as he thinks that the multiplicity of language games (e.g. those governing “science, literature and the arts”60) are irreducible and heterogeneous. Simply put, “we have no common measure”61 here, and the resultant incredulity toward metanarratives (i.e. “narrations with a legitimating function”62) constitutes our postmodern condition. If metanarrative legitimation is problematic, then the emancipatory quest for consensus itself becomes ethically and politically questionable. After all, why assume that it is “always better to play together”?63

Clearly, Lyotard’s use of “language game” is rather different from Wittgenstein’s.64 For while the former extends its application to cover complex sociocultural phenomena, Wittgenstein’s own examples in the Investigations (e.g. “Giving orders, and obeying them … Reporting an event … Forming and testing a hypothesis … Translating from one language into another … Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying” [PI §§23–5]) are significantly more mundane, and thereby cut across science, religion, art, and so on. Lyotard’s extension of “language game” thus enables him – rightly or otherwise – to draw explicit ethico-political conclusions; specifically that the imposition of one

63. Jean-François Lyotard, Postmodern Fables, Georges Van Den Abbeele (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 144.
64. The striking exception to this is OC §§608–12.
set of rules across the social field “entails a certain level of terror”; a more-or-less tacit injunction: “be operational (… commensurable) or disappear.” To translate conflicting parties, even for the sake of consensual harmony, violates the given heterogeneity of (Lyotardian) language games. Because different language games have their own operational criteria for how to move, and cannot be externally justified (i.e. their rules are local), the tension between language games cuts deep. However, such tension is not due to a problem of mere litigation or disagreement about the application of a shared rule. Rather, what interests Lyotard is what he calls the “differend,” where even the criteria for playing differ between subjects or collections thereof. Such conflict constitutes a differend because “the success (or the validation) proper to one genre is not the one proper to others.”

Although bolstered by his philosophy of language and appeal to a quasi-Kantian sublime, the political implications of Lyotard’s incommensurability thesis are pretty clear. He therefore advocates a “pagan” attitude of celebration and multiplication of differences – even a “war on totality.” Privileging one language game would be as absurd as claiming that chess or poker was the only true game. The pagan recognizes that there is no such privilege, for one can play numerous games each of which is “interesting in itself.” Conversely, a sure indication that people are insufficiently pagan is that “they think that they are in the true.” The flourishing of difference, nourished by an experimental attitude, is therefore what Lyotard thinks we postmoderns should desire, not least because questions of justice cannot be solved by models or rules. The alternative to this “pagan” attitude is the sort of dogmatism that, ultimately, leads to imperialism and genocide. Lyotard’s avowed openness to “difference” may sound cozy, but for him dissensus is the cost of recognizing the heterogeneous nature of language games. Although agonistic, Lyotard is

66. Although even within a language game there is no necessity to “move” one way rather than another; see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Georges Van Den Abbeele (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 66, 80–81.
68. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 82.
70. Avant-garde art is the paradigm case here, for its only “rule” is to search for (and question) its own rules; see Lyotard, *The Differend*, 139, and *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, 24.
73. Lyotard’s shifting vocabulary of language games, little narratives, phrases, and so on similarly bears witness to his agonistic desire to avoid totalizing discourse. The agonism of the phrase amounts to this: to phrase is inescapable; it is given, but how to phrase remains open (see Lyotard, *The Differend*, 66; *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, 54). Owing to the multiplicity of possible linkages, there is a corresponding multiplicity of possible disputes about
not therefore despairing, for politics is simply inseparable from the “threat of the differend.”  

These concerns seem in keeping with Wittgenstein’s insistence that all we can ultimately say is “this language-game is played” (PI §654), for at some point justification is exhausted (PI §217). Indeed, as noted earlier, the language game is “something unpredictable … it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable). It is there – like our life” (OC §559). Thus, when Lyotard writes “All we can do is gaze in wonderment at the diversity of discursive species,”75 we might well hear an echo of Wittgenstein’s own amazement at the given multiplicity of language games and forms of life (PI 226). On a Lyotardian reading, then, Wittgenstein’s anti-essentialism bears witness to “what the postmodern world is all about”; namely, the delegitimation of homogenizing metanarratives.76

While there are some striking correlations between Lyotard and Wittgenstein – especially the latter’s remarks in §§608–12 of On Certainty quoted earlier – we would now like to shift focus from Lyotard’s differend (and associated themes77) to Levinas – one of the most prominent continental philosophers of “difference.”78 Like Lyotard’s, Levinas’s work resists easy summary. As such, we will concentrate on a couple of themes that relate most conspicuously to Wittgenstein’s later thinking.

Levinas’s central preoccupation throughout his work is with the singularity of the “other” – specifically, other human beings.79 In this he draws on our prephilosophical experience of others, placing special emphasis on face-to-face encounters. According to Levinas, traditional philosophy has tended to characterize the other as essentially a member of a common species, an instance of humanity, or to use philosophical jargon, a token of a type. Typically, the other here figures as a source of epistemological concern – hence the problem of other minds and associated puzzles. But this way of construing our relation to others misses something much more fundamental; namely, that I am routinely faced by concrete, singular, vulnerable others – each with their own distinct

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74. Ibid., 138.
76. Ibid., 41.
78. For more on the relation between Wittgenstein and Levinas, see Bob Plant, Wittgenstein and Levinas: Ethical and Religious Thought (London: Routledge, 2005).
79. For Levinas’s views on other animals, see especially “The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas,” A. Benjamin and T. Wright (trans.), in The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other, Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (eds) (New York: Routledge, 1988).
life-narratives, needs, desires, etc.80 (We might say, borrowing Wittgensteinian terms, that Levinas is here reminding us of something mundane we nevertheless tend to overlook due to its “familiarity” [PI §129].)

Much of Levinas’s work thus focuses on what it means to be faced by a finite, vulnerable, embodied other. The general claim he makes here is that “access to the face is straightaway ethical.”81 In other words, my “access” to the other is not dependent on any analogical inference or chain of reasoning on my part; rather, it is immediate. As Levinas remarks, what the face expresses

is not just a thought which animates the other; it is also the other present in that thought … [for the] expression does not speak about someone, is not information about a coexistence, does not invoke an attitude in addition to knowledge … Expression is … the archetype of direct relationship.82

Levinas goes further, however, for the face is not merely a collection of discernible features to be recognized, deciphered, or comprehended.83 Rather, the face has an active ethical dimension, for I am faced by the other’s face, not merely presented with one more worldly object for cool contemplation. Here, then, Levinas maintains that the other’s face embodies three things: first, the biblical command “Thou shalt not kill”;84 second, the appeal “Do not kill me” (and even “Do not abandon me”85); and third, the face accuses me of already having killed, of being an (albeit unwitting) accomplice in others’ deaths.86 So, the other’s face simultaneously commands, appeals, and accuses. Combined, the moral claim made on me here is inescapable.87 Thus, when Levinas says that the “face speaks,”88 the point is not merely physiological. Rather, the face provides the

80. Ibid., 169.
84. Levinas, Ethics and Infinity, 89.
85. Emmanuel Levinas, Outside the Subject, Michael B. Smith (trans.) (London: Athlone, 1993), 44.
88. Levinas, Ethics and Infinity, 87.
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ethical conditions of possibility for discourse. For it is from the (vulnerable) authority of the other’s face that the silent demand that I justify myself first comes, and toward the (authoritative) vulnerability of the face that my response is ultimately addressed. It is in this sense that responsibility is “not a simple attribute of subjectivity”; rather, I am “initially for another.”

That being faced by the other demands that I justify myself is one of Levinas’s most persistent themes, for he repeatedly insists that the face “calls me into question.” The natural “egoism” of the self – what Levinas sees as its instinctive prioritization of its own welfare, needs, and desires over others’ – is therefore undermined in the face-to-face encounter. For here I am (albeit silently) required to justify to the other my very “right to be.” Why? Because my simply being here constitutes a “usurpation of someone’s place.” This then helps to explain why Levinas insists that “bad conscience … comes to me from the face of the other.”

The command of the face “Thou shalt not kill” is therefore an impossible injunction, for I have already sacrificed others, and continue to do so. For no matter how sensitive and generous I might be toward this other, I thereby neglect all the other others who are just as singular and needy.

It is in this sense then that responsibility is, strictly speaking, “infinite.” For what Levinas rules out is the good conscience involved in thinking that one’s responsibilities have been accomplished. (This latter theme plays a central role in Derrida’s ethical and political writings on hospitality, forgiveness, and the gift.)

These, in brief, are some of the central motifs of Levinas’s work. Mindful of all this, it is striking that Wittgenstein also draws our attention to the human face. In a sense this is unsurprising, for face-to-face encounters clearly play a central role in our everyday dealings with others. But Wittgenstein’s remarks on the human face (and the body more generally) have more notable Levinasian resonances. For he too wants to undermine the general philosophical view that others are essentially another species of object to be known. Like Levinas, Wittgenstein insists that the meaningful presence of the other is immediate. For example, one sees consciousness, and even a “particular shade of consciousness,” in the other’s face. When encountering others one does not first look into oneself and then “make inferences … to joy, grief, boredom” (Z §225) concerning them.

(This is why a facial expression cannot adequately be described in terms of “the

89. Ibid., 96.
92. Levinas, Entre Nous, 148.
distribution of matter in space” [CV 82].) Rather, we normally “describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored” (Z §225); its meaning “is there as clearly as in your own breast” (Z §220). The face, one might therefore say, manifests joy, grief, boredom, suffering, and so on. It is not incidental then that some recent Wittgensteinians describe embodiment, and specifically the human face, as a “moral space,” for the face is “the locus of the possibility of all those expressions that are at the basis of moral life.”

Despite all of this, we should not overstate the similarities between Levinas and Wittgenstein. For while Levinas constantly stresses the radical “otherness” of the other (although he gives this a distinctly ethical twist), Wittgenstein repeatedly emphasizes the regularities and commonalities of human behavior (PI §206). For example, he remarks: “If a man’s bodily expression of sorrow and of joy alternated, say with the ticking of a clock, here we should not have the characteristic formation of the pattern of sorrow or of the pattern of joy” (PI 174). In a similar vein, elsewhere Wittgenstein writes:

Isn’t it as if one were trying to imagine a facial expression not susceptible of alterations which were gradual and difficult to catch hold of, but which had, say, just five positions; when it changed it would snap straight from one to another. Now would this fixed smile, for example, really be a smile? And why not? (Z §527)

Such a face or body would signal, not radical “otherness,” but rather abnormality, dysfunction, or someone acting or making a joke. Wittgenstein thus asks us to imagine meeting people whose facial features were identical. Here, he suggests, this “would be enough for us not to know where we are with them” (CV 75) – just as we would falter if we were to encounter others whose linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior was completely predictable.

Given Wittgenstein’s preoccupation with human embodiment, his occasional references to the “soul” may seem rather surprising. But what interests Wittgenstein here is, predictably enough, how this term actually functions in our ordinary intercourse. If we “look and see,” rather than impose preconceived ideas of what “soul” means, we find that the term does not name some mysterious inner substance. Saying that someone “has a soul” is manifested, not in one’s hypothetical beliefs about their metaphysical constitution, but rather through one’s practical orientation toward them. In other words, to “believe that men have souls” lies in the application of this “picture” (PI §422), and this

96. Bergson’s Laughter is in large part an extended meditation on this point.
is why, regarding concrete others facing me, I have “an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the opinion that he has a soul” (PI 178). Given this very practical characterization of “attitude,” it becomes clear why such a picture is central to our sense of ethical concern for finite, embodied, vulnerable others. There is something primordially significant about the human form, so much so that it determines the limits of to what or whom the concepts pain, consciousness, soul (etc.) can be meaningfully attributed. It is in this sense then that caution is needed when speaking of the intractable or radical “otherness” of the other. For while other human beings may not be transparent to us (hardly something we should bemoan), that does not mean that they are inherently mysterious or that an unfathomable gulf separates us. Certainly the lives of others are singular; each of us has our own physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive peculiarities, not to mention our own distinct life-narratives. In this sense we are unique and irreplaceable. But it is misleading to suggest that our uniqueness betokens some radical difference between us. For this ignores the mundane fact that, simply in virtue of being human, we share a considerable amount. Indeed, as suggested earlier, if others were truly radically “other,” how could we possibly be cognizant of this fact? Surely they would not even register on our cognitive, affective, and empathic radar.97

Both Wittgenstein and Levinas insist on the immediacy of our intersubjective encounters; our responsiveness to others is not essentially deliberative, nor does it result from our reasoning by analogy (Z §537). But here is where Wittgenstein and Levinas part company in the most significant way. As noted above, Levinas conceives of the face-to-face as undermining the natural “egoism of the I.”98 That is to say, for Levinas ethics is fundamentally “against nature because it forbids the murderousness of my natural will to put my own existence first.”99 This markedly bleak vision of the natural is crucially at odds with Wittgenstein’s naturalism, and specifically his insistence that “it is a primitive reaction to tend, to treat, the part that hurts when someone else is in pain; and not merely when oneself is.” By “primitive,” Wittgenstein does not mean anything derogatory, but rather that such responses are “pre-linguistic: that a language-game is based on it, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought” (Z §541). (“‘Putting the cart before the horse’ may be said of an explanation like the following: we tend someone else because by analogy with our own case we believe that he is experiencing pain too” [Z §§540–42].) Thus:

98. Levinas, Basic Philosophical Writings, 54.
Being sure that someone is in pain, doubting whether he is, and so on, are so many natural, instinctive, kinds of behavior towards other human beings, and our language is merely an auxiliary to, and further extension of, this relation. Our language-game is an extension of primitive behavior. (Z §545)

Of course, there are times when the meaning and sincerity of others’ behavior is far from obvious. But Wittgenstein’s point is that, in the ordinary course of our lives, “I can only believe that someone else is in pain, but I know it if I am” is only to say that “one can make the decision to say ‘I believe he is in pain’ instead of ‘He is in pain’. But that is all … Just try – in a real case – to doubt someone else’s fear or pain” (PI §303). Put slightly differently, in such circumstances one needs “reasons for leaving a familiar track,” for “[d]oubt is a moment of hesitation and is, essentially, an exception to the rule” (PO 379). In an especially striking passage, Wittgenstein proceeds:

The game doesn’t begin with doubting whether someone has a toothache, because that doesn’t – as it were – fit the game’s biological function in our life. In its most primitive form it is a reaction to somebody’s cries and gestures, a reaction of sympathy or something of the sort. We comfort him, try to help him. (PO 381)

The important point here is that if, as Wittgenstein maintains, language is an extension, refinement, or replacement of primitive reactions (Z §545; CV 31; PI §244), then moral deliberation concerning when, how and to whom we should attend is ultimately rooted in prelinguistic natural or “primitive” reactions toward others. This is not to contest the obvious anthropological fact that the manner in which different cultures organize and implement their moral values may vary considerably. (Nor is it to contest the existence of sociopaths and moral blindness.) What it does suggest, however, is that the depth of such cultural diversity is not unfathomable, but rather circumscribed both by prelinguistic behaviors and given natural facts about human beings – not least their finitude and vulnerability. This then is why Wittgenstein insists:

The concept of pain is characterized by its particular function in our life.

Pain has this position in our life; has these connexions; (That is to say: we only call “pain” what has this position, these connexions).

Only surrounded by certain normal manifestations of life, is there such a thing as an expression of pain. Only surrounded by an even more far-reaching particular manifestation of life, such a thing as the expression of sorrow or affection. And so on. (Z §§532–4)
Moral problems force themselves on us insofar as they arise from the “common life between men and do not presuppose any particular forms of activity in which men engage together.” Thus, for example, what constitutes suffering is not primarily an epistemic or hypothetical matter; it is central to the natural life of human beings. The other’s suffering commands us to help (whether or not we actually do); his misery “calls for action: his wounds must be tended.” As such, the various trajectories taken in the course of historical and cultural practice and rational ethical and political deliberation are only possible on the grounds of a much more natural responsiveness toward others. Unlike Levinas’s ethics of radical otherness, then, what Wittgenstein is reminding us of in all this is the natural backdrop our lives share; our “agreement … in form of life” (PI §241).

In the previous discussion we have been stressing Wittgenstein’s (albeit minimal) naturalism, and how this figures in thinking about the relevance of his later work for ethics. Before concluding, however, it is worth saying something about “Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough,” for here Wittgenstein’s naturalism plays an even more tangible role. In these notes, Frazer is taken to task for portraying the magical and religious views of humankind as pseudo-scientific “errors” or “pieces of stupidity” (RFGB 61). According to Wittgenstein, however, religious beliefs can be erroneous only to the extent that they offer a theory or opinion. But “[n]o opinion serves as the foundation for a religious symbol” (RFGB 64); indeed, the “characteristic feature of primitive man is that he does not act from opinions” (RFGB 71). Frazer’s assessment is driven by his desire to explain religious practices. True to form, Wittgenstein opposes this by insisting that one must “only describe and say: this is what human life is like” (RFGB 63). Under these methodological constraints, then, “all one can say is: where that practice and these views occur together, the practice does not spring from the view, but they are both just there” (RFGB 62). These sentiments are therefore in keeping with Wittgenstein’s remarks in On Certainty that he wants to “regard man here as an animal … a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination.” After all, “[a]ny logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination” (OC §475). For Wittgenstein, neither religious practices nor language itself are founded on reason; rather, the “origin and the primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop” (CV 31). In short, Wittgenstein’s focus in “Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough” is not on (allegedly) “primitive” human beings, but rather on the “primitive” within human beings.

Wittgenstein thus provides a continuity thesis regarding primitive behaviors and language games. Indeed, this is why he suggests that “one could begin a book on anthropology by saying: When one examines the life and behavior of mankind throughout the world, one sees that … [human beings] perform actions which bear a characteristic peculiar to themselves, and these could be called ritualistic actions” (RFGB 67). Not only does Wittgenstein narrow the apparent rift between Frazer’s “savages” and us postmoderns, but this underlying commonality is something Frazer himself presupposes. For if his explanations did not already appeal to a natural tendency in us, then they would have little explanatory force. What Wittgenstein is stressing is the kinship between the behavior of Frazer’s “savages” and “any genuinely religious action of today” (RFGB 64). Because these various practices show a “common spirit” (RFGB 80), were one to invent a religious ritual, it would either perish or be “modified in such a manner that it corresponds to a general inclination of the people” (RFGB 78). (Indeed, we should remember our own ritualistic behaviors, such as kicking the ground in anger or kissing the photograph or name of a loved one.) Moreover, on closer inspection, Frazer’s “savages” understand perfectly the natural boundaries of their rituals, for the “same savage, who stabs the picture of his enemy apparently in order to kill him, really builds his hut out of wood and carves his arrow skillfully and not in effigy” (RFGB 64). Hence, Wittgenstein concludes that if they were to document their knowledge of nature, it “would not differ fundamentally from ours” (RFGB 74). Judging the religious practices of Frazer’s “savages” by our scientific criteria is misguided, perhaps also unjust, but not because of some radical differend or unfathomable “otherness.” Rather, the injustice here lies in Frazer’s underestimating our natural commonality. It is therefore unsurprising that “in relation to man, the phenomena of death, birth, and sexual life, in short, everything we observe around us year in and year out … will play a part in his thinking … and in his practices” (RFGB 66–7).  

102. In the same vein, Winch maintains: “[T]he very conception of human life involves certain fundamental notions – which I shall call ‘limiting notions’ – which have an obvious ethical dimension, and which indeed in a sense determine the ‘ethical space’, within which the possibilities of good and evil in human life can be exercised … [specifically] birth, death, sexual relationships. Their significance here is that they are inescapably involved in the life of all known human societies in a way which gives us a clue where to look, if we are puzzled about the point of an alien system of institutions … In trying to understand the life of an alien society, then, it will be of the utmost importance to be clear about the way in which these notions enter into it … [T]he very notion of human life is limited by these conceptions” (“Understanding a Primitive Society,” American Philosophical Quarterly 1[4] [October 1964], 322). Passages such as these undermine the common view that Winch is some sort of cultural relativist.
Wittgenstein introduces the concept “language game” (and associated terms) to shake us from our grammar-induced urge to think that language functions in one way. Rejecting such essentialism thus leads him to embrace a contextual, descriptive–therapeutic (rather than aprioristic, speculative–theoretical) approach. The early part of our discussion focused on this aspect of Wittgenstein’s work. What is of broader significance, however, is that while he emphasizes sensitivity toward the “multiplicity of language-games” (PI §24), he does not think that the horizon of human life is radically open. While we must be attuned to diversity in the social, historical, and cultural realm, insofar as language games emerge from shared “primitive behavior” (Z §545), it is misleading to interpret Wittgenstein as having “developed the theory of the irreducible plurality of language games,” and who thereby “sought to resolve the difficult question of values in terms of plurality.”103 It is even more misleading to think that Wittgenstein faced intractable problems “surmounting the heterogeneity of language games and the corresponding forms of life.”104 While specific passages in his later work (not only in On Certainty105) lend themselves to this sort of interpretation, Wittgenstein’s naturalism situates him at least as close to “common-sense” philosophy as to Lyotard’s postmodernism or Levinas’s ethics of radical otherness.

Inevitably in an essay of this sort it is impossible to provide a comprehensive analysis of a given philosopher. As such, we have doubtless presented Wittgenstein in a partial light, foregrounding what we considered to be the most interesting and salient facets of his work. Specifically, we have emphasized his naturalism and tried to explain how this bears on a number of issues – not least those of a broadly ethical sort. But, one might reasonably ask, where does this leave us? What is the relationship between Wittgenstein and so-called “continental philosophy”? The answer to this question, it seems to us, remains contentious. Or rather, if we expect a neat answer to this question, then we will likely be disappointed, for Wittgenstein’s is not the sort of work to permit such an unequivocal answer. To borrow a good Wittgensteinian metaphor, Wittgenstein’s own work is held together by a network of “family resemblances”: a “complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail” (PI §66). But this should not be cause for despair, among continental philosophers or anyone else. For Wittgenstein's

104. Ibid., 58.
105. See, for example, Wittgenstein’s remarks on religious believers and nonbelievers being “on an entirely different plane” (L&C 53; cf. 56, 59–60) insofar as they “think entirely differently” (L&C 55). As such, he suggests, there is no “contradiction” between them (L&C 53, 55).
work requires reconstruction. What we have provided here is just part of that much larger – albeit disparate – ongoing project. Ours has been a cautionary tale, specifically against reading Wittgenstein as a champion of unbounded radical difference and otherness. Such a reading, we think, misses an important, although often neglected, aspect of his work: namely, his minimal naturalism. But other commentators – for example, Simon Glendinning, Stephen Mulhall, Chris Lawn, and Søren Overgaard\textsuperscript{106} – have traced other points of contact between Wittgenstein and continental philosophy. During the twenty-first century, no doubt, there will be other similarly insightful and challenging reconstructions of Wittgenstein’s work. In this sense at least, the future for thinking about Wittgenstein in relation to continental philosophy remains open.

**MAJOR WORKS**


I. INTRODUCTION: THE FREUDIAN DIFFERENCE IN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY – THE DISCOVERY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

Sigmund Freud\(^1\) is a momentously important figure not only in relation to the history of the continental philosophical tradition; he casts a prominent long shadow over the entirety of the past century.\(^2\) In addition to informing certain varieties of therapy linked to specific theoretical models of the mind, Freud’s invention of psychoanalysis has exerted (and continues to exert) enormous influence on Western culture and the history of ideas, even transforming the very manners in which people think and speak about themselves at an everyday level. Who does not occasionally suspect that he or she and others are moved by obscure or hidden mental forces, that the reasons for observed behavior are not always what they superficially seem? And few thinkers from one hundred years ago continue to provoke controversy in the here-and-now. Freud’s writings, rather than being highly specialized psychological texts focusing on sexuality and family life, are incredibly rich and wide-ranging reflections on numerous aspects of the human condition, such as the workings of memory,

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2. Freud’s influence is discussed in the essay on “Psychoanalysis and Desire” by Rosi Braidotti and Alan D. Schrift in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*. 
the relationship between mind and body, the meaning of literature and art, the nature of the emotions, the function of religion, and the structure of social groups. In several senses, for one to understand oneself today requires understanding Freud.

Thanks to his formidable erudition and amazing breadth of interests, Freud’s texts have something to say about nearly every issue and topic of concern to philosophers (as well as to anyone who pauses to ponder the mysteries of being human). However, whereas Anglo-American philosophical orientations generally have, with a few exceptions, skirted around serious engagement with the implications of Freudian psychoanalysis for accounts of mind and subjective agency, every significant philosophical movement forming part of the history of thought in twentieth-century Europe has, at a minimum, felt obligated to rise to the challenge of reconsidering the multifaceted enigmas of existence and subjectivity in response to Freud. It would be no exaggeration to assert that what is designated nowadays by the phrase “continental philosophy” involves, almost by definition at the current historical juncture, various relations with Freudian psychoanalysis and its diverse offshoots.

Along with Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, Freud is an essential, unavoidable point of reference for those continental philosophers working in his wake (with Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud functioning as a sort of foundational triumvirate for continental philosophy from the twentieth century through the present). Likewise, for all who seek to comprehend these philosophers, a certain comprehension of Freud’s key concepts and claims is mandatory. At the most basic and fundamental of levels, what Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud have in common is an emphasis on the subtle and insidious ways in which people remain opaque to themselves, operating under the influence of forces and factors foreign to their self-images and yet, at the same time, absolutely constitutive of and integral to their very being. One might be tempted here to invoke the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s\(^3\) neologism “extimacy,” a neologism referring to that which is simultaneously intimate and exterior, the core of a subject’s structure, which the conscious self of this same subject nonetheless cannot directly identify with and make its own. Along these lines, economic class struggles (Marx), historical power relations (Nietzsche), and fraught past experiences (Freud) are all posited as central determinants of the human condition usually misrepresented and/or obfuscated by mechanisms that conspire to keep such unsettling truths from being openly acknowledged and addressed – these mechanisms being ideology according to Marx, morality according to Nietzsche, and repression according to Freud.

\(^{3}\) For a discussion of Lacan, see the essay by Ed Pluth in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. 

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However, one might already be wondering: What sets Freud apart from Marx, Nietzsche, and other thinkers in the continental philosophical tradition with whom he shares some overlapping conceptual ground? What is distinctive about Freudian psychoanalysis with respect to post-Kantian European philosophy? There are many fashions in which one could go about answering such questions. In fact, considering both the sizable intellectual scope of Freud's own voluminous writings as well as the veritable mountain of literature by clinicians, philosophers, and many others dealing with Freud, a small library's worth of books could be written on the differences Freudian ideas make in the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century continental philosophy.

What is more, Freud analyzes many matters of direct concern to philosophers of various stripes: temporality, embodiment, subjectivity, inter-subjectivity, affectivity, and countless other objects and phenomena. So, given that the present discussion is constrained by the length limitations of a single essay, difficult decisions must be made about what will be focused on here (as Spinoza remarks, “all determination is negation”). Despite these difficulties, one notion clearly thrusts itself forward as the leading candidate for the status of being Freud's crucial and unique contribution to the history of ideas, including the history of continental European philosophy: the unconscious (das Unbewusste). Psychoanalysis is born with the discovery of the unconscious in the late 1890s. It thereafter remains the defining object of inquiry for analysis as a particular discipline unto itself.

As Freud himself admits, he does not invent the unconscious ex nihilo, instead arriving at this notion through a combination of clinical experience with patients (including himself as the analysand of his in-depth self-analysis) and extensive reading across a range of material. He readily concedes that quite a few poets, artists, and philosophers before him discerned significant aspects and contours of these nuanced shades of mental life. Additionally, against a nineteenth-century intellectual background colored by the concepts of F. W. J. von Schelling, G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Marx, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, among others, it initially appears to be the case that much of what seems original in Freud involves, in actuality, modifications, inflections, and embellishments added to ideas that were already, as it were, “in the air” before he invents psychoanalysis at the turn of the century.

But this initial appearance is misleading. Although Freud's elaborations of psychoanalysis (as centered on the unconscious) over the decades of his mature career draw much inspiration from a whole series of other thinkers and disciplines, one must not lose sight of those characteristics and features of the specifically Freudian unconscious that make it an absolutely unprecedented idea distinct from its historical precursors. Lacan laments that Freud chose to designate what he discovered with a word bearing a negative prefix (i.e. “un-”). His
“return to Freud” endeavors to undo the damage done to the picture of Freud by misunderstandings generated, at least in part, by the proliferation of false renditions of the unconscious flourishing in the vagueness and indeterminacy opened up by a concept-term superficially appealing to everything that is simply not conscious; a brief moment of consideration ought to lead one to conclude that the unconscious of psychoanalysis, as a set of components and operations at play in the human psyche, cannot be the mere equivalent of the indefinite number of things that could be said to be “not conscious.” Following Lacan’s lead, only a correct positive conception of the unconscious (as more than just the negation of consciousness) will suffice in order to situate Freud properly vis-à-vis both his predecessors and successors in the history of continental philosophy. Lacan (sometimes referred to as “the French Freud”) is arguably the most important interpreter of the philosophical import of Freudian psychoanalysis for continental Europe, and the approach to Freud adopted here is unashamedly guided in certain ways by his teachings.

What follows is organized into two parts. In the first part, the peculiar features of the unconscious as the object of Freudian psychoanalysis will be outlined, with an eye to highlighting those of its traits that identify it as a unique contribution to the history of ideas. This task of outlining will be structured by the six sorts of questions one can ask about a thing (i.e. Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? – of course, each of these questions will require further specification to become precise enough to guide a fruitful discussion of Freud). Then, in the second part, this thus-established delineation of the unconscious will be used to situate Freudian psychoanalysis in its relations to some of the major European philosophical orientations of the past two centuries. This latter half of the essay will strive to bring into view the convergences and divergences between Freud and those surrounding him in nineteenth- and twentieth-century continental philosophy.

II. THE UNCONSCIOUS – THE OBJECT OF FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Who? – the subject of the unconscious

Although Freud does not explicitly employ the terms “subject” and “subjectivity” as found throughout the bodies of literature constituting continental philosophy – more than anyone else, Lacan is responsible for putting such philosophical language into circulation within Freudian discourse – what these terms refer to is constantly at stake throughout the entire span of his psychoanalytic theorizations. However, even granting this, one might nevertheless wonder whether Freud’s descriptions of the unconscious are the appropriate places to
go looking for a Freudian account of subjectivity; surely his musings and speculations about the conscious dimensions of the ego, for instance, are more likely to furnish a depiction of the subject relevant to the concerns of philosophical orientations situated in a tradition rooted in Kantian and post-Kantian German idealism (these being conceptual frameworks evidently centered on consciousness and self-consciousness). Is the unconscious not something nonsubjective? Would images of it along the lines of either an utterly asubjective roiling mass of impulses and urges and/or a static storehouse of inert, frozen tableaus of episodic memories not be more fitting?

The unconscious posited by Freud is reducible to neither a seething sea of irreducible instinctual energies nor an accumulated jumble of snapshots of the childhood past. Rather, the unconscious of Freudian psychoanalysis is a thing that thinks (albeit in modes intimately connected to libidinal and mnemic factors). What is most revolutionary about Freud’s “Copernican Revolution” – Freud himself compares his mental decentering of the psyche to the shift from geo-centrism to helio-centrism – is the implication that one can think without knowing that one thinks, that one can know without knowing that one knows. Much of Western philosophy assumes that the mental and the conscious are synonymous and coextensive (this assumed equivalence has been empirically falsified by a wealth of psychological and neuroscientific research apart from the critiques to which psychoanalysis has submitted it). Consequently, many philosophers have presupposed (and some still persist in presupposing) that thinking and knowing exemplify and are inextricably bound up with the reflexive structures of a consciousness transparent to itself (i.e. to think is to think that one thinks, to know is to know that one knows). What Freud uncovers in his clinical work with patients and his examinations of sociocultural materials are the traces of sophisticated and complex processes of mentation (i.e. highly elaborate and clever mental maneuverings often involving intricate constellations of words and symbols) foreign to and disowned by the very authors of the evidence exhibiting these traces.

From the perspective opened up by Freud’s analytic ears, a far-from-mindless “it,” akin to an alien other of equal (yet utterly different-in-kind) intelligence to the familiar self-conscious “I,” appears to dwell within psyches whose forms of consciousness tend to ignore or deny the muffled presence of this it. Mentioning Lacan’s twin twists on René Descartes’s famous “Cogito, ergo sum” is perhaps helpful here: “I think where I am not” – that is, the unconscious involves a thinking that the “I” of conscious selfhood does not believe or suspect is happening – and “I am not where I think” – that is, the true kernel of one’s subjectivity resides not in the ego of one’s self-awareness, but, instead, in this thinking that circumscribed conscious awareness does not think is thinking. The Freudian unconscious is, first and foremost, an ensemble of nonreflexive
mental dynamics, a thinking that one \((qua\) conscious ego) does not reflectively think while (it is) thinking.

\textit{What? – the substance of the unconscious}

Although the unconscious is a style of thinking, a set of distinctive modes of mentation, it is not this exclusively. Of course, for anyone even minimally familiar with Freud, the unconscious also can be conceived of as both a particular place in the mind (i.e. a specific sector of the psyche topographically distinct from consciousness and the preconscious) and certain sorts of ideational materials (such as painful memories, inadmissible intentions, threatening desires, and the like). The knowing involved with this aspect of mental life is closely related to such materials as a kind of knowledge that one knows without knowing that one knows, relegated to mental regions resistant to self-conscious reflective assessment.

Hence, insofar as the unconscious is not pure form without content, a philosopher, especially one situated in the continental tradition, is likely to ask: What is the ontological status of the unconscious? Of what sort of “stuff” does it consist? What types of being(s) are involved with it? Freud himself does not address such queries directly, in part owing to his aversion to philosophy as he views it. His craving for scientific legitimacy in the eyes of the natural scientific positivism of his time, coupled with his bad impressions of highly speculative varieties of philosophizing inspired by the German idealists, lead him to be generally quite dismissive and disparaging of philosophy as a discipline, despite the obvious wealth of philosophical consequences entailed by his psychoanalytic theories. Nonetheless, whole books could be written in response to the preceding questions.

In terms of the ontological–material essence of the Freudian unconscious, several key points must be made. To begin with, the young Freud embarks on his path as a medical student researching matters neurological; as evinced by the posthumously published \textit{Project for a Scientific Psychology} (1895), this training (under the direct influence of Brücke and the indirect influence of Gustav Fechner and Hermann von Helmholtz) remains a pervasive influence shaping his metapsychological reflections across the entire span of his intellectual itinerary. However, he soon comes to realize the limitations of the neurology of his day. Freud awaits an eventual biological articulation of psychoanalytic metapsychology, but starts laying the theoretical foundations of analysis without it. Whether the insights he thereby arrives at can and should be put back into relation with the natural sciences has been and continues to be the focus of much lively debate both within and outside of philosophical circles.

\textit{Contra} a plethora of popular misrepresentations, Freud is not the vulgar biological materialist that he too frequently is portrayed as being, namely, a
scientistic reductionist in the mold of eighteenth-century French monistic materialism. The psyche, including the unconscious, is admittedly not without its relations to the body. But, in addition to defying a complete and exhaustive reduction to corporeal being alone, the body with which the psychical apparatus maintains a rapport is not just mechanistic matter moved solely by efficient causes (i.e. the matter at stake in crude science-inspired materialisms). The (sexualized) body-image, as the ideational representations (Vorstellungen) of the body, is a crucial mediating matrix conjoining, as Freud puts it, soma and psyche. In this vein, through his concept of drive (Trieb) – this concept is another of Freud's major contributions to the history of ideas, one as unprecedented with respect to the philosophical tradition as the unconscious – Freud depicts human being as taking shape at the complex, tangled intersection of body and mind, nature and nurture.

Furthermore, as is particularly apparent in the early founding texts of psychoanalysis (such as, most notably, The Interpretation of Dreams, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, and Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious), much of the “stuff” of the unconscious consists of elaborate webs of images, words, symbols, and concepts (i.e. Vorstellungen, themselves accumulating over the course of the individual’s ontogenetic life history, chained together in incredibly sophisticated networks by the thinking activity of unconscious mental processes). Succinctly stated, the Freudian unconscious is not the familiar bastardized version of his later notion of the id (das Es). In other words, it is far from being simply a bubbling cauldron of primitive animalistic instincts held in check by nothing more than external social prohibitions and their psychical internalizations. Nor, by contrast with the Jungian unconscious and its archetypes, is the Freudian unconscious determined from the beginning by any innate meaningful contents wired into the foundations of the psyche.

Where? – the place of the unconscious

In addition to the form and content of the unconscious, there is the matter of the place of the unconscious. In continental European psychoanalytic circles, the 1923 publication of The Ego and the Id marks a transition from the “first topography” (i.e. the fundamental map of the mind as divided into conscious, preconscious, and unconscious domains) to the “second topography” (i.e. the id, ego, and super-ego trinity). Anglo-American psychoanalysts refer to this pivotal shift in Freud's metapsychology as the replacement of the “topographic model” with the “structural model.” Additionally, one should note that, for the later Freud, the terms “conscious,” “preconscious,” and “unconscious” are not straightforwardly supplanted by (or correspond in any direct one-to-one manner with) the terms “id” (das Es), “ego” (das Ich), and “super-ego” (das Über-Ich). Instead,
“conscious,” “preconscious,” and “unconscious” change from being nouns in the first topography (i.e. names for places in the psyche) to being adjectives in the second topography, adjectives modifying the nouns “id,” “ego,” and “super-ego” (e.g. in Freud’s later work, there are unconscious portions of the ego and super-ego, hidden dimensions of selfhood and conscience of which one normally is unaware). Moreover, the latter terminological triad, as with other of Freud’s German terms (such as \textit{Trieb} or \textit{Schicksal}), poses serious questions of translation on which hinge fundamental psychoanalytic issues with clinical and practical as well as theoretical and philosophical implications. For instance, whether every occurrence of “\textit{das Es}” or “\textit{das Ich}” should be translated with the technical terms “id” and “ego” respectively, rather than the words “It” and “I,” makes a genuine difference to one’s understanding of Freud’s writings about analysis from 1923 onwards. Lacan’s disputes with American ego psychology come out quite clearly through the differences between how he exegetically translates Freud’s German versus the fashions in which his English-speaking adversaries read \textit{The Ego and the Id} (like the German, the French terms for the three psychical entities of the second topography [“ça,” “moi,” and “surmoi”] preserve the same ambiguity between the technical and the nontechnical).

These difficulties aside, attention ought to be paid to the obvious here: Freud speaks of a psychical “topography,” namely, a (metaphorically) spatial depiction of the mental apparatus. The first association one might have in response to this, especially those who buy the image of him as a naturalizing biological reductionist, is the idea of the project of anatomical localization. However, Freud, painfully aware of the limitations of even the most cutting-edge of what was then-contemporary neurology, warns against efforts to pin down the “places” of the psyche in relation to the anatomy of the central nervous system (with a hindsight informed by today’s neurosciences, this decision against the project of localization was the right move insofar as the vast majority of complex mental dynamics, including ones operative in the Freudian unconscious, are nonlocalized \textit{qua} widely distributed across bodily systems and environs).

Another association people often make as regards visual metaphors for the unconscious as a mental space is to the motifs of so-called “depth psychology,” to imaginings of the unconscious as the concealed corners and recesses of the mind, as a psychical container for unpleasant things shrouded from view by the veil of repression. This conception of it as a deep, overshadowed repository is incredibly problematic (Lacan’s recourse to mathematical topology is driven, in part, by the struggle to purge metapsychological theorizing of any reliance on a misleading picture-thinking tethered to the spontaneous, intuitive Euclidian geometrical register of macro-level sensory-perceptual experience). Unconscious phenomena frequently are on display out in the open (as instances of “the psychopathology of everyday life”), transpiring on the very surface of
quotidian reality in publicly visible words and deeds – and yet, of course, usually somehow going unnoticed nonetheless. Furthermore, insofar as, on the Freudian account, consciousness itself is shaped by the unconscious, the latter is woven into the fabric of the former (rather than consciousness standing over and above the depths of the unconscious). Finally, certain dimensions of the unconscious even could be said to be distributed across individual psyches, situated in the intersubjective and trans-subjective structures arising between human beings via exchanges occurring within a diverse array of sociosymbolic milieus.

**When? – the temporality of the unconscious**

Freudian psychoanalysis, along with such roughly contemporaneous continental philosophical movements as both transcendental and existential phenomenology, takes significant strides in the direction of reconsidering the nature of being human in light of reflections on time. The temporal dynamics organizing psychical life are absolutely essential components of Freud’s analytic theories. And yet, not only does Freud himself fail to realize the full extent of the contributions his work makes to a new philosophical conceptualization of temporality – this is related to his insistence on the “timelessness” of the unconscious – but popular consciousness comes to consider the discipline he founds as, so to speak, a science of the past. That is to say, owing to a combination of some of Freud’s own remarks with impressions circulating among the general public, the unconscious phenomena of the psyche are at risk of being envisioned as either impervious to the passage of time and/or restricted to the effects of a limited number of repressed episodic memories from childhood. These misleading notions regarding the relevance (or, more accurately, irrelevance) of time to Freudian psychoanalysis obscure from view its many far-reaching ramifications for theories of temporality in philosophy.

Admittedly, the past is indeed very important in Freud’s account of mental life, as evinced through such things as infantile sexuality, the return of the repressed, repetition compulsion, transference, and so on. But, beginning with his earliest proto-psychoanalytic texts of the 1890s, Freud indicates that the past at stake in the psychical facets with which he is concerned is a past dialectically intertwined with a present continually unfurling itself off into the uncharted terrain of the future, a future filled with an indefinite multitude of unpredictable contingencies. Such phenomena as deferred action (*Studies on Hysteria*), mnemic re-transcription (“Letter 52” to Fliess), screen memories (“Screen Memories”), day-dreams (“Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”), and, most notably, the interaction between “infantile wishes” and “day-residues” in the formation of the “manifest texts” of dreams via the “dream-work” (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) all reveal that what the unconscious retains of the past in the form of
encoded ideational representations is subjected to repeated retroactive alterations in connection with the ongoing lived history of ontogenesis. As a result of this dialectical oscillation between past and present, the unconscious past exerts its influence over the present only insofar as the present provides associative catalysts for the reactivation of this past, a past then modified by these same reactivations. Consequently, in psychoanalysis, a pure, undiluted repetition of or regression to a past “as it was” is impossible for several metapsychological reasons. This is a far cry from the image of the unconscious as a repository of fixed memories, a closed album of unchanging snapshots of early life events.

Additionally, the formations of the unconscious tend to orbit around enigmas pertaining to the temporal character of the human condition. More precisely, the entanglement of sexuality with the topics of birth and death is revealed through both the symptoms of certain neurotics and the fundamental fantasies situated at the core of each and every psyche. Many of the mysterious questions of existence that these fantasies attempt to answer bear on matters of mortality (and an unconscious that is allegedly ignorant of chronological time and logical negation struggles to comprehend such matters).

Lastly, although Freudian psychoanalysis could be identified as deploying developmental models of the mind, its developmentalism is not that of developmental psychology as it is commonly understood. To be more specific, when Freud insists on the timelessness of the unconscious, what he means is that prior phases of development (i.e. past periods of psychical experience and structure) are not eliminated and replaced by subsequent phases of development. Instead, the effects of the passage of time on the psyche involve the cumulative sedimentation of interacting layers (interactions in which layers of the long ago can and do continue to bend and warp current processes), rather than successive demolitions of the old by the new.

**Why? – the reasoning of the unconscious**

One of the more common misconceptions of the Freudian unconscious depicts it as a homunculus-like mind-within-the-mind, a sort of second mind as a lustful and violent Doppelganger of the conscious mind familiar to the first-person self. Freud takes great care to argue against such notions. By contrast with, for instance, the depth psychology of Pierre Janet (1859–1947; one of Freud’s contemporaries who posits a “subconscious” qua a split-off double of consciousness), the unconscious of Freudian psychoanalysis does not think in the manners and modes of the thinking with which consciousness is acquainted. Unconscious mentation works quite differently than conscious mentation – so differently, in fact, that traces of the former, often writ large out in the open, easily and usually go unrecognized by the latter. The strange, unfamiliar thinking
of the unconscious is not bound by the same logical and chronological laws and patterns as conscious cognition. In outlining elements of his metapsychology, Freud highlights the peculiarity of the unconscious in noting that it has no cognizance of either negation (including the law of noncontradiction foundational to the bivalent logic relied on by forms of conscious rationality) or time (in terms of the linear ordering of phenomena through the skeletal schema of past, present, and future). The Freudian distinction between “primary processes” (associated with the unconscious) and “secondary processes” (associated with consciousness) emphasizes precisely this: the rules and procedures of unconscious mentation are different in kind from those of conscious thinking. Hence, primary-process-style cognition is not to be conceived of along the lines of secondary-process-style cognition. In other words, the unconscious cannot be thought of as a duplicate of consciousness, a second consciousness operating apart from, yet in ways similar to, the first consciousness of the experiencing “I.”

Some of the philosophically crucial upshots of Freud’s insistence on the thinking (of the) unconscious as radically other in relation to conscious thought have to do with the statuses of reason and meaning in human existence. The unconscious is not “irrational” in the sense of being an inner primitive animality of crude instinctual whims and caprices, an opaque maelstrom of murky energies alien to more sophisticated, higher-order conceptual and linguistic reasoning. Nonetheless, the unconscious also is not “rational” relative to standards for rationality related to consciousness and self-consciousness. It does not pursue ends, weigh means, calculate outcomes, and ponder consequences as the conscious mind constantly does. The unconscious does not even recognize a firm, black-and-white line of demarcation between reality and fantasy, between fact and fiction. Freud, in connection with his later theories centered on the death drive, the super-ego, and masochism, goes so far as to hypothesize that the psyche even sometimes deviates from the rudimentary rationality embodied in the self-interested aiming at well-being, sabotaging its own pleasurable pursuits and inflicting pain and suffering on itself.

Likewise, although the formations of the unconscious are far from meaningless, they cannot be interpreted according to criteria of meaning derived from the recognizably meaningful phenomena of conscious life as experienced by the self of the ego. For example, the primary-process mentation characteristic of the unconscious, a style of thinking reflected in the dreams and free associations focused on by analysts, pays no heed to whether its manipulations of words, ideas, and images “mean something” according to the standards for meaning upheld by grammar, syntax, logic, and chronology. Unconscious cognition chains together ideational representations according to looser, more liberal principles of association, forging links between fragments of mental content that consciousness would never think to link. Consequently, psychoanalysis à
Freud is not (exclusively) a hermeneutic endeavor in search of deep meaning insofar as it necessarily involves paying attention to how facets of consciousness are configured and constrained by (sometimes quite elaborate and intricate) forms of nonsense and meaninglessness (nonsensical and meaningless from the perspective of mundane conscious contemplation).

How? – the manifestations of the unconscious

What evidence is there revealing the operations of the unconscious supposedly at play within the psyche? Asked differently, how does this un-thought thinking related but irreducible to libidinal economies manifest itself in analytically interpretable manners? Some of the first pieces of evidence prompting Freud to propose the revolutionary thesis that not all of what is mental is conscious come from his attempts to address hysteria therapeutically. This particular variety of neurosis involves psychosomatic conversion symptoms and/or affective reactions of a seemingly exaggerated and inappropriate degree of intensity in response to their apparent experiential stimuli. As regards the medically mysterious bodily ailments of hysterics, Freud’s 1890s writings on hysterical patients and phenomena postulate, below the threshold of explicit conscious thematization and awareness, a psychical (rather than strictly physical) body cobbled together out of images, words, and concepts. This more-than-physiological body, a body of Vorstellungen, is identified as being responsible for the distribution of conversion symptoms across the body (i.e. symptoms that convert painful psychical conflicts into a decipherable “language” of physical pain). And, as regards the apparently irrational emotional outbursts of hysterics, Freud surmises that there invariably is, as it were, method to the madness. If there is a glaring discrepancy between a circumstance and someone’s affective response to it, then, hidden behind (but associatively linked to) the circumstance, there must be another circumstance (a repressed idea or memory) as the unconscious determinant in relation to which the response is indeed justified and understandable. That which at first glance appears to be simply irrational turns out to be complexly structured by an idiosyncratic (quasi-)rationality, namely, the peculiar logics of mental processes typically unrecognizable to conscious cognition.

In the years that follow (especially 1900–1905), Freud proceeds to divulge a plethora of examples buttressing his axiomatic insistence that the mental and the conscious are anything but equivalent to or synonymous with each other. This deluge of evidence allegedly speaking in favor of the hypothesis of there being unconscious dimensions and dynamics in the mind comes in the forms of dreams, lapses of memory, slips of the tongue, and bungled actions, among other phenomena constituting the psychopathology of everyday life. Whereas the symptoms of hysteria are not experienced by all people, everyone is acquainted
with these sorts of instances regularly occurring in the course of quotidian existence. Freud's interpretive gamble here is to wager that, contrary to widespread presumptions that nocturnal imaginings and accidental blunderings are obviously without any real significance, these seemingly unimportant occurrences are, in fact, of great import. Such occurrences, Freud contends, are encoded manifestations of another type of thinking able to be thoroughly decoded only through analytic interpretation. Given the pervasive ordering and organization of mentally mediated life, Freud considers it unreasonable simply to write off puzzling dreams and perplexing behaviors as merely meaningless, as marginal and disconnected in relation to the intricate linguistic–conceptual webs woven throughout the fabric of human being.

But perhaps the strongest evidence in favor of the Freudian case for the unconscious comes from people's amorous and sexual lives. Starting with his groundbreaking 1905 text *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud brings to light a range of features of this prominent portion of human existence for which explanatory strategies based on the assumptions that the sexual is instinctually dictated by biological nature alone and/or that love is either self-evident or entirely inexplicable quickly prove to be inadequate and unsatisfactory. Individuals do not just fall in love with whoever comes along who happens to be a fitting partner for the animal–organic endeavor of reproduction. Nor do they confine their pleasures to heterosexual genital copulation; sometimes they do not take pleasure in this, but fancy other things instead. People often cannot articulate a cogent account for who they become enamored with or why they enjoy what they enjoy sexually. Through his conceptions of and reflections on infantile sexuality, homosexuality, drives, the Oedipus complex, transference, perversions, fetishism, gender identity, and sexual difference, Freud re-examines love and sexuality as blossoming at the tangled intersections of soma and psyche. Moreover, the powerful influences helping to configure these amorous and sexual phenomena usually remain opaque to ordinary conscious reflection. And yet, despite appearing to be illogically devoid of any rhyme or reason, love and sexuality, from the Freudian perspective, are not without their reasons, however rational or irrational, however visible or invisible.

III. FREUD AND … – THE RELATIONS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS TO EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS

German idealism

Freud directly and indirectly refers to Immanuel Kant on several occasions. Most of these references occur in the context of discussions dealing with the super-ego
and moral masochism. Kant’s metaphysics of morals, his ethics of pure practical reason, is clearly what Freud has in mind when he talks about the merciless harshness of super-egoistic morality as a “pure culture of the death drive.” On Freud’s anti-Kantian account, seemingly disinterested rational conscience often serves as the disguised conduit for the nonrational interests of the sadistic id, with the id’s sadism inwardly discharged, via the super-ego, against the ego as its brutalized object. The ego’s consciously baffling guilt is a price paid for the satisfaction of the vicious id. One could say that, from a Freudian perspective, ethical renunciations and sacrifices, contrary to superficial appearances, are not without pathological enjoyment (qua the satiating of aggressive impulses).

Freud rarely mentions the German idealists. J. G. Fichte does not appear even once in the index of names occurring in the Standard Edition. The one citation of Hegel is a reference, in The Interpretation of Dreams, to someone else quoting Hegel. Schelling is explicitly invoked somewhat more frequently, most notably in the 1919 essay “The Uncanny.” However, based on his acquaintance with certain nineteenth-century intellectual currents inspired by German idealism, Freud tends to dismiss this late-modern philosophical orientation as pseudoscientific obscurantism, as unsubstantiated spiritualist silliness unworthy of serious consideration.

However, Freud’s dismissive poor estimation of German idealist Naturphilosophie (philosophy of nature) is based more on its use and abuse by subsequent figures than on a careful assessment of the writings of Schelling and Hegel. Had he looked more closely at these two philosophers, Freud might have discerned in them precursors of and resources for his metapsychological model of the human psyche. Freudian psychoanalysis posits conflict, in various forms and on multiple levels, as a pervasive (even ubiquitous) power conditioning the ontogenetic emergence of full-fledged subjectivity and thereafter continuing to shape subjects. Freud’s later speculations lead him to propose that psychical conflict, as grounded in the antagonisms and tensions reigning between Eros and the Todestrieb (death drive), goes right down to the bare bones and raw flesh of the biological body; human corporeality, rather than being harmoniously self-integrated and internally synthesized, is shot through with discord. In terms of this hypothesized fundamental strife between the forces of life and death, Freud credits the pre-Socratic thinker Empedocles with being an early predecessor in relation to his dual-drive theory of 1920 and after. But, in greater historical proximity to Freud, Schelling and Hegel conceive of material nature as saturated by proto-subjective negativity. The substance of German idealist Naturphilosophie, like the conflict-ridden somatic underpinnings of psychical life theorized by Freud, is at war with itself, permeated by the violence of clashing forces and the agitating disturbances of unsettling affects.
Moreover, thanks to Lacan putting Freud into dialogue with Hegel, one can perceive retroactively important precedents for Freud’s specifically psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious in Hegel’s philosophy (the 1930s rudiments of Lacan’s own theoretical framework emerge at the intersection of Freudian psychoanalysis and Kojève’s Hegelianism). Some of these precedents include the dialectical self-subverting structure of the figures of consciousness in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the insistence on the thoroughly all-encompassing conceptual and linguistic mediation of human being in the 1812 *Science of Logic*, and the invocations of an unconscious entangled with sociohistorical forms of existence in the 1821 *Philosophy of Right*, to name a few psychoanalytically resonant lines of thought in the Hegelian philosophical apparatus. Like Freud, Hegel insists that the hidden dimensions of human subjectivity are not to be conceived of simply as the dark depths of a brute, bestial nature. Hegel and Freud concur on a point of great significance: the unconscious side of the subject is traversed by and enmeshed with intersubjective and trans-subjective configurations of great complexity and sophistication, networks of elaborately organized words, images, and ideas.

**Materialism**

The brand of materialism with which Freud obviously entertains a relationship is that of such nineteenth-century materialists as Fechner and Helmholtz, namely, a scientism inspired by physics and chemistry. In particular, Freud’s metapsychological theories, from his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology* through some of his final writings of the 1930s, display evidence of the influence on his thinking of so-called “psycho-physics.” Psycho-physics is a nineteenth-century version of a quite well-known type of (speciously) scientific materialism, a materialism that believes it is both possible and desirable to reduce mental life and everything with which such life is bound up to corporeal substance (i.e. matter as physical particles mechanically interacting with each other according to the laws of efficient causality). Simply put, the psycho-physicists known to Freud strove to construct a psychology in which the psychical is investigated and described in the same fashion in which the natural sciences of the time handled material objects.

The influence of naturalistic, science-inspired materialism on Freud is glaringly manifest through several features of his corpus. First of all, Freud’s earliest metapsychological formulations borrow images and ideas from the neurology in which Freud had been trained, speaking of the psyche (at least metaphorically if not literally) as a system of interconnected neurons through which circulate the excitations and stimuli of quotas of energy (both endogenous and exogenous). These neurology-derived metaphors persist, disguised and
undisguised, throughout the entire subsequent span of Freud’s intellectual itinerary. Additionally, Freud repeatedly appeals to the natural sciences; in particular, he forecasts future biological confirmations of his controversial hypotheses regarding human sexuality. More generally, the mechanistic language with which Freud depicts the dynamics of the psyche sometimes strongly resembles the discourse of psycho-physics, making mental processes sound like the workings of an asubjective, inhuman mechanical contraption.

But there are several very good reasons for rejecting the notion that Freud himself remains a committed psycho-physicist. And some of these reasons disclose resonances between psychoanalysis and the materialism(s) developed by and after Marx and Friedrich Engels. Although Freud makes no overt proclamations about historical and/or dialectical materialism (apropos Marxism, he briefly comments on the Russian Revolution of 1917 in *Civilization and Its Discontents*), his theoretical framework, like that of Marx and Engels, would not allow for unreservedly embracing any sort of mechanistic materialism. Stated much too succinctly, the relation between body and mind in Freudian psychoanalysis is a dialectical one. More precisely, soma participates in giving rise to psyche; but, thereafter, the psyche thus generated can and does exert reciprocal transformative powers over its libidinal–material sources in the body. Hence, by contrast with the mechanistic materialism of, for instance, psycho-physics, the treatment of mental life in analysis does not reduce it to an epiphenomenal status vis-à-vis the physical body.

Finally, as regards Marx’s historical materialism, Freud’s later work leads him implicitly to break with certain Enlightenment principles and biases presupposed by Marx (and, like Marx, Freud too is deeply marked by the beliefs and ideals of the Enlightenment). The traditional Marxist vision of history involves assuming that, at least in the long run, people are inclined to think and act in accordance with their own best interests (as exemplified by Marx’s prediction that, eventually, the oppressed proletarian masses will awaken from their ideological slumber and revolutionarily smash their capitalist shackles so as to create a radically egalitarian socioeconomic arrangement in which true justice reigns). This is to attribute a minimal underlying rationality to human beings, one postulating that if somebody fully and genuinely knows what is “better” for himself or herself, then he or she will desire this good and behave so as to obtain it (an old article of faith going back to Socrates). Through such concepts as the death drive and “disavowal” (*Verleugnung*), the later Freud indicates not only that human beings can and do become libidinally invested in self-defeating and self-destructive projects, but they also are able openly to acknowledge things (say, that given values and institutions are based on bankrupt ideological foundations) while, regardless, continuing to live in ways unaltered by these acknowledgments. Knowing the truth is not automatically and inevitably
liberating. Marxist critiques of ideology, as motivated by revolutionary political pursuits, are faced with some additional daunting difficulties by certain of Freud’s insights into the contradictions and inconsistencies of desiring subjectivity and its defense mechanisms.

**Existentialism**

Although the label “existentialism” originates in the first half of the twentieth century as a term of journalistic convenience used with reference to Jean-Paul Sartre in particular, it has come to designate a movement beginning with the later Schelling (of the 1809 *Freiheitschrift* and after) and running through Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, Martin Heidegger, Sartre, Albert Camus, and Samuel Beckett, among others. The existentialists’ focus on the affective lives of human beings, especially their emphases on the relative frailty of reason *vis-à-vis* the emotions and the disturbing details of the gloomier side of negative affects, seems to be strikingly similar to what is involved with some of the concerns central to Freud’s analytic perspective. And, if Nietzsche is deemed to be an existentialist, then, as a chorus of authors engaged in an academic sub-industry unto itself never tire of claiming, Freud is profoundly indebted to existentialism. Admittedly, Nietzsche is almost certainly one of the figures Freud has in mind when, in a moment of modesty, he portrays psychoanalysis as a theoretical systematization and practical instrumentalization of the insights and discoveries of various key predecessors. However, this momentary modesty aside, it would be utterly unjustifiable to maintain that Freudian analysis is simply a clinical recapitulation of Nietzschean philosophy. Apart from there being much in Freud’s *oeuvre* that is not to be found in any developed or explicit form in Nietzsche’s writings, there are many important differences between these two thinkers even at the level of overlapping concepts (such as the unconscious, drives, and so on). Moreover, whether any of the versions of the libidinal economy hypothesized by Freud are seamlessly compatible with the infamous “will to power” posited by Nietzsche is quite doubtful.

Countless comparisons and contrasts could be elaborated here as regards looking at Freud alongside the existentialist tradition. One could spell out a Freudian problematization of the possibility of reasonless action represented by the character Meursault in Camus’s novel *The Stranger*. One could weave together Heidegger’s treatment of temporality in his analytic of Dasein with the delineation of the temporal structures of the psyche sketched by Freud. Numerous other things could be said as well. Incidentally, along these lines, it is worth noting that Freud showed little interest in the bridge-building efforts of “existential psychoanalysts” such as Ludwig Binswanger and Medard
Reciprocally, Heidegger was blithely dismissive of psychoanalysis and Sartre was highly critical of it. Both Heidegger and Sartre viewed Freud’s vision of the human condition as too mechanistic and determinist to capture what is most essential in being human.

Despite their disagreements, Heidegger and Sartre share a picture of Freud as pursuing a fundamentally reductive project, as seeking to collapse the being of human beings into the law-governed workings of ultimately bio-material forces. This vulgar, commonplace portrayal of Freudian psychoanalysis is terribly mistaken. On the one hand, it is indeed true that Freud’s notions of intrapsychical defense mechanisms and the overdetermination of states of consciousness undermine certain standard, quotidian senses of oneself as being an autonomous self, a free agent. But, on the other hand, psychoanalysis is anything but a straightforward discourse of determinism, a set of narratives about how people are nothing more than inherently ignorant puppets dancing on the end of strings held by an invisible master called “the unconscious.” For Freud, not only are individuals usually unaware of the degree to which their seemingly self-determined words and deeds actually are determined by influences operating below the level of conscious cognizance; they are also, at the same time, heavily invested in avoiding any direct realizations of the frightening extent to which their modes of life and styles of being are not imposed and held in place by the authority of an extra-mental external reality such as fate, God, society, and/or childhood. In other words, behind the veil of repression lurk not only the heteronomous determining matrices and machinations of the unconscious, but also an often obfuscated “abyss of freedom,” that is, an unsettling autonomy as the groundless ground beneath all constructed and constraining fashions of living. This freedom is normally just as unconscious as the hidden powers of psychical overdetermination.

**Phenomenology**

Freud shares with his contemporary Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, a debt to the teachings of Brentano. More precisely, Freud and Husserl appropriate, each in his own way, Brentano’s “intentionality thesis” according to which the mental is distinct from the physical insofar as the former involves

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4. Binswanger (1881–1966) and Boss (1903–90) were both mental health practitioners who sought to integrate clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis with phenomenology and existentialism, in particular the existential phenomenology of Heidegger. In philosophical circles, Binswanger today is perhaps best known for his essay “Dream and Existence,” thanks to Foucault’s translation of it (a translation accompanied by an introduction longer than the essay itself). Boss, advocate of “Daseinanalysis,” is responsible for prompting Heidegger to give his *Zollikon Seminars* addressing philosophy and psychological matters.
an intentional directedness. Additionally, this directedness requires psychical “presentations” forming the (mental) objects with which the acts and operations of the mind concern themselves. Apart from influencing certain of Freud’s metapsychological models having to do with Vorstellungen and their roles apropos reality (as psychical reality, the reality principle, etc.), Brentano’s notion of intentionality informs the so-called “fundamental rule” of clinical analytic practice, namely, free association on the part of the analysand. When a patient in analysis says that he or she has “nothing” to say or “nothing” on his or her mind, this is never taken as literally true by the analyst. Due to the abiding, inherent “aboutness” of mental life (i.e. its intentional structure), there always and necessarily are things occurring to the analysand lying on the couch. Hence, his or her protests that he or she cannot think of anything to talk about should be interpreted, in nearly all instances, as resistance to associating freely.

However, despite having Brentano in common as a source of early inspiration, Freudian psychoanalysis and Husserlian phenomenology part company when it comes to the topic of the unconscious. Bluntly put, transcendental phenomenology à la Husserl contains no equivalent to the specifically analytic unconscious. When Husserl and his followers address aspects of mental subjectivity apart from the domain of conscious awareness, what they usually refer to are features of the mind that Freud would qualify as either preconscious (i.e. features that can become conscious on deliberate, focused reflection) or nonconscious (i.e. features that simply cannot be rendered within the parameters of possible representation holding for first-person conscious mentation). Unlike what is preconscious or nonconscious, what is unconscious is kept outside of the circumscribed sphere of (self-)consciousness thanks to the workings of defense mechanisms (i.e. repression and other intrapsychical defenses). The contents of the unconscious, although in most cases capable of being brought to light through an analytic process (by contrast with the nonconscious), cannot easily be called to mind at will (by contrast with the preconscious). Husserlian phenomenology lacks a proper unconscious insofar as it does not posit anything resembling the defense mechanisms so central to the Freudian understanding of mental life.

Whereas transcendental phenomenology shows little interest in psychoanalysis qua theory of the unconscious, existential phenomenology proves to be a much more promising philosophical partner for analysis. Although Heidegger turns a blind eye to Freud on the basis of ill-informed opinions of the latter’s ideas, Binswanger and Boss, as well as many others, are not without their good reasons for sensing some potential points of theoretical co-augmentation between a metapsychological model of the psyche and an existential analytic of Dasein. One of the tragedies of the missed encounter between Freud and Heidegger is that the two twentieth-century figures carrying out the most radical
reconsiderations of the human condition in light of temporality did not end up collaborating.

With respect to psychoanalysis, Maurice Merleau-Ponty is the most sympathetic and engaged of the great thinkers of the phenomenological orientation. Not only does he explicitly take up Freud’s concepts and the ontogenetic schemas contained in analytic metapsychology – he also draws on Kleinian object-relations theory and certain ideas formulated by his friend Lacan. In particular, the Merleau-Pontian account of embodiment, involving a distinction between the exogenously mediated “lived body” and the corporeality at stake in the natural sciences, is quite relevant to Freudian analysis. But, at the same time, the images and themes of harmony, integration, and fusion permeating Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical discourse are at odds with the psychoanalytic stress on both pervasive antagonism and conflict as well as the psychical subject’s insurmountable out-of-joint-ness with its surrounding environs.

Critical theory

Although Freud himself does not engage with Marx, several twentieth-century figures and movements in the Marxist tradition see in Freudian psychoanalysis a set of useful theoretical tools for political analysis and critique (and this despite Freud’s bourgeois sensibilities as well as the suspicions that analysis is a form of “class therapy” excluding those not sufficiently blessed with spare time and disposable income). The most notable and well-known instance of this is the selective appropriation of Freud’s ideas by members of the Frankfurt School of critical theory. Theodor Adorno’s famous 1950 study The Authoritarian Personality attempts to sketch a psychoanalytically informed portrait of a purported type of individual character structure allegedly susceptible to fascist-style authoritarianism. As regards Adorno, it also should be mentioned here that his criticisms of scientism in the social sciences, with this scientism’s insistence on quantitative and statistical methods of study, dovetails with the position of Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis vis-à-vis those psychologies

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5. Melanie Klein (1882–1960) is the founder of object-relations theory, a post-Freudian psychoanalytic approach that, as its name suggests, emphasizes the centrality of fantasy-mediated relationships with objects and others as the driving motor mechanisms of psychical development. Relations, rather than endogenous libidinal forces and factors, are identified as the formative fundaments of the psyche, fundaments allegedly established starting in very early infancy. Along with ego psychology (an outgrowth of Anna Freud’s analytic doctrines, with the 1940s split between Anna Freud and Klein having had a decisive impact on the subsequent history of psychoanalysis, especially in the English-speaking world) and Lacanianism and its permutations, object-relations theory is one of the three major orientations shaping psychoanalysis over the course of the past several decades.
basing themselves on the numerical parsing of data from large test-subject sample pools. Freud does not shy away from offering evidence for his metapsychological claims about the organization and operation of the psyche: quite the contrary. But, nonetheless, analyses are always-unique experiences taking shape between singular subjects in intimate circumstances, circumstances whose private and unrepeatable qualities make them ill suited for a methodology based on replicable experiments open to public scrutiny. For practical as well as philosophical reasons, psychoanalysis cannot survive reduction to a “scientific psychology” according to the standards of the sort of scientism argued against by Adorno.

However, the key manifesto of Frankfurt School Freudo-Marxism in its most robust incarnation is Herbert Marcuse’s 1955 book *Eros and Civilization*. In this text and elsewhere, Marcuse, through his particular manner of combining Freud with Marx, contends that psychoanalysis both falls prey to aspects of the ideology of capitalism’s “repressive society” and, simultaneously, also harbors the conceptual resources for seeing through this same ideology. In Marcuse’s eyes, Freud erroneously treats as ahistorical constants of human psychology facets of psychical life shaped by the temporary historical features of capitalism as a particular socioeconomic system. More specifically, Marcuse maintains that the material conditions peculiar to Freud’s era – these conditions ostensibly require renunciations and sacrifices (i.e. “repressions” as per Marcuse’s rather loose construal of Freudian vocabulary) on the part of individuals as cogs in a collective machine involving “alienated labor” and artificial scarcity – mislead Freud into positing extreme libidinal inhibition as an inherent, contextually invariant symptom afflicting every (discontent) individual ensconced within “civilization” (defined as any group order in which the price of membership is submission to restrictive rules). Along Marxist lines, Marcuse imagines a new ensemble of historico-material conditions yet to come in which the pointless toiling of commodity-propelled capitalism and the curbs on satisfaction it demands are eliminated; and, with this revolutionary change, neurosis-inducing repression as conceived of by Freud supposedly is eliminated too. While criticizing Freud in this fashion, Marcuse avowedly continues to rely on Freudian psychoanalysis, especially its theories of the libidinal economy, to explain the psychological and subjective workings of capitalism as well as to articulate his vision of a future society beyond repression. But Marcuse’s political deployment of Freud’s ideas arguably is based on some far-from-insignificant misunderstandings of these ideas. In a nutshell, Marcuse tends to equivocate illegitimately between instinctual needs and psychical drives as well as between intrapsychical repression and external social suppression. A better metapsychological appreciation of drive dynamics in relation to their enveloping milieus problematizes Marcuse’s picture, calling into question whether
the revolutionary liberation he anticipates can or would ever occur as envisioned by him.\footnote{6}{For a detailed discussion of Marcuse, see the essay by John Abromeit in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5}.}

Blending psychoanalysis with Marxism is not the sole prerogative of the Frankfurt School. Starting in the 1960s, Lacan attracts an audience outside clinical analytic circles, an audience containing leftists of various stripes (including Maoist students of Louis Althusser, himself committed to a careful Marxist consideration of psychoanalysis, such as Jacques-Alain Miller and Alain Badiou\footnote{7}{Miller and Badiou are discussed in detail in the essay by Patrice Maniglier in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7}, while Badiou is the focus of an essay by Bruno Bosteels in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8}.}). Claude Lefort, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Slavoj Žižek, to name several of the most prominent representatives of continental political thought as inflected by psychoanalysis, draw on analytic concepts in their reflections on democracy and capitalism.

\textit{Feminism}

The feminist reception of Freud, even when limited to those varieties of feminism forming part of the continental philosophical tradition, cannot be summarized easily or adequately given its sophistication and complexity. Needless to say, Freudian psychoanalysis has sparked a range of reactions from feminist thinkers, spanning a spectrum running from outright rejection to enthusiastic appropriation. What follows are a few highly selective remarks about a topic (i.e. Freud and feminism) around which has formed a sizable mass of diverse texts and debates.

Before mentioning some of the most noteworthy continental feminists concerned with Freudian psychoanalysis, a couple of claims ought briefly to be made against a certain feminist tendency to dismiss Freud as a misogynistic turn-of-the-century Viennese male whose views reflect those of his sexist culture and time. To begin with, Freud’s female analysands are themselves products of a sexist culture and time. As such, their psyches are marked by the effects of a phallocratic system; through analysis, Freud reveals just how deeply ingrained are the imprints of patriarchy. But there is a world of difference between description and prescription, with Freud describing the sexualities and libidinal subjectivities of his patients without thereby aiming to endorse in a normative mode what he describes. Furthermore, despite moments when Freud admittedly does seem to fall back into aspects of the misogyny of his era, his sustained examination of sexual difference and gender identities, itself a deviation from his predecessors’
and contemporaries’ general tight-lipped silence apropos such matters, arguably opens up a whole horizon of new possibilities for considering the multifarious relationships between sexuality and subjectivity.

Along related lines, Freud launches his clinical analytic career by being one of the first people to start genuinely listening to suffering women. He treats female hysterics not as irrational creatures of emotion buffeted about by a crazy vortex of feelings and sensations (perhaps discombobulated by a “wandering womb”), but as proper human beings with rich mental lives that, even when riddled with psycho-neurotic symptoms, exhibit the rhyme and reason of the psychical logics uncovered by analysis. Additionally, Freud is not the simple-minded biological determinist that many, including many feminist critics, make him out to be on the basis of flawed partial interpretations of his writings. For him, human physiology, with “the anatomical distinction between the sexes,” indeed crucially contributes to shaping the contours and characteristics of people’s subjectivities. But these bio-material factors do not predestine someone in the direction of a single subjective telos; nor do they enjoy a final determining authority over who and what (sexed) individuals are or become.

French feminism and those feminist thinkers drawing from this particular strain of feminism are the most favorably disposed toward Freud and his legacy (especially his legacy in France as influenced by Lacan). While being critical of Freudian psychoanalysis in her classic 1949 book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir’s discussions of femininity therein are prefigured by Freud’s groundbreaking de-essentialization of gender identity and his revelatory analytic dismantling of the sociopsychical constructions contributing to configurations of a denaturalized sexual difference. In Beauvoir’s wake (and continuing up through the present), others tackle the issues of sex and gender in fashions that openly employ psychoanalytic concepts. Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Catherine Clément, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, to list just a handful of theorists of diverse outlooks, maintain a nuanced, multifaceted dialogue with Freud, simultaneously pointing to limitations plaguing his conceptions of femininity while also deploying his ideas in projects striving to reconceptualize the status of sexual difference (these two endeavors sometimes come together as an immanent critique, namely, a critique of Freud’s account of sexual subjectivity relying on Freud’s own notions). Admittedly, even for those feminists drawing on Freud, there is much in his corpus (such as versions of the Oedipus complex and the notorious conjecture about penis envy in women) that must be reworked or discarded in light of feminist critical insights. Some of the most far-reaching explorations of the places of embodiment and inter-subjectivity in Freudian psychoanalysis are due to feminist interventions in the analytic field.
Of course, when one considers the link between psychoanalysis and structuralism, the primary association that immediately comes to mind is Lacan's return to Freud. During the first six years of his annual seminar (1953–59) and in contemporaneous writings, Lacan endeavors to re-read Freud through the lens of Saussurian structuralism (his version of Ferdinand de Saussure is heavily reliant on that of the structural linguist Roman Jakobson). Paying close attention to both the role of language in Freud's theories and the linguistic–conceptual details of Freud's texts, Lacan asserts that Freud unknowingly already was a proto-structuralist of a Saussurian sort. Much of his evidence for this assertion comes from the prevalence of elaborate word-plays in the numerous examples of dreams, jokes, and parapraxes analyzed by Freud, especially in his early writings. Lacan insists that interpreting Freud's works in this fashion is crucial for avoiding the deviations from the essential tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis of which Lacan thinks Anglo-American psychoanalytic orientations are guilty. Lacan's quasi-structuralist return to Freud is a sustained effort to combat the image of Freudian psychoanalysis marketed by the American ego psychology of the 1950s in particular.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, a structural anthropologist who epitomizes what is referred to as classical French structuralism, also significantly informs how Lacan understands Saussure and his successors in connection with psychoanalysis. What is more, Lévi-Strauss, taken on his own apart from Lacan's references to him, champions a conception of “structure” audibly resonating with the Freudian notion of the unconscious in manners echoing the resonances between Hegel and Freud. To be more precise, in his 1949 *Elementary Structures of Kinship* and similar studies, Lévi-Strauss claims to uncover the workings of formally expressible laws and patterns organizing and underpinning identity, status, and familial–social relations in given human groups. For the most part, the members of these groups are not directly or explicitly aware of these laws and patterns, although their thoughts and actions testify to the rule of these orders of nonconscious structures. Like the Freudian unconscious, Lévi-Straussian structures, rather than being sets of nonconscious instinctual tendencies, are networks of sophisticated codes and algorithms palpably molding individuals’ existences without, for all that, these networks being self-reflexively grasped as such by those caught in their grip.

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*8. For a discussion of Saussure and Jakobson, see the essay by Thomas F. Broden in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*

*9. For a detailed discussion of Lévi-Strauss, see the essay by Brian C. J. Singer in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*
According to the conventions of certain philosophical journalists and intellectual historians, Michel Foucault (at least in his youth) and Roland Barthes both also qualify, along with Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, as structuralists. In some of his first and some of his final works (in such texts as 1961’s *History of Madness* [early] and 1976’s initial volume of *The History of Sexuality* [late]), Foucault situates Freud historically, using this historical framing to call into question Freud’s seemingly revolutionary, unprecedented status. From these critical Foucaultian perspectives, Freud appears to be surprisingly complicit with longstanding prior psychiatric traditions as well as part of a growing Western cultural tendency toward valorizing sexuality as the supposed secret truth of who and what one is. However, in between the early and late phases of his *oeuvre*, Foucault, near the end of *The Order of Things* (1966), approvingly speaks of psychoanalysis as participating in “the erasure of the figure of man,” that is, the dawn of a new antihumanist thought (although Foucault does not mention him by name here, he undoubtedly is appealing to Lacan’s structuralist version of analysis).

Carrying out a project called for by Saussure himself, Barthes develops semiotics as a “science of signs” beyond linguistics proper (i.e. a theory of sign-systems encompassing not only the signs of natural languages, but the signifying elements functioning in cuisine, fashion, art, etc.). Kristeva, perhaps Barthes’ most prominent student, weaves together semiotics and Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis. The semiotic sensitivity to the multiple dimensions of signifying materials and practices – neither semiotics nor psychoanalysis limits signs and signifiers to meaningful instances of communicative language – meshes well with analytic approaches to the symbolically shaped texture of psychical subjectivity and its contexts.

**Poststructuralism**

Lacan’s seventh seminar of 1959–60 (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*) justifiably could be identified as the first poststructuralist (albeit *avant la lettre*) treatment of Freudian psychoanalysis. Therein, Lacan enacts what is often described as a sort of turn in his thinking, a shift of emphasis in his foundational “register theory” from the Imaginary and the Symbolic to the Real. Whereas previously he focuses on the effects of images and signifiers in the structuring of the speaking subject, at the end of the 1950s he turns his attention to things (for instance, *das Ding*, *jouissance*, *der Nebenmensch*, and so on – in short, Things of the Real) that impact the Imaginary–Symbolic structures of reality without themselves being captured by or reducible to such structures. The signifier-supported scaffoldings of desiring subjectivity in its relations with intersubjective and trans-subjective constellations are no longer, in and after the seventh seminar, the sole foci of...
analytic metapsychology. Succinctly stated, for the later Lacan, structure is (in his own parlance) “not all.”

However, the inaccurate picture of Lacan as a classical Lévi-Straussian structuralist, a picture based on his teachings from the years prior to the seventh seminar, informs a poststructuralist rebellion against the Lacanian return to Freud. This rebellion is intertwined with the events of May 1968 in Paris. In the climate of France in the late 1960s, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari mount their anti-Oedipal critique of psychoanalysis, a critique portraying Freud and Lacan as insidious normalizers of desire, as representatives of an effort to codify an anarchic, nomadic, impersonal, and machine-like libidinal economy within the constraining coordinates of narratives centered on the nuclear family and its familiar anthropomorphic actors.10 Deleuze and Guattari manage powerfully to channel and express the sociopolitical concerns of many of their contemporaries. But, under the influence of these turbulent times, this anti-Oedipal duo indulge in the tactics both of representing the Oedipus complex as the be all and end all of Freudian psychoanalysis (itself a debatable, dubitable representation) as well as of depicting Lacan as fundamentally a structuralist advocate of the utterly Oedipal Freud (this too is questionable and problematic).

In fashions more sympathetic to psychoanalysis, other poststructuralist discontents of Lacanianism play Freud off against Lacan. Arguably animated by a vaguely Bergsonian conceptual and theoretical aesthetic, André Green, Jean Laplanche, Paul Ricoeur, and others (such as Kristeva) appeal to Freudian energetics (supposedly encompassing the concepts of libido, drive, affect, and similar notions) contra the purported dominance of bloodless formal structures in the Lacanian model of psychical subjectivity. This poststructuralist strain of psychoanalytic theory is primarily responsible for the now-familiar allegations that Lacan—the-analyst indefensibly neglects body and emotion (themselves said to be sidelined by him in tandem with his ostensibly lopsided privileging of signifiers as conceived of via such disciplines as linguistics and mathematics). As with Deleuze and Guattari, these sorts of readings of Freud and Lacan are contentious and contestable.

Lastly, there are multiple connections between, on the one hand, psychoanalysis à la Freud, and, on the other hand, Jacques Derrida and the “deconstructionism” associated with his name. Derrida repeatedly addresses Freud and Lacan.11 Moreover, his novel methods and techniques of philosophical exegesis are avowedly indebted to psychoanalytic practices of listening and reading.


Nonetheless, Derrida shares many of his fellow poststructuralists’ concerns and reservations apropos Freudian and Lacanian analysis. Additionally, from a certain angle one can perceive deconstruction and psychoanalysis as mirror-image inversions of each other: whereas the former tends to discern a chaotic, nonsystematic heterogeneity behind a textual façade of ordered, systematic homogeneity, the latter tends to discern the opposite, namely, an ordered homogeneity behind a textual façade of chaotic heterogeneity (for example, the apparently fragmented and disjointed free associations of analysands are, in actuality, governed by an integrated, coherent order of unconscious formations). The texts interpreted by deconstructionists and analysts often differ, and, appropriately, so too do their interpretive procedures.

Declarations of Freud’s death have become a journalistic cliché in an age dominated by the alliance between insurance companies and the pharmaceutical–industrial complex. However, although no longer enjoying the anomalous, strange success of its mid-twentieth-century years as the preferred psychological treatment of celebrities and the privileged theoretical framework governing psychiatry departments, psychoanalysis is far from perishing and disappearing. Part of what has been crucial to keeping Freud and his followers alive is continental philosophy’s lively interest in psychoanalytic ideas (not to mention the creative applications of these ideas carried out by various sectors of the humanities and social sciences influenced by European philosophical currents). Today, philosophers and theorists rooted in the philosophies of continental Europe continue to appropriate, modify, and refine concepts from the Freudian tradition, using psychoanalysis to interrogate a range of contemporary cultural, political, religious, and scientific issues. Considering his continuing relevance to how people understand themselves and their world, Freud is anything but dead.

MAJOR WORKS

All references to the English translations refer to The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (24 vols), edited and translated by James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–74); hereafter abbreviated SE, followed by the volume number and, if a given text is one of two or more in a single volume, the inclusive page numbers. The dates in parentheses mark the dates of publication of the original German texts; those in brackets, when they occur, mark the dates of composition if these differ from the dates of publication.


*Studien über Hysterie* (with Josef Breuer) (1893–95). Published in English as *Studies on Hysteria*. SE 2.

*Die Traumdeutung* (1900). Published in English as *The Interpretation of Dreams*. SE 4–5.
Der Witz und Seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten (1905). Published in English as Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. SE 8.
Jenseits des Lustprinzips (1920). Published in English as Beyond the Pleasure Principle. SE 18: 1–64.
Das Ich und das Es (1923). Published in English as The Ego and the Id. SE 19: 1–66.
Hemmung, Symptom und Angst (1926). Published in English as Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety. SE 20: 75–175.

Apart from the books listed above, many of Freud's most important texts are article-length essays as well as novella-length case studies. The most important of these would include (but not be limited to): the Fliess correspondence, the five famous case studies (Dora, Little Hans, the Rat Man, Schreber, and the Wolf Man), the writings on psychoanalytic technique, the papers on metapsychology, the later pieces on sexuality and gender identity, as well as numerous analyses of social, cultural, and political phenomena. The reader interested in these texts should turn to The Standard Edition.
13
RESPONSES TO EVOLUTION: SPENCER’S EVOLUTIONISM, BERGSONISM, AND CONTEMPORARY BIOLOGY
Keith Ansell-Pearson, Paul-Antoine Miquel, and Michael Vaughan

Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* was published towards the end of 1859 and although its influence on the intellectual life of the second half of the nineteenth century was immense and dramatic, it alone did not generate the rise of interest in questions about evolution. As one commentator has noted, most nineteenth-century evolutionists were Lamarckians or Spencerians rather than Darwinians: Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) had published his theory of progressive evolution in *Philosophie zoologique* in 1809 and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) had developed an evolutionary theory of mind and behavior in his *Principles of Psychology* of 1855.¹ It is often assumed that Spencer and Darwin adhere to the same theory of evolution, but this is not the case; and it is Spencer who, at least for philosophers, was the major intellectual figure of the period. Some of philosophy’s most original minds, such as Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and Henri Bergson (1859–1941), took note of the Darwinian revolution and the rise of philosophical evolutionism and sought to respond to them.² Bergson captures the mood well when he writes in his great text of 1907, *Creative Evolution*, that “the language of transformism forces itself now upon all philosophy, as the dogmatic affirmation of transformism forces itself upon science.”³ Let us note at the outset that Darwin’s aim in the *Origin of Species* was not to promote the concept of evolution – the word appears only at the very end of the

book⁴ – but rather to do away with the notion of supernatural intelligence, that is, the view that the universe is the result of an idea or plan. As one commentator has noted,⁵ what is radical about Darwin’s book is not its evolutionism but its materialism: species evolve according to processes that are entirely natural, chance-generated, and blind. Indeed, Darwin’s choice of the word “selection” may be unfortunate since it suggests an intention at work in nature, while the process of evolution is a blind one: “The selection of favorable characteristics is therefore neither designed nor progressive. No intelligence, divine or otherwise, determines in advance the relative value of individual variations.”⁶ There is, then, no ideal type or essence of a species toward which adaptive changes are leading.

In his *The Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication* (1868), Darwin makes it clear that the process by which living things evolve can be explained without making use of any theory of design.

In this essay, we focus attention on Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*, since this is without doubt the most important text on evolution by a continental philosopher. It contains an important critique of Spencer’s evolutionism; it is intellectually ambitious and rich in showing how philosophy and science can reach a new rapport concerning questions of life; and it has inspired major developments in both postwar philosophy (notably the work of Gilles Deleuze) and recent biology (notably in applications of complexity theory and nonlinear thermodynamics to the study of living systems).

I. HERBERT SPENCER AND EVOLUTIONISM

Spencer’s ideas on evolution are primarily contained in his *First Principles* (1862) and his two-volume work, *The Principles of Biology* (1864, 1867). In the first work, he sets himself two main tasks: first, to come up with an adequate definition of the aims and scope of philosophy; and, second, to provide an adequate conception of evolution. Spencer accepts that philosophy has limits of knowledge and affirms the idea that philosophy is unable to formulate “Being” in

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⁴ The idea of evolution is presented at the end of the *Origin of Species* in a way that permits one to speak of a kind of Darwinian sublime: “Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved” (*The Origin of Species* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985], 459–60).


distinction from “Appearance.” In short, philosophy is not an ontology. But what is its character once these limits have been acknowledged? Spencer considers the rivalry between German and English philosophy in which “the English criticism” repudiates everything regarded as absolute knowledge. What they share, however, he notes, is a commitment to philosophy as the discipline that is concerned with systematized knowledge. What is needed is a useful contrast between philosophy and science. Spencer proposes that science “means merely the family of Sciences” and consists of “truths more or less separated”; by contrast philosophy stands for truths that have been integrated (FP 37). He writes:

How, then, is Philosophy constituted? … So long as these truths are known only apart and regarded as independent, even the most general of them cannot without laxity of speech be called philosophical. But when, having been severally reduced to a mechanical axiom, a principle of molecular physics, and a law of social action, they are contemplated together as corollaries of some ultimate truth, then we rise to the kind of knowledge which constitutes Philosophy proper. (Ibid.)

Philosophy’s job is to “comprehend and consolidate the widest generalizations of Science” (ibid.). If science is partially unified knowledge, philosophy is completely unified knowledge. Knowledge begins with crude and isolated observations; it then seeks to establish propositions of a broad scope that are separate from particular cases; and finally, it culminates in the articulation of universal propositions. It is important to note that Spencer is placing the stress not simply on knowledge as a process but rather on philosophy being able to express definite pieces and truths of knowledge; that is, his concern is not with the validity of the act of knowing but with the actual product of knowledge, such as an ultimate proposition that “includes and consolidates all the results of experience” (FP 42). For example, philosophy shows that we always think in terms of “relations” and their elements, such as likenesses and differences. Our thought enjoys a status of “relativity” and is thus forever debarred from “knowing or conceiving Absolute Being” (FP 47).

In the case of “evolution” the concern is with specifying its most general laws, for example, showing that “in its primary aspect” it denotes a change “from a less coherent to a more coherent form consequent on the dissipation of motion and integration of matter.” Spencer takes this to be a universal process, that is, one through which “sensible existences,” both individually and as a whole, pass

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during the “ascending halves of their histories” (FP 115). He contends that this holds for both the earliest changes in the visible universe and the changes that can be traced in societies and the products of social life, including science itself. Spencer is thus identifying a law of development that can be applied to all things that undergo evolution, be it a solar system, a planet, an organism, or a nation: “From the lowest living forms upwards, the degree of development is marked by the degree in which the several parts constitute a co-operative assemblage – are integrated into a group of organs that live for and by one another” (ibid.). Spencer is seeking again the most general and comprehensive principles by which the phenomenon of “Life” (a word he comes to be suspicious of8) can be understood, for example, “integration” and “differentiation.” His central and most well-known claim is that in evolution there is a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. We see this, he contends, in the case of the human animal, in the progress of every tribe and nation as well as every civilization (FP 122). The initial definition of “evolution” can now be finessed, then, as a change from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity (FP 127, 138).

Spencer’s *The Principles of Biology* takes the form of a theoretical inquiry into the meaning of life and not a contribution to the growth of any particular biological science.9 His specific aim was to combat the “continental” tradition of inquiry and deny that living things possessed meaning on account of their being directed by an internal force or power. He was keen to avoid any probing into what may lie beneath surface shapes and instead seeks to restrict knowledge, in true empiricist fashion, to what is causally visible; in short, knowledge is “superficial” and, as such, uncovers rational and functional laws.10 Spencer places himself in opposition to two continental currents of thought: on the one hand, the philosophical idealism associated with the likes of Lorenz Oken (1779–1851) and Goethe; and, on the other hand, a materialistic current stemming from Comtean positivism. Any appeal to transcendentalism (such as a vital principle of life) was to be avoided, along with innate principles and teleological perfection. At the same time, a crude positivism that held life to be meaningless was also to be avoided. There is “meaning” in life but this will be discovered only in the detailed interpretation of the functions and structures of life, such as plants and animals, and in the examination of their relations with an environment.11 Life is not a separate force and the science of biology will demonstrate that living things are all subject to the same laws as the rest

9. Ibid., 211.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 212.
of the physical universe: “Nothing would be hidden; for Spencer the meaning of life was plainly visible in the forms and structures of the material world.” Where Spencer is radical is in his denial that classifications of living forms correspond to anything natural in the world; systems of classification are an artificial means for organizing our knowledge. The further we carry the analysis of things, he holds, the more obvious it becomes that divisions and classifications are essentially human inventions and scientific artifices by which we limit and arrange the matter under investigation and as a way of facilitating human inquiry.

The issue that intrigues Spencer in *The Principles of Biology* is not the natural selection of species but species’ self-persistence and perpetuation; in short, their continuation over time. This means, therefore, focusing on the “static” aspect of life. He explains the exhibition of species’ stability by recourse to a vital impulse, which he calls the protoplasm, but this impulse is not progressive, that is, it is an agent not of change but of stasis. For him what causes change is not the inner life force but some harsh novelty caused in the environment that serves to jerk a species out of equilibrium. Evolution, then, exhibits no drive towards perfection. On this issue he takes his inspiration from Darwin: evolution does not work toward specific goals. Moreover, “Spencer’s biological evolution had become a matter of responses to physical forces that shaped or formed organic entities in the same way they did inorganic ones.” Curiously though, he holds to the view that the evolutionary destiny of human beings is separate from the rest of nature. His hope is that in time evolution will move beyond its “red in tooth and claw” character and result in the general abolition of “evil,” or life beyond the cruelty, competition, pain, and fear that characterize nature.

**II. BERGSTON’ S CREATIVE EVOLUTION**

Bergson began his intellectual life as a follower of Spencer but soon broke with him on core philosophical issues. In *Creative Evolution*, while acknowledging the powerful attraction Spencerian evolutionism has exerted on contemporary thought, he goes so far as to contend that this evolutionism deals in fact neither with becoming nor with evolution (CE 232). We shall return to his criticism of Spencer later in the next section. First, it will be helpful to provide insight into some of the main arguments of Bergson’s great text, the text that turned him into a philosophical sensation in his own time and which various biologists of

our own time, such as Steven Rose, Brian Goodwin, and Mae-Wan Ho, refer to as containing rich resources for understanding the evolution life as an open, dynamical system.

Bergson may well be the most important philosopher of life in the twentieth century, the one most seriously committed to it for philosophical ends. *Creative Evolution* was an audacious work when it was first published in 1907, and it remains so today. Here we encounter a continental philosopher taking seriously the insights of modern evolutionary theory and biology, attempting to assess their implication for matters of concern to philosophy, and seeking to demonstrate how philosophy can illuminate and clarify our thinking of life in its evolutionary aspects. Bergson is not afraid to speculate. However, for him “speculation” should be neither abstract nor idle, but grounded in facts that are empirically intelligible and testable. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson attempts to show that the problem of knowledge, the problem of accounting for the faculties of intellect (intelligence) and intuition, is one with the metaphysical problem of gaining access to the real: the two form a circle, the center of which is “the empirical study of evolution.” The double form of consciousness (intuition and intellect) is shown to reveal “the double form of the real” itself (dynamic and static). For Bergson, intellect reveals only the static aspect of reality, but through intuition we may gain access to the dynamic reality that intellect misses. The attempt to demonstrate this constitutes what we might call the Bergsonian Revolution. It is an effort to enter “into life’s own domain,” conceived as “reciprocal interpenetration, indefinitely continued creation” (CE 115). Life is to be approached as a “current of creative energy … precipitated into matter” that endeavors “to wrest from it [matter] what it can” (CE 209).

The significance of the science of the nineteenth century for Bergson is that it places at the center of its inquiry the “study of living beings.” He concedes that even here science may still be governed by mechanics, but what we are dealing with is a mechanics of transformation, which is a mechanics that cannot be developed by relying on geometrical and spatialized schemas of thought. Change, transformation, and evolution are bound up with living and open systems, and the features of novelty that characterize such systems will always elude a mathematical treatment. A major critical point that Bergson makes in *Creative Evolution* concerns the way in which an exclusively physico-chemical study of organisms cannot grasp the real growth and change that are essential to life, because it treats its object of study – be it a single cell or a whole organism – mathematically, that is to say, as a constant, isolable, and self-identical unit. For Bergson, the physical sciences become merely symbolic when they treat life, which displays dynamic properties, within this static framework. Further, if science claims that it is justified in doing so because life is essentially mathematical, it ceases to be descriptive and becomes hypothetical. Through his studies of
cytology, embryology, and paleontology, Bergson is well aware that the evidence suggests the contrary, that life is not essentially mathematical. In Bergson’s terms, treating life within a static mathematical framework is dogmatic, and betrays a metaphysics that haunts science.

In an unorganized body or material object, Bergson accepts that change may be only a displacement of the ultimate parts of which an object is made, parts that themselves do not change, meaning there is no real growth, no history, nothing to prevent the object returning to its previous state (CE 5). What biology reveals, for Bergson, is that living organisms do not change through a mere rearrangement of parts, but that each part itself changes by splitting in an unpredictable way. Hence “the distinctive feature of the organized body is that it grows and changes without ceasing” (CE 9) because this growth or change “does not proceed by the association and addition of elements but by dissociation and division” (CE 58). This means that unlike unorganized matter, change in living systems cannot be charted and predicted as a rearrangement of parts because the parts themselves do not remain unchanged throughout the process. Indeed, they do not even remain self-identical, as it is their nature to multiply: “because there are several individuals now, it does not follow that there was not a single individual just before … it was one in the first instance and afterwards many” (CE 9). For Bergson, this is not a hypothesis: it is observable fact, evident in cell division, in the development of the embryo, and in the evolutionary process of speciation. In each case we see that what was once one is now literally two (or four, or eight, etc.). Thus, the very language of ultimate parts with a constant numerical value, which is the basis of a mathematical treatment, cannot express this process in which the parts that we identify continually multiply, and what is more, multiply in an unpredictable way.15

In contesting a purely mathematical treatment of life Bergson does not, as has been widely supposed, espouse a naive vitalism. Vitalism entails an appeal to some mysterious vital stuff that is then held to be the transcendent motor or agent of evolution, while Bergson explicitly eschews any appeal to a vital force or principle. He notes that when the mind considers the infinity of infinitesimal elements and causes that come together in the genesis of a living being, in which the absence or deviation of any one of them would ruin everything, its first impulse is to take “this army of little workers as watched over by a skilled foreman, the ‘vital principle,’ which is forever repairing faults, correcting effects of neglect or absentmindedness, putting things back in place” (CE 145). For

15. We should note that mathematics has found new applications since Bergson’s time, and that within complexity theory in particular it is now used to model the behavior of systems that are held to be in principle dynamic and unpredictable, while in fact giving rise to patterns of regularity – a view that is very close to Bergson’s own, but which the mathematics of his day did not entertain.
Bergson, however, there is no such foreman; nor are there any workers that need such supervision. Furthermore, “the position of vitalism is rendered very difficult by the fact that, in nature, there is neither purely internal finality nor absolutely distinct individuality” (CE 27).

Bergson claims that time has not been taken seriously in previous science. He contends that both common sense and science deal with isolated systems, which are systems that realize themselves in the course of time. Time is reduced to a process of realization on account of the fact that mechanical explanation treats both the past and the future as calculable functions of the present. As a result, time is deprived of efficacy and, in effect, reduced to nothing, having just as much reality for a living being as an hourglass. This is true of both mechanism and finalism for Bergson. Indeed, he contends that finalism is merely an inverted mechanism, substituting the attraction of the future for the compulsion of the past and conceiving the order of nature on the model of a realization of a plan. Bergson claims that both mechanism and finalism are, ultimately, attempts to conceive evolution along the lines of the workings of the human mind (for good reasons did Emmanuel Levinas locate in Bergson's text a source for Heidegger's question concerning technology). He thus claims, somewhat radically, that mechanism's reproach against finalism – that it is anthropomorphic – can also be applied to mechanism itself. Both conceive of nature working like a human being in bringing parts together and proceeding via association and the addition of elements. Bergson suggests that a glance at the development of an embryo will readily show that life works in a very different manner, namely, via dissociation and division (self-differentiation).

Bergson's conception of life draws heavily on his notion of a virtual multiplicity made up of heterogeneous elements, in which the relations between them are ones of fusion and interpenetration. Considered in terms of its contact with matter, life can be likened to an impetus or an impulsion that in itself “is an immensity of potentiality [virtualité], a mutual encroachment of thousands and thousands of tendencies,” which are such only when spatialized (CE 165–6). It is matter that carries out in actuality the division of this virtual multiplicity, and individuation is to be treated as in part the work of matter and in part the result of the inclination of life. In the opening part of Creative Evolution, Bergson states that there is no universal biological law that applies “precisely and automatically to every living being.” Rather, “there are only directions in which life throws out species in general” (CE 10–11). This seemingly innocuous statement provides the key to understanding Bergson's attempt to stage an encounter between the

discoveries of modern biology and an enlarged perception of the “whole” of life and evolution, one that endeavors to go beyond the uncritical assumptions of “evolutionist philosophy” (the reference is to Spencer).

What challenge to thought did Bergson think the new biology presented? First, and most obviously, there is the rejection of Aristotle’s thinking. In his discussion of the development of animal life in chapter two of Creative Evolution, he says that the cardinal error that has vitiated almost all philosophies of nature from Aristotle onward lies in seeing in vegetative, instinctive, and rational life successive degrees in the development of one and the same tendency. In fact, they are “divergent directions of an activity that has split up as it grew” (CE 88).

This is in accord with one crucial aspect of his conception of “life,” namely that it proceeds not by the association and addition of elements but by dissociation and division. Bergson argues that one of the clearest results of modern biology is to have shown that evolution has taken place along divergent lines (CE 113). This means that it is no longer possible to uphold the biology of Aristotle in which the series of living beings is regarded as unilinear.

The second challenge to thought raised by the new biology was located in the modern doctrine of “transformism,” a doctrine that Bergson says he accepts “as a sufficiently exact and precise expression of the facts actually known” (CE 15). On the one hand, it shows us that the highest forms of life – highest in terms of complexity – emerge from a very elementary form of life, thus “the most complex has been able to issue from the most simple by way of evolution.” On the other hand, it shows that life can no longer be treated as an abstraction. Life can now be described in terms of the continuity of genetic energy that cuts across the bodies “it has organized one after another, passing from generation to generation, [and that] has become divided among species and distributed amongst individuals without losing anything of its force, rather intensifying in proportion to its advance” (CE 17).

Bergson insists that we need to display a readiness to be taken by surprise in the study of nature and life and learn to appreciate that there might be a difference between human logic and the logic of nature. We cannot approach nature with any a priori conceptions of parts and wholes or any a priori conception of what constitutes life, including how we delimit the boundaries of an organism and hence define it. We must resist the temptation to place or hold nature within our own ideas or shrink reality to the measure of them. We should not allow our need for a unity of knowledge to impose itself on the multiplicity of nature. Life challenges the essential categories of thought: unity, multiplicity, mechanical causality, intelligent finality all fall short. A consideration of life in its evolutionary aspects makes it virtually impossible to say where individuality begins and ends, whether the living being is one or many, whether it is the cells that associate themselves into an organism or the organism that dissociates itself.
into cells. Unity and multiplicity, or the one and the many, are categories of inert matter; the vital impetus can be conceived as neither pure unity nor pure multiplicity.

The need for a new thinking of life arises for Bergson, in particular, out of the deficiency of the intellect and its inability to think duration.

The more duration marks the living being with its imprint, the more the organism differs from a mere mechanism, over which duration glides without penetrating. And the demonstration has most force when it applies to the evolution of life as a whole ... inasmuch as this evolution constitutes, through the unity and continuity of the animated matter which supports it, a single indivisible history.

(CE 24)

Time is written and engrafted – it is inscription: “Wherever anything lives, there is, open somewhere, a register in which time is being inscribed” (CE 11). Bergson insists that this is no metaphor; rather, it is of the essence of mechanism to consider as metaphorical every effort to ascribe positive attributes to time. For mechanism, change is reducible to an arrangement or rearrangement of parts, while the irreversibility of time is depicted as an appearance relative to our ignorance. But if there is no direction of time for physics, this cannot be the case for biology. On every level we care to examine it, be it embryology, morphology, or the process of evolution itself, time is the indicator of life and of individuated living systems. This inscription and recording of time is, in fact, the time and place of the vital:

[W]hat is properly vital in growing old is the insensible, infinitely graduated, continuance of the change of form ... The evolution of the living being, like that of the embryo, implies a continual recording of duration, a persistence of the past in the present, and so an appearance, at least, of organic memory. (CE 13)

III. BERGSON ON SPENCER’S EVOLUTIONISM

Bergson opposes his conception of evolution to the Spencerian one, arguing that Spencer’s method consists in reconstructing evolution with fragments of the evolved (CE 232). In short, Bergson’s argument is that Spencer is unable to think genuine evolution since he lacks a principle of genesis and instead supposes that we can posit at the beginning what can only be the result of an actual evolution:
Already, in the field of physics itself, the scientists who are pushing the study of their science furthest incline to believe that we cannot reason about the parts as we reason about the whole; that the same principles are not applicable to the origin and to the end of a progress; that neither creation nor annihilation, for instance, is inadmissible when we are concerned with the constituent corpuscles of the atom. Thereby, they tend to place themselves in the concrete duration, in which alone there is true generation and not only a composition of parts.

(CE 235)

For Bergson, the illusion is generated when we define the evolution of life as a passage from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. In effect, he is criticizing a specific variety of finalism, what Stephen Jay Gould and Richard C. Lewontin baptized “the Panglossian paradigm” or “adaptationist program”:

We call it the adaptationist programme, or the Panglossian paradigm [which] is rooted in a notion popularized by A. R. Wallace and A. Weismann, (but not, as we shall see, by Darwin) toward the end of the nineteenth century … This programme regards natural selection as so powerful and the constraints upon it so few that direct production of adaptation through its operation becomes the primary cause of nearly all organic form, function, and behavior.”

However, Bergson is not being completely fair to Spencer since the principle of the passage from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous does not, in fact, specify the evolution of life but is to be applied to the physical universe. It is not the simplistic idea Bergson takes it to be, since before the invention of statistical mechanics it was not possible to understand life, or the formation of the solar system in our galaxy, except as a simple growth of entropy or of homogeneity in a closed system. Life needs an open structure to evolve, and this means for Spencer that evolution cannot be a closed system. For example, living organisms, which are made of “crystalloids” and “colloids,” integrate nitrogenous compounds to which, through the absorption of heat, they add more motion. In short, they are not simple monatomic closed gas systems but are open systems. This means that “living aggregates” are not simply to be thought as “associated facts.” By

this process a variety of heterogeneous elements and of heterogeneous functions in the same organism come to be diversely proportioned in diverse places and rendered more complex by evolution.

The details of Spencer’s account of the evolution of life cannot be traced here. Bergson takes issue with it for a specific reason: the concepts that Spencer utilizes to account for evolution in the direction of the heterogeneous, such as integration, equilibrium, and maximization, and which come from the integral calculus, suggest that the process of evolution can be explained and predicted by natural laws (which are not laws of fate). Darwin, it needs to be noted, does not conceive of evolution in these terms. Although he admits the existence of natural laws, and endeavors to come up with a theoretical explanation concerning the origin of new species, he does not connect this explanation with a possible prediction of evolution. Darwin does not accept the idea of an intelligent design, such as an omniscient Creator who could have foreseen every consequence resulting from the laws he imposes.¹⁹ He thus takes issue with the idea that evolution could have been intentionally ordered. Had this been the case, natural selection would not be the law or mechanism by which the Creator achieves his design because natural selection would not have been foreseen at the beginning.²⁰ Of course, Darwin did not hold this position from the start of his intellectual inquiries but came to it gradually as a result of intense and searching reflection. His mature stance is that the good of each being depends on the way by which this good is selected. Moreover, different ways of selection give different meanings to the concept of goodness, so that good and bad, fitting and ill-fitting, are emergent properties. This means that the substrate is not neutral. Rather, it can change in different circumstances.

What, then, as Daniel Dennett puts it, is Darwin’s most dangerous idea? Is it that natural selection acts only through and for the good of each being, or for the good of a species, but without any intention? If so, we can then conclude, as does Dennett, that natural selection acts as a mindless and mechanical meta-engine that modifies biological engines, which in turn generate the growth in complexity and adaptability.²¹ Dennett advances his idea of the accumulation

²⁰. Ibid., 428.
²¹. Dennett writes: “Here, then, is Darwin’s dangerous idea: the algorithmic level is the level that best accounts for the speed of the antelope, the wing of the eagle, the shape of the orchid, the diversity of species, and all the other occasions for wonder in the world of nature. … No matter how impressive the products of an algorithm, the underlying process always consists of nothing but a set of individually mindless steps succeeding each other without the help of any intelligent supervision; they are ‘automatic’ by definition: the workings of an automaton” (Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life [London: Allen Lane, 1995], 59). According to Dennett, the key lesson to be learned from Darwin’s revolution is this: Paley
of design based on a mindless algorithm in contraposition to the conception of
a creative order that produces novelty from nothing that he attributes to Gould.
In Dennett’s view, natural selection is a crane and not a skyhook, and this means
that natural selection is just a functional property that is not directly connected
with its material structure. Like different clocks that can all keep good time,
natural selection can be realized by different natural substrates. This is the argu-
ment of “substrate neutrality.”

However, one of Bergson’s main arguments is that time is acting in biology
and so we need to pay attention to what natural selection is doing in each specific
set of circumstances: evolution is never ready-made but always making itself.
The Darwinian tree of evolution is full of singularities; it does not lead to a
state in which all possible events are equiprobable. New “possibles” for life are
invented. To conceive this, we need only think about genes that are not eternally
conserved but can be modified; or let us think about how the world of RNA has
been changed in the world of DNA. Bergson’s insight into “creative evolution,”
then, is that constraints in biology do not have the same meaning they have in
classical physics because they are flexible.

The reduction of real complexity to mathematical computation is one that
Bergson locates in both nineteenth-century physics and biology. He quotes
the following passage from Emil Du Bois-Reymond’s Über die Grenzen des
Naturerkennens of 1892:

We can imagine the knowledge of nature arrived at a point where
the universal process of the world might be represented by a single
mathematical formula, by one immense system of differential equa-
tions, from which could be deduced, for each moment, the position,
direction, and velocity of every atom of the world. (CE 25)

Life cannot be understood simply in terms of a mechanical realization of
preexisting goals or problems. Rather, the problems of life are general ones,
evolving within a virtual field that is responded to in terms of specific solu-
tions.22 Bergson’s main argument, then, is that to adequately conceive of life we

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22. An example to illustrate this would be cases of convergent evolution, such as the eye, repre-
senting solutions to general problems that are common to different phylogenetic lineages, in
this case that of light and the tendency “to see,” or vision, and which involve a heterogeneity
in the mechanisms actually involved.

was right in holding Design to be not only a wonderful thing but also to involve intelligence.
Darwin’s contribution was to show that this intelligence could be broken up into “bits so tiny
and stupid that they didn’t count as intelligence at all, and then distributed through space and
time in a gigantic, connected network of algorithmic process” (ibid., 133).
need to appeal to a duration in which novelty is constantly springing forth and in which evolution is genuinely creative.

IV. ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EVOLUTION

At the end of chapter three of *Creative Evolution*, Bergson turns his attention to a consideration of the question of the “significance” (*signification*) of evolution, and the way in which this is revealed in “man.” This should not be taken to reintroduce teleology or anthropomorphism into evolution, for Bergson states that it is in a “quite special sense that man is the ‘term’ and ‘end’ of evolution.” How, then, is this “special sense” to be understood? He is not, of course, claiming that the phenomenon of human consciousness mysteriously lies at the very beginning of the evolution of life as some kind of concealed destiny. His point is that the key characteristics of consciousness – indetermination, hesitation, delay, the quantity of choice with respect to a field of action, and so on – are also tendencies or potentialities of life itself (life as a current of “creative” energy). It is in this specific sense that Bergson argues that consciousness – and what he calls “supra-consciousness” (*supraconscience*) – lie at the very origin of life. This expanded notion of consciousness means before all else an “exigency of creation” that can become manifest to itself only where creation is possible: “It lies dormant when life is condemned to automatism; it wakens as soon as the possibility of a choice is restored” (CE 261). Bergson is not suggesting that the evolution of life miraculously transcends the domain of contingency and accident in order for consciousness to realize itself. Evolution remains contingent in every aspect, and Bergson is not reintroducing teleology when he locates man as the “end” of evolution. Rather, he maintains that with the human being the “life” of consciousness reaches, at least potentially, its highest state of emancipation from the restrictions imposed on it by matter. He accepts that “there has not, properly speaking, been any project or plan” (CE 265), and that the evolution of life “takes directions without aiming at ends” (CE 102). Indeed, it is a crucial aspect of his conception of a creative evolution, be it a question of a work of nature or a work of art, that forms are created without an end in view, and Bergson works out his account of the significance of man in the context of a treatment of the part played by contingency in evolution, which he takes to be enormous and extends as far as life assuming a carbonic form and being developed and concentrated in organisms.

In his book *Wonderful Life*, Gould suggests that the fossils of the Burgess Shale challenge the traditional frameworks of progress and predictability for interpreting evolutionary history, revealing instead that the nature of that history is essentially contingent. The reason these fossils demand a new explanatory
framework is because they show that the diversity of life during the “Cambrian explosion” – the earliest known proliferation of multicellular organisms – was much greater than it is today. Today, there are thought to be twenty to thirty different phyla (basic anatomical designs) within the animal kingdom. What the Burgess fossils reveal is that at the very origin of the animal kingdom there were at least fifteen to twenty additional phyla. On the basis of this evidence, Gould rejects what he calls “the ladder of progress” and “the cone of increasing diversity” as models of evolutionary change and develops a new explanatory framework in which diversification (of species) follows only from a prior decimation (of phyla). He states that it was a lottery as to which phyla survived and does not shy away from the implications this has for our understanding of ourselves as human beings and our place in evolution:

Invariant laws of nature impact on the general forms and functions of organisms; they set the channels in which organic life must evolve. … But the physical channels do not specify arthropods, annelids, mollusks and vertebrates, but, at most, bilaterally symmetrical organisms based on repeated parts. The boundaries of the channels retreat even further into the distance when we ask the essential questions about our own origin: Why did mammals evolve among vertebrates? Why did primates take to the trees? Why did the tiny twig that produced Homo sapiens arise and survive in Africa? When we set our focus upon the level of detail that regulates most common questions about the history of life, contingency dominates and the predictability of general form recedes to an irrelevant background.

Gould’s account of the decimation of phyla, among which humanity’s distant ancestors must have survived, coupled with the contingency of our subsequent

23. More specifically, the number of phyla, or basic anatomical designs, was much greater during the Cambrian explosion, while today there are thought to be a greater number of species based on fewer phyla. See Stephen Jay Gould, Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History (London: Century Hutchinson, 1989), 98–100.

24. Bergson himself explicitly rejected the ladder of progress and the cone of diversity as images of evolutionary development in Creative Evolution: “the impression derived [from the study of organisms] is not always that of an increasing complexity … Nor does it suggest the idea of steps up a ladder” (CE 110).

25. As Gould says, “We do not know for sure that the Burgess decimation was a lottery, but we have no evidence that the winners enjoyed adaptive superiority,” nor is there evidence that the survivors could have been predicted on the basis of any prior characteristic: “twentieth-century paleontology portrays the Burgess losers as adequately specialized and eminently capable” (Wonderful Life, 239, emphasis added).

26. Ibid., 289–90.
evolution, leads him to take seriously the contingency of the human mind itself: “wind back the tape of life to the early days of the Burgess Shale; let it play again from an identical starting point, and the chance becomes vanishingly small that anything like human intelligence would grace the replay.” Gould does not develop a positive account of the alternatives except to infer rightly from the extinct members among the Burgess fossils that they would be forms of life radically different from the vertebrates, mollusks, arthropods, and so on that are familiar to us today.

How is it, then, that if Bergson acknowledges the tremendous role played by contingency and accidents in evolution, which make it entirely conceivable that we could have evolved in ways that would make us physically and morally different from what, in fact, we are, he can also claim that man is the highest achievement of life, and as such reveals its nature most clearly? The brilliance of Bergson’s account of the significance of the human is that from a comprehensive analysis of the variety of contingent evolutionary forms, he is able to discern certain functions that he sees as universal, and the expression of which is what marks out man as the most significant of its products. Hence, the empirical details of evolution constitute the factual basis not only for an understanding of the actual form of the human, but also for any speculation regarding its evolutionary significance.

Whereas it is the examination (in paleontology and comparative anatomy) of material forms that revealed contingency, it is the examination of organisms in terms of their function, and specifically their relation to energy, that allows Bergson to attribute significance to the human in particular. As Bergson says, “life as a whole, whether we envisage it at the start or at the end of its evolution, is a double labor of slow accumulation and sudden discharge” of energy. It is along these lines that Bergson distinguishes plant and animal life, which “develop two tendencies which at first were fused in one” (CE 76). The accumulation and release of energy “at first completed each other so well that they coalesced,” but in the history of evolution we see that “the animal evolved … toward a freer and freer expenditure of discontinuous energy” while “the plant perfected rather its system of accumulation” (ibid.). Their tendency to emphasize different aspects of energy flow leads to the development of different modes of feeding, of movement, and ultimately of consciousness in the plant and the animal. However, his characterization of the evolution of animal life in terms of an increasing ability to use energy leads Bergson into a direct confrontation with the second law of thermodynamics, which states that all energy tends to degrade into heat, which is distributed throughout matter in a uniform manner. Bergson considers this to be “the most metaphysical of the laws of physics” because it attempts to
describe the very direction of existence (CE 156). While it may apply within a closed material system – which Bergson describes as “a thing unmaking itself” (CE 157) – it does not apply to life, in which we find an effort to remount the incline that matter descends and that in its creative passage through matter is “a reality which is making itself in a reality which is unmaking itself” (CE 159).28

Is Bergson here, for once, in direct contradiction to empirical evidence? His is an extreme claim, and demands some kind of support. This can be provided, however, by Mae-Wan Ho, one of the few biologists to adopt Bergson’s work as a valid resource within science. In The Rainbow and the Worm, Ho develops an account of living systems in terms of nonequilibrium thermodynamics. Like Bergson, she claims that living organisms are “irreconcilable with the statistical nature of the laws of thermodynamics,” hence those laws cannot be applied to life without some reformulation, which Ho develops under the name “a thermodynamics of organized complexity.”29 The difference for Ho is this: whereas in material systems, energy tends toward undifferentiated distribution or “equilibrium” as stated by the second law of thermodynamics, living systems are highly differentiated as a consequence of the way “energy flow organizes and structures the system in such a way as to reinforce the energy flow.”30 For this to work, an organism’s ability to store energy is key. Hence, in Ho’s definition, an organism is a coherent structure maintained far from thermodynamic equilibrium by the ability to store energy, and then release it in a way that magnifies its effect well beyond any potential it would have had in a purely material context. Bergson’s description of animal life as a counter-entropic movement can be refined, through Ho’s work, into an account of life as a local magnification of potential energy resulting through the differentiation of storage and release.

The excess of energy that the animal has at its disposal is, then, the condition for the development of human freedom as much as the brain itself. That is to say, human consciousness is not to be explained with reference only to its material conditions, but also to the contingent conditions of its evolutionary history. Gould too has noted this: “We shall then finally understand that the answer to such questions as ‘Why can humans reason?’ lies as much (and as deeply) in the quirky pathways of contingent history as in the physiology of neurons.”31

Hence Bergson is not being materialistic, or providing an emergent account of the mind when he argues, for example, that the difference between animal consciousness and human consciousness lies in the number and range of motor

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28. For Bergson’s discussion of Boltzmann’s interpretation of the second law of thermodynamics, see CE 157.
30. Ibid.
mechanisms that have been set up in the human brain, which serve to give an almost unlimited field of choice in their release. Thus, from the fact that the brains of human and ape are alike, “we cannot conclude that consciousnesses are comparable or commensurable” (CE 263), because from the limited to the unlimited there is all the distance between the closed and the open (in fact, what we have here is a difference of kind and not merely degree). Unlike the case of the animal, the powers of invention within the human are not simply variations on the theme of routine. Rather, we have a machine that has the potential to triumph over mechanism and closure. The human is not a captive of the mechanisms its brain has set up. It is as a complex, open machine, therefore, that the human can be said to be the “interesting” animal. Bergson then duly notes the importance of the role played by language, social life, and technics in the creation of this “exceptional life” of the human animal (elsewhere Bergson calls man “the sporting animal” and conceives the brain as an organ of sport).32

The complication of the brain, for Bergson, is an effect of evolutionary freedom as much as a condition of human freedom. The development of the brain itself is contingent on the excess of energy that allows the development of free action along the animal line of evolution. The brain is not an originary material base that allows consciousness to emerge. Rather, it is material so organized by evolutionary “consciousness”33 as to allow it to re-emerge in the human:

Things have happened just as though an immense current of consciousness, interpenetrated with potentialities of every kind, had traversed matter to draw it towards organization and make it, notwithstanding that it is necessity itself, an instrument of freedom. But consciousness has had a narrow escape from being itself ensnared. Matter, enfolding it, bends it to its own automatism, lulls it to sleep in its own unconsciousness. … So, from the highest rung of the ladder of life, freedom is riveted in a chain which at most it succeeds in stretching. With man alone a sudden bound is made; the chain is broken.34

The human form, then, is not prefigured in the evolutionary movement and cannot be said to be the outcome of the whole of evolution since this has been accomplished on several divergent lines, and the human species is simply at the

33. Again, this is not to anthropomorphize evolution: consciousness here means freedom, contingency, creation, and so on.
end of one of them: “[man] does not draw along with him all that life carries in itself” (CE 266). Nevertheless, for Bergson man is more significant than the species that occupy the other lines of vegetable and animal evolution because he is the being in whom the vital movement of life reaches its highest expression, and hence the being in whose freedom the creative nature of evolution is made most evident. This point is worth stressing so that Bergson is not misheard when he advances these kinds of insights. There is nothing anthropomorphic in Bergson’s claim that man reveals the significance of evolution, primarily because it is not the specific form of man but his function as a free and creative being that constitutes his significance. It is as if “a vague and formless being” (un être indécis et flou) – call it, Bergson says, man or superman – had sought to realize itself but could succeed in this effort only by abandoning parts of itself in the process (such losses are represented by the animal and vegetable worlds and what is positive in them).

In subsequent essays and texts, Bergson does think outside the restrictions he himself had placed on speculation in Creative Evolution, speaking of the appearance of the human – “or of some being of the same essence” – as the “raison d’être of life on our planet.” However, we should not suppose that the metaphysician in Bergson has simply got the better of him and now overrides the stress he had previously placed on the empirical study of evolution. He still maintains that “experience is the only source of knowledge,” and he seeks to develop his insights on the basis of a synthesis of an intellectual cognition of facts and the accumulation of probabilities. With the word “experience” Bergson means something rich and varied, but the objects of experience we refer to must be ones that can become objects of scientific inquiry and research. Bergson’s thinking of life and of creative evolution culminates in a conception of “creative emotion” and the claim that philosophical certainty, which admits of degrees, requires the extension of intuition – supported by science – by “mystical intuition.” He ends his final book, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion (1932), by describing the universe as a machine for the production of gods and declaring that the task now facing human beings is whether they wish to go on living or not. In order to address the tremendous social, political, and international problems of the planet, we need to refine the “spirit of invention” that to date has been cultivated largely on the basis of mechanism. It is not more and more reserves of potential physico-chemical energy that need releasing but those of a moral energy: “the body, now larger, calls for a bigger soul” and “mechanism should mean mysticism.”

37. Ibid., 310.
It is perhaps this kind of reflection on the meaning of evolution that has generated some of the more far-out speculations we encounter in work on evolution in the twentieth century, such as the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), as well as in positions advanced in our own time that propose that we are currently witnessing on earth a takeover of mindless Darwinian evolution by controlled and self-directed evolution. De Chardin, a priest and paleontologist, claimed to have been inspired in part by Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* as well as by Nietzsche’s conception of the superhuman. What concerns him most is not that there is evolution, a fact he considers indisputable, but whether evolution is directed or not. In *The Phenomenon of Man*, he holds that evolution does have a precise orientation as well as a privileged axis, and he thinks that he can show this while “leaving aside all anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism.” In his attempt to establish his case, he resurrects almost all the notions that Darwin’s revolution had cast into intellectual oblivion: “The impetus of the world, glimpsed in the great drive of consciousness, can only have its ultimate source in some inner principle, which alone could explain its irreversible advance towards higher psychisms.” In short, for de Chardin the meaning of evolution comes from it having a definite direction and this is a psychic one centered on man or, rather, consciousness and the fact that the story of life on earth is to be understood as the spreading of “spirit” around it. The future of evolution for de Chardin consists in the attainment of what he calls “super-life,” which is a “superior form of existence” beyond mere survival and an opening “onto limitless psychic spaces” in the universe. He explicitly uses the word “superhuman” to depict this future and speaks of it in terms of a “spiritual renovation of the earth.” In an attempt to add intellectual substance to his ill-defined concerns, de Chardin comes up with an armory of strange new terms,

38. In a statement that takes one’s breath away on account of its reckless personification of evolution, Kevin Kelly writes: “My larger point is that the advantages of Lamarckian evolution are so great that nature has found ways to make it happen,” and adds, “Evolution daily scrutinizes the world not just to find fitter organisms but to find ways to increase its own ability. … Evolution searches the surface of the planet to find ways to speed itself up … not because it is anthropomorphic, but because the speeding up of adaptation is the runaway circuit it rides on. … What evolution eventually found in the human brain was the complexity needed to peer ahead in anticipation and direct evolution’s course” (*Out of Control: The New Biology of Machines* [London: Fourth Estate, 1995], 361). He goes on: “What evolution really wants – that is, where it is headed – is to uncover (or create) a mechanism that will most quickly uncover (or create) possible forms, things, ideas, processes in the universe” (ibid., 363).


such as the noosphere and the Omega Point, and together they are meant to support his claim that evolution can be interpreted as the story of the ascent of consciousness and spirit that culminates in an era of “hyper-personalization” – or, one might say, Hegel meets biology and evolution: “There can be no doubt about it,” he claims after stating that modern totalitarianism is the distorted truth of something magnificent, “the great human machine is designed to work and must work – by producing a super-abundance of mind.”

De Chardin’s appreciation lacks the subtlety of Bergson’s speculations about the significance of evolution and the possible “meaning” within it of the appearance of the human. Moreover, he fundamentally distorts the sense of Nietzsche’s “superhuman” figure. For Nietzsche, of course, the emphasis is to be placed on the body, not on consciousness or spirit, and he was keen to separate his idea from association with evolutionary thought, insisting that the question to be posed was not what should now replace or succeed humanity in the order of being, but rather what kind or type of human should now be willed and bred as having greater value and being more certain of a future.

V. DELLEUZE AND BERSONISM

The influence of Bergson on Deleuze cannot be overestimated. Indeed, Alain Badiou calls Bergson Deleuze’s “real master, far more than Spinoza, or perhaps even Nietzsche.” He further insightfully notes that it was Deleuze’s immense

43. By “noosphere,” de Chardin means a new era in evolution centered on the emergence of the “thinking layer” or the “soul” of the Earth and achieved through hominization: “outside and above the biosphere there is the noosphere” (ibid., 202). The “Omega Point” names the centered point around which the noosphere revolves, namely, consciousness as “hyper-personalization”: “Because it contains and engenders consciousness, space-time is necessarily of a convergent nature. Accordingly its enormous layers, followed in the right direction, must somewhere ahead become involuted to a point which we might call Omega, which fuses and consumes them integrally in itself” (ibid., 285). In short, de Chardin is claiming that the more the “sphere” of the world expands and grows in consciousness, the richer and deeper it becomes and is concentrated at a point that allows us to speak of “the volume of being.”

44. Ibid., 284–5.

45. Ibid., 82.

46. In a note of 1883–84, Nietzsche writes: “we are in the phase of the modesty of consciousness … Put briefly: perhaps the entire evolution of the spirit is a question of the body … The organic is rising to yet higher levels. Our lust for knowledge of nature is a means through which the body desires to perfect itself … In the long run, it is not a question of man at all: he is to be overcome” (Nietzsche, The Will to Power, §676).


merit to have “modernized the Bergsonian filiation.” He did this by extricating Bergson from what he had laid himself open to:

a recuperation of the injunctions of the Open [an important category in Bergson’s The Two Sources of Morality and Religion] by Christian spiritualism and an adjustment of his cosmic vision to a certain global teleology of which Father Teilhard de Chardin was for a time the herald.49

According to Badiou, then, Deleuze’s appropriation of Bergson is of great significance since it “secularizes” him and in so doing connects his concepts “to the creations at the forefront of our time.”50

Deleuze identifies a number of philosophical innovations in Bergson’s project and he accords a special importance to the accomplishment of Creative Evolution, locating in it the seeds of a new thinking of difference and the prospect of thinking beyond the human condition (beyond, that is, our spatialized habits of representation). There are a number of places in his writings where Bergson explicitly approaches philosophy as the discipline that “raises us above the human condition” (la philosophie nous aura élevés au-dessus de la condition humaine) and makes the effort to “surpass” (dépasser) the human condition.51 In Creative Evolution, Bergson conceives philosophy as “an effort to dissolve again into the Whole.” Moreover: “Intelligence reabsorbed into its principle, may thus live back again in its genesis” (CE 123). Such a method of thinking has to work against the most inveterate habits of the mind and consists in an interchange of insights that correct and add to each other. For Bergson, as Deleuze notes, such an enterprise ends by expanding the humanity within us and so allows humanity to surpass itself by reinserting itself in the Whole.52 This is accomplished through philosophy, for it is philosophy that provides us with the means (methods) for reversing the normal directions of the mind (instrumental, utilitarian), so upsetting its habits. Deleuze stresses that for Bergson this makes philosophy’s task a modest one. If we suppose that philosophy is an affair of perception, then it cannot simply be a matter of correcting perception but only of extending it. There is nothing at fault with the human condition, and its fundamental errors and habits do not require correction. Rather, the task is to extend the human present, which is the aspect of time in which the human necessarily dwells, a necessity to be explained through the dictates of evolution.

49. Ibid., 99.
50. Ibid.
such as adaptation: “The human condition is the maximum of duration concentrated in the present, but there is no co-exclusivity to being, that is to say that there is not only the present.”

For Deleuze, Bergson’s philosophy contains a new thinking of difference: “The notion of difference must throw a certain light on Bergson’s philosophy, but inversely Bergsonism must bring the greatest contribution to a philosophy of difference.” It is a quasi-phenomenological venture since the aim, Deleuze declares, is to “return” to things themselves. The promise, if this is got right, is nothing less than one of difference delivering Being to us. A careful consideration of the differences of nature will lead us to the nature of difference. Hitherto, thinking has confused two kinds of difference and covered one with the other: differences of degree over differences of kind or nature. The task of philosophy is to grasp the thing itself in its positivity, and this requires a notion of internal difference. Deleuze fully appreciates that a certain strand of modern philosophy finds such a notion of difference to be absurd. In the Hegelian schema of difference, a thing differs from itself only because it differs in the first place from all that it is not. Difference is, therefore, said to be constituted at the point of contradiction and negation. The novel modernity of Bergsonism lies, for Deleuze, in its critique of metaphysics and of a science that has forgotten the durational character of life and imposed on it an abstract mechanics. It rests on a schema that homogenizes difference by selecting only differences of degree through a spatialized representation of the real. General ideas simply present for our reflection completely different givens that get collected in utilitarian groupings. The task for Deleuze is one of breaking out of a merely “external state of reflection,” so that philosophy no longer has a merely negative and generic relation with things in which it remains entirely in the element of generality.

For Deleuze the ultimate aim is to reconnect human thought and existence to, as he puts it, the “universal consciousness” of the Whole (le Tout). If Nietzsche’s philosophy rests on an inversion of Platonism and a parody of metaphysics, the Bergsonian has found a different path, one that is able to articulate a philosophy of becoming that enables us to reverse the normal directions of thinking and its spatial habits. As Deleuze points out, for Bergson metaphysics begins not with Plato but with Zeno.

55. “Metaphysics dates from the day when Zeno of Elea pointed out the inherent contradictions of movement and change, as our intellect represents them” (Bergson, The Creative Mind, 17); and, “Metaphysics … was born of the arguments of Zeno of Elea on the subject of change and movement. It was Zeno who, by drawing attention to the absurdity of what he called
for philosophy. In his 1960 lecture course on *Creative Evolution*, Deleuze indicates precisely where Bergson’s importance lies, namely in the effort to radicalize the post-Kantian project commenced by Solomon Maimon and J. G. Fichte: the need to pass from a transcendental philosophy to a genetic one. Exposing the “myth of the given” has, of course, been a preoccupation of much of twentieth-century philosophy and with respect to both analytical and continental sources of thought. Deleuze focuses attention in large measure on the nature of Bergson’s singular contribution to this project. Neither the intellect nor matter can be taken as given (today the polarity is cashed out as one of “mind” and “world’); rather, there is a need for a double genesis. It is this conception of genesis that constitutes such an essential aspect of the Bergsonian revolution. If successful, it means that we will be able to enter into the Whole, or what Deleuze calls the universal consciousness of life. Deleuze stresses that the Whole enjoys neither interiority nor totality; individuated forms of life have a tendency toward closure but this is never accomplished on account of life. As Bergson puts in *Creative Evolution*, “finality is external or it is nothing at all” (CE 27). That the Whole is not given should fill us with delight since it is only our habitual confusion of time with space, and the assimilation of time into space, that makes us think the Whole is given, if only in the eyes of God.

Informing Deleuze’s Bergsonism is a philosophical critique of the order of need, action, and society that predetermines us to retain a relationship with things only to the extent that they satisfy our interest, and of the order of general ideas that prevent us from acquiring a superior human nature. This “ethical” impulse of Bergsonism has been taken up, as we shall now see, within contemporary biology.

VI. “CREATIVE EVOLUTION” TODAY: BERGSON AND CONTEMPORARY BIOLOGY

A major innovation of Bergson’s work on biology is the shift away from a focus on parts and toward the view that it is the whole that is important. This is not...
to say that the analytic study of the parts of organisms, or of organisms as parts
of evolution, is unimportant to Bergson, but that such research must itself take
its direction from the whole context within which the parts find their sense.
In Creative Evolution this move is evident in Bergson's definition of life as a
whole that splits up into parts through dissociation rather than a whole that is
constructed through the association of parts. This has several consequences:
first of all, it rules out mechanism as a complete account of life because the focus
on ultimate parts means it cannot think life except as constructed from matter;
and second, it rules out vitalism as an account of life because the focus on an
immortal life-force means it cannot think its relation to matter except as a
mysterious kind of animation. We might say, then, that while mechanism lacks
an adequate philosophy of life as a whole, vitalism lacks an adequate physics of
particular living organisms.

In Creative Evolution, Bergson presents a third way of approaching the
problem that avoids the dogmatic stand-off between mechanism and vitalism
by providing an account of life in expanded material terms: as dissociation, as
the freeing up of energy, as an unpredictable and ultimately creative evolution.
Bergson eschews dogmatic theorizing and retains of mechanism and vitalism
only what is based on experience: from mechanism, this is the analytic study of
organisms (the forms of which now are understood as contingent rather than
determined), and from vitalism, the idea of life (which is now understood as
immanent rather than transcendent to the forms of organisms). In Creative
Evolution, Bergson was working with an expanded understanding of matter that
was not widely recognized at the time, and this, as well as his choice of the term
élan vital, led to him being broadly categorized as a vitalist. Today, however,
there are no longer the same mechanistic limitations on our understanding of
matter, and Bergson's dynamic account finds corroboration in many areas of
contemporary biology (although we can still, of course, find the same dogmatic
mechanism that Bergson opposed). What we can also find is that in place of
vitalism (which is now largely consigned to history) are a number of models for
thinking life as an open, dynamic system and for thinking through the implica-
tions of this for scientific practice itself.

How, then, do we locate Creative Evolution in the context of biology today?
We do not want to limit our treatment of Creative Evolution to its reinstate-
ment in a revisionist history of biology that, in the light of recent alternatives,
would seek to expand the story of twentieth-century biology beyond that of the
development of a mechanistic science leading from neo-Darwinism to modern
genetics, but nor can we claim that Creative Evolution was a canonical text for
the development of those alternatives. More than anything, it is the failure of
the human genome project to “explain” life in mechanical terms (its greatest
discovery was that there are not enough genes to do this, hence raising new
questions rather than answering old ones) that necessitated a change of approach from determinism to a consideration of nonlinear causality, feedback mechanisms, and context-dependent behavior. What *Creative Evolution* can offer is a model for thinking through these kinds of problems in biology, and, what is more, a model that relates these problems in biological research practices both to a more general epistemology (an engagement with which runs through all Bergson's work, and *Creative Evolution* in particular) and to their broader social and historical context (something that Bergson develops in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, particularly in its fourth and final chapter).

Biologist Steven Rose has stated the need for resources exactly like this in the preface to *Lifelines*, where he describes how his attempt to establish a perspective on biology that transcends genetic reductionism made it necessary to “draw upon those powerful alternative traditions in biology which have refused to be swept along by the ultra-Darwinist tide into accepting that living processes can be reduced to mere assemblages of molecules driven by the selfish urges of the genes to make copies of themselves.” For Rose, Bergson (along with Georges Cuvier, Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, and Hans Dreisch) is part of “an alternative, almost underground nonreductionist tradition in biology [whose] voices were and still are drowned out by an almost universal reductionist consensus which insists that, whatever the theoretical critique, reductionism works.” And we should note here that Dreisch, Bergson, and others are no longer described as vitalists but as “nonreductionists,” signifying an important shift in the intellectual landscape: we no longer have vitalism as a metaphysical hypothesis opposed to “scientific” mechanism, but nonreductionism as a valid position within science that is opposed to what is now recognized as the metaphysical hypothesis of reductionism.

59. “The lesson that has emerged with blinding clarity from the whole genome project is the error of regarding an organism as a kind of supermolecular machine whose parts are written in the genetic code” (Brian Goodwin, *Nature’s Due: Healing Our Fragmented Culture* [Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2007], 89). “No amount of information on genes and protein interactions will ever add up to the complex, entangled whole that is the organism” (Mae-Wan Ho, “Human Genome: The Biggest Sell-Out in Human History,” International Society for Science in Society report (2000). www.i-sis.org.uk/humangenome.php [accessed January 2010]).


62. Indeed, in *Creative Evolution* Bergson had described the mechanistic treatment of life according to mathematical principles as “a certain new scholasticism that has grown up during the latter half of the nineteenth century around the physics of Galileo” (CE 236; cf. 13). Brian Goodwin also suggests that the modern science for which Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes laid the groundwork has now reached its limit as our primary way of knowing and relating to the world (*Nature’s Due*, 11).
The reductionistic or mechanistic focus on parts that Bergson criticized in neo-Darwinism is today most clearly evident in genetics, and is subjected to a similar criticism by a number of biologists. For example, Brian Goodwin writes:

Organisms have been replaced by genes and their products as the basic elements of biological reality. … There is no lack of highly persuasive books whose objective is to demonstrate why organisms are not what they seem to be – integrated entities with lives and natures of their own – but complex molecular machines controlled by the genes carried within them. … It is the absence of any theory of organisms as distinctive entities in their own right, with a characteristic type of dynamic order and organization, that has resulted in their disappearance from the basic conceptual structure of modern biology.63

For Goodwin, evolution is not the realization of a genetic program, but a dynamic process of emergent order (morphogenesis) “in which genes play a significant but limited role.”64 It is an approach that, like Bergson’s, reintegrates the quantifiable facts of scientific analysis in a broader appreciation of the qualitative process that is their true context. As Goodwin expresses it:

in an extended view of the living process, the focus shifts from inheritance and natural selection to creative emergence as the central quality of the evolutionary process. … Inheritance and natural selection continue to play significant roles in this expanded biology, but they become parts of a more comprehensive dynamical theory of life which is focused on the dynamics of emergent processes.65

63. Brian Goodwin, *How the Leopard Changed its Spots: The Evolution of Complexity* (London: Phoenix, 1994), ix–x. It is worth noting here that while Goodwin’s statement might call to mind Richard Dawkins’s *Selfish Gene*, Dawkins cannot straightforwardly be assimilated to a reductionist position. True, organisms are vehicles for the survival of atomistic genes in Dawkins’s work, but only in the sense that it is the genes, and not the whole organism, that are the true subject of natural selection. In other respects, the organism is an “integrated and coherent” unit in which “genes may interact and even blend” in their effects on the organism. Dawkins’s point as regards selection is that “they do not blend when it comes to being passed on to future generations” (*The Extended Phenotype* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982], 114). While the reduction of inheritance to the passing on of genes is itself highly questionable, Dawkins does not reduce properties of organisms to the action of their genes, remaining sensitive to the environmental and social factors that affect gene expression.


Denis Noble is another biologist whose work foregrounds the necessity of placing genes in their wider context. Whereas Goodwin uses a language of emergence derived from complexity theory, Noble develops what he calls “systems biology” as an alternative to the view that the instructions for the development of an organism lie in its genes: “there is no such program and there is no privileged level of causality in biological systems.” Noble denies any metaphors that would attribute causal agency exclusively to genes, as if they “control,” “determine,” “code for,” or “contain” organic events in advance of their realization:

From the systems biology viewpoint the genome is not understandable as “the book of life” until it is “read” through its “translation” into physiological function. My contention is that this functionality does not reside at the level of genes. It can’t because, strictly speaking, the genes are “blind” to what they do, as indeed are proteins and higher structures such as cells, tissues and organs.

There is a complex interaction between genes and their environment – both the cellular environment and the wider environment of the organisms in which they exist. The organisms in turn have a relationship with their environment, and this also will have an impact on gene expression.

Moreover, this environment crucially determines which genes are expressed and to what degree. The passage of information is not simply one way, from genes to function. There is two-way interaction.

However, despite the theoretical sophistication of the nonreductionist thinking of life, the shift toward this perspective within biology remains a mere stirring when compared to the landslide that its interpretive success might lead us to expect. To understand why this is the case, let us highlight another

67. Ibid., 34.
68. Ibid., 33. Here and in the next extract, Noble is specifically referring to the cellular environment, although, in his view, what he says is also true of wider environments.
69. Ibid., 35.
70. Both Goodwin and Noble, for example, have demonstrated the value of emergence and nonlinear causality as strategies for understanding the heart organ. See Goodwin, Nature’s Due, ch. 2, in which he also discusses cancer as an emergent property of cells, and Noble, The Music of Life, ch. 5.
important point in the passage we cited from Rose: *whatever the theoretical critique, reductionism works.*

Who cares if the behavior of a gene is context dependent if we can isolate that context and show that within it the gene behaves in a predictable way? Or if we can isolate the aspects of a gene that are independent of a particular context and on this basis predict how it will behave when transplanted to a different one? Who cares about context dependence *in principle* when we can ignore it *in fact*? Well, philosophers such as Bergson do, and biologists such as Rose, Goodwin, Ho, and Noble do. But why do they? And what practical alternatives do they offer to the genetic technologies we are alluding to? In order to answer this, let us turn Rose’s statement that “reductionism works” into a question, or rather a series of questions: *how does reductionism work, what does it work on, and with what results?*

In their critical assessment of mechanistic practices in science, writers such as Rose, Goodwin, Noble, and Ho raise many of the same points as Bergson, emphasizing the utilitarian bent of the intellect toward fabrication, the historical contingency of scientific methods and principles, and the way mechanistic approaches actualize only a small part of a potentially far richer relationship to nature. However, they also emphasize two key issues that have developed only since Bergson’s time: that research projects today are largely dictated by the requirements of technological and corporate interests, and that scientific practices constitute a significant intervention into natural processes – so much so that they are considered to make a significant contribution to the current environmental crisis. Now, in the terms of the mechanistic hypothesis, the intellectual reduction of nature to its fundamental parts is a process of discovery; but from a critical perspective, such an activity is not one of discovery but of intervention. If nature is a holistic process, then the isolation and manipulation of certain natural processes constitute a fundamental alteration of nature itself.

In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson's account of life as an integral whole was accompanied by an extensive critique of the intellect as that which resolves life into parts, describing it as an instrument of useful action rather than of disinterested speculation. Its main characteristic is the fabrication of instruments from matter, and when it turns to consider life it cannot help but do so from its utilitarian perspective: “it makes us consider every actual form of things, even the form of natural things, as artificial and provisional; it makes our thought efface from the object perceived, even though organized and living, the lines that outwardly mark its inward structure” (CE 101). This ability to regard living form

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71. The word alternative is not entirely appropriate here; the issue is not about abandoning mechanistic science, but delimiting for it an appropriate field of application and complementing its method with others that may be more appropriate to different areas.
as provisional – to literally see in life only raw material for our use – gives us “an unlimited power of decomposing according to any law and of recomposing into any system” (ibid.). In Creative Evolution, this remains an epistemological point, and Bergson is primarily concerned with accounting for the “bewilderment” of an intellect designed to organize matter “when it turns to the living and is confronted with organization” itself, but the problem today is a different one: the “recompositions” that the intellect organizes are at odds with the “inward structure” or “organization” of organisms or ecosystems, and actually disrupts those systems (CE 104).72

Goodwin has demonstrated very clearly that the presuppositions of genetic reductionism “make it legitimate to shunt genes around from any one species to any other species.”73 If the gene is ultimately the only biological reality, then “species don’t have natures” and “we can manipulate them in any way.”74 Life itself loses all significance in such a view, and nature becomes “a set of parts, commodities that can be shifted around.”75 As Goodwin notes, the rhetoric that goes along with biotechnology is totally at variance with the reality: genes are not stable bits of information, they are defined by context, and if you change the context you change the activity of the gene, leading to unexpected modifications and transgenic transference between species.76 For Goodwin, contemporary genetic technologies mark the highest point of a “science of quantities” that was formally introduced by Galileo and has, during its relatively short history, enabled an exceptional rate of technological development. He suggests that the advancement of scientific knowledge, which now suggests that life is not made up of parts, and the worsening environmental crisis, which results from treating life as if it is made up of parts, both indicate the necessity of a fundamental shift toward what he calls “a science of qualities” that would take into account the properties of living systems as a whole.77 In his most recent work he has argued

72. In The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, Bergson suggests that “the spirit of invention has not always operated in the best interests of humanity” and that we should “allot to the machine its proper place, I mean the place where it can best serve humanity,” although his beef is largely with the social implications of technology, which fosters an artificial need for luxury and widens the gap between capital and labor, rather than with the environmental implications that would be revealed only years later. See Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, 305–7.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
that living systems have qualities such as health that are in no sense “secondary” to those usually observed by science. They are properties that pertain to the whole system and cannot be explained in terms of the properties or interaction of its parts.78

In the *Origin of Species* Darwin introduced his new concept of natural selection by using an analogy between variation under domestication and variation under nature. The work of contemporary biologists, no less than that of Bergson, suggests that it is time to move beyond this analogy. The effects of the contemporary techno-scientific “domestication” of nature are so much more powerful than the selective breeding that Darwin considered that they defy comparison (after Bergson, we could say that this is a difference of degree that is so great it amounts to a difference in kind). Rather than suggesting an analogy with nature, the evidence today indicates that “domestication” suggests the opposite: the technological manipulation and control of nature is the most short-sighted and destructive line of action we could have taken, disrupting nature and inhibiting creative evolution. Alongside her laboratory practice, Ho has also developed an extensive critique of mechanism, characterizing it as an adolescent phase in the development of the life sciences and claiming that the application of methods and principles drawn from the mathematical and physical sciences is inadequate to an understanding of life: in order to reach maturity, biology must adopt a more holistic perspective, using an intuitive as well as intellectual approach. She emphasizes a view of life as symbiotic, with humans as participants in a creative – we could say, a healthy – evolution. Such participation cannot be grounded in an intellectual – that is to say, an instrumental – disposition toward nature: a disposition that makes us alienated from nature and from ourselves.79

Life is holistic, and the manipulation of parts has effects on the whole that cannot, in principle, be predicted. Reductionists may well object that, given a complete knowledge of the parts, prediction is possible, but what Bergson originally revealed was that analytic knowledge alone is by definition inadequate, because it reveals not what life is, but only what we can do to it. In this context, a concept such as “conservation” can find a new application, no longer as simply the preservation of life as it is, but rather as the preservation of the dynamism of life so that it can continue to evolve creatively. As the Bergson scholar and environmentalist Pete Gunter has pointed out, Bergson’s focus on the whole of

78. See Goodwin, *Nature’s Due*, ch. 3. Another example of reductionism at work on a larger scale is the industrial farming practice of monoculture: “This monoculture mentality arises directly out of a reductionist science of quantities that looks at species in terms of specific traits that can be maximized to give high yields of particular products” (Goodwin, *How the Leopard Changed its Spots*, 211). The Bergson scholar and environmentalist Pete Gunter also investigates the effects of monocultural farming in North Texas in his book *The Big Thicket*.

79. This is a central theme of Goodwin’s *Nature’s Due*. 

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evolution “locates man squarely in nature and stresses man's kinship to all living creatures.” Bergson's model of evolution as the differentiation of a common impetus clearly emphasizes the importance of studying the evolution of ecosystems as well as individual species. The concept of divergent tendencies within a single evolutionary process means that all evolution, in principle, is symbiotic, and places ecology at the very heart of biology.

A biology of organisms that is not complemented by an ecology of the whole context within which they evolve is incapable of supporting an adequate concept of creative participation in life, leaving the scientist unable to comprehend life, able only to make use of it. Farming practices based on genetic technologies such as the annual use of neutered and patented seeds, or based on industrial technologies such as clearcutting and monoculture, effectively abolish the dynamic conditions of a creative evolution. Indeed, when Goodwin describes the way in which “mechanism works,” he uses an analogy with drug addiction: “farmers become enslaved to ‘scientific’ methods of production that are intrinsically unsustainable, and new technological ‘fixes’ are needed to sort out new problems.” We cannot solve the problems that techno-science has created through further interventions. Indeed, this line of thinking has more in common with indigenous knowledge than it does with European epistemology, but it is important to note (as against readings that would suggest Bergson is an “irrationalist” and “anti-science”) that this is not essentially at odds with science – only with the intellectual and industrial appropriation of science. What is required is – in Bergson’s terms as well as those of contemporary biologists – intuition of the self and sympathy with life; only in this way can “humanity … set about simplifying its existence with as much frenzy as it devoted to complicating it.”

Creative Evolution is only now receiving the attention it deserves. More than any other work in the philosophy of life, this text is predominantly understood in light of what came after it. This is not to say merely that we interpret it in retrospect, but that the philosophical community has had a century to acclimatize itself to the scientific worldview that Bergson recognized at its inception. It stands as a lesson in how philosophy can accompany rather than follow science, and how both disciplines gain from this partnership. Dynamic theories of biology and evolution can operate only through the recognition of the temporal character of living systems, ecological theories can operate only through the recognition of sympathy between organisms, and both these approaches were developed by Bergson at a time when biological science on the

whole operated by treating organisms as raw material. Our thinking of life today is moving away from control and toward participation, away from exploitation and toward sustainability, and only now is scientific thought embarking on the path that Bergson pointed out a century ago, a path that he had seen indicated in the evolutionary biology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Bergson's visionary ideas are not of course the only resource for this project, but they surely merit being placed at the center of any serious philosophical response to questions of life and evolution.

83. Mention should be made of Uexküll's Umwelt research, which sought to show the extent to which the "environment" is structured and mediated by the specific Umwelt of the organism and which has been taken up by continental philosophers such as Heidegger (The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics), Merleau-Ponty (In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays), and Deleuze & Guattari (A Thousand Plateaus).
# CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHILosophical Events</th>
<th>CulTural Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>1620 Bacon, <em>Novum organum</em></td>
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<td>1633</td>
<td>Condemnation of Galileo</td>
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<td>1634</td>
<td>Establishment of the Académie Française</td>
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<td>1637 Descartes, <em>Discourse on Method</em></td>
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<td>1641 Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em></td>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Nightwatch</em></td>
<td>English Civil War begins</td>
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<td>1642</td>
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<td>John Milton, <em>Paradise Lost</em></td>
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<td>1651 Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em></td>
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<td>1662 Logique du Port-Royal</td>
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<td>1665</td>
<td>Newton discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1667</td>
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<td>1675</td>
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<td>Leibniz discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1677 Spinoza, <em>Ethics</em></td>
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<td>1687</td>
<td>Newton, <em>Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica</em></td>
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<td>1689 Locke, <em>A Letter Concerning Toleration</em></td>
<td>(–1690) Locke, <em>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Two Treatises of Civil Government</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosopher/Author</td>
<td>Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>1695</td>
<td>Bayle</td>
<td>Dictionnaire historique et critique, vol. I</td>
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<td>1714</td>
<td>Leibniz</td>
<td>Monadologie</td>
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<td>1739</td>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>A Treatise of Human Nature</td>
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<td>1742</td>
<td>Handel</td>
<td>Messiah</td>
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<td>1748</td>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</td>
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<td>1751</td>
<td>Diderot and D'Alembert</td>
<td>Encyclopédie, vols 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>1759</td>
<td>Voltaire</td>
<td>Candide</td>
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<td>1762</td>
<td>Rousseau</td>
<td>Du contrat social and Émile ou de l'éducation</td>
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<td>1774</td>
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<td>1776</td>
<td>Death of Hume</td>
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<td>1781</td>
<td>Kant</td>
<td>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</td>
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<td>1783</td>
<td>Kant</td>
<td>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</td>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>Kant</td>
<td>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</td>
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<td>1788</td>
<td>Birth of Arthur Schopenhauer</td>
<td>Kant, Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</td>
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<td>1789</td>
<td>Death of d’Holbach</td>
<td>Adoption of La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen</td>
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<td>1791</td>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td>The Magic Flute</td>
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<td>1792</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft</td>
<td>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Creation of the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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**CHRONOLOGY**

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<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1795 Schiller, <em>Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen</em></td>
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</table>
| 1800 Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*  
Schelling, *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* | Beethoven’s First Symphony | |
| 1804 Death of Kant | | Napoleon Bonaparte proclaims the First Empire |
| 1805 | Publication of Diderot, *Le Neveu de Rameau* | |
| 1806 Birth of John Stuart Mill | Goethe, *Faust, Part One*  
Reinstatement of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university | Napoleon brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end |
| 1807 Hegel, *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* | | |
| 1812 (–1816) Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* | | |
| 1815 | Jane Austen, *Emma* | Battle of Waterloo; final defeat of Napoleon |
| 1818 Birth of Karl Marx | Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* | |
| 1819 Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*  
Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* | Byron, *Don Juan* | |
<p>| 1821 Hegel, <em>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</em> | | Death of Napoleon |
| 1823 | | Beethoven's Ninth Symphony |
| 1830 (–1842) Comte, <em>Cours de philosophie positive in six volumes</em> | Stendhal, <em>The Red and the Black</em> | |
| 1831 Death of Hegel | Victor Hugo, <em>Notre Dame de Paris</em> | |
| 1832 Death of Bentham | Clausewitz, <em>Vom Kriege</em> | |
| 1833 Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey | Pushkin, <em>Eugene Onegin</em> | Abolition of slavery in the British Empire |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
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<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Th e first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<td>1837</td>
<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Birth of Hermann Cohen</td>
<td>Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)</td>
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<td>1844</td>
<td>Marx writes <em>Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts</em></td>
<td>Alexandre Dumas, <em>The Count of Monte Cristo</em></td>
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<td>1846</td>
<td>Kierkegaard, <em>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</em></td>
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<td>1847</td>
<td>Boole, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>On the Conservation of Force</em></td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Birth of Wilhelm Windelband</td>
<td>Publication of the <em>Communist Manifesto</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the French Second Republic</td>
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<td>1852</td>
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<td>Napoleon III declares the Second Empire</td>
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<td>1853</td>
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<td>(–1856) Crimean War</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>Birth of Paul Natorp</td>
<td>H. D. Thoreau, <em>Walden</em></td>
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<td>1855</td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>Über das Sehen des Menschen</em></td>
<td>Walt Whitman, <em>Leaves of Grass</em></td>
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<td>1856</td>
<td>Birth of Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>1858</td>
<td>Birth of Émile Durkheim</td>
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<td>1861</td>
<td>Johann Jakob Bachofen, <em>Das Mutterrecht</em></td>
<td>Tsar Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
<td>Political Events</td>
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<td>1862</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, <em>Les Misérables</em></td>
<td>Édouard Manet, <em>Olympia</em></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>(-1869) Leo Tolstoy, <em>War and Peace</em></td>
<td>The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1866</td>
<td>Lange, <em>Die Geschichte des Materialismus</em></td>
<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Crime and Punishment</em></td>
<td>The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Marx, <em>Das Kapital, vol. I</em></td>
<td>Birth of Émile Chartier (&quot;Alain&quot;)</td>
<td>Completion of the Suez Canal</td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>Birth of Émile Chartier (&quot;Alain&quot;)</td>
<td>Creation of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)</td>
<td>(-1871) Franco-Prussian War Establishment of the Third Republic</td>
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<td>1870</td>
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<td>Paris Commune</td>
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<td>1871</td>
<td>Cohen, <em>Kants Theorie der Erfahrung</em></td>
<td>Darwin, <em>The Descent of Man</em></td>
<td>End of German Occupation following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>Birth of Marcel Mauss</td>
<td>Eliot, <em>Middlemarch</em></td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>Death of Mill</td>
<td>(-1877) Tolstoy, <em>Anna Karenina</em></td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>Birth of Ernst Cassirer and Max Scheler</td>
<td>First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Berthe Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley)</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>Birth of Emil Lask</td>
<td>Premiere of Georges Bizet’s <em>Carmen</em></td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>Death of Lange</td>
<td>Death of George Sand (Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin)</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Cohen, <em>Kants Begründung der Ethik</em></td>
<td>Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Frege, <em>Begriffsschrift</em></td>
<td>Henrik Ibsen, <em>A Doll’s House</em></td>
<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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<td>Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle</td>
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<td>1882</td>
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<td>Thomas Edison exhibits his first incandescent light bulb</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Jaspers and José Ortega y Gasset</td>
<td>Premiere of Wagner’s <em>Parsifal</em> in Bayreuth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Death of Marx</td>
<td>Cantor, “Foundations of a General Theory of Aggregates”</td>
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<td>Dilthey, <em>Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(~1885) Nietzsche, <em>Also Sprach Zarathustra</em></td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>Birth of Gaston Bachelard, Frege, <em>Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik</em></td>
<td>Mark Twain, <em>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</em></td>
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<td>Windelband, <em>Präludien</em></td>
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<td>1886</td>
<td>Nietzsche, <em>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</em></td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>Nietzsche, <em>Zur Genealogie der Moral</em></td>
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<td>1888</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Wahl</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein</td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Birth of Rudolf Carnap, Fritz Kaufmann, and Edith Stein</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung”</td>
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<td>Rickert, <em>Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis</em></td>
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<td>1893</td>
<td>Birth of Roman Ingarden, Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1894</td>
<td>Natorp, <em>Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der Humanität</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1894</td>
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<td>Captian Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>1895 Birth of Max Horkheimer and Felix Kaufmann</td>
<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of projected motion pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896 Bergson, <em>Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit</em></td>
<td>Athens hosts the first Olympic Games of the modern era</td>
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<td>1897 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
<td>Durkheim, <em>Le Suicide</em></td>
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<td>1898 Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
<td>Zola, article &quot;J'accuse&quot; in defense of Dreyfus</td>
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<td>1899 Rickert, <em>Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft</em></td>
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<td>Start of the Second Boer War</td>
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<td>1901 Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
<td>Death of Herbert Spencer</td>
<td>Planck formulates quantum theory</td>
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<td>1903 Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavaillès</td>
<td>Natork, <em>Platons Ideenlehre</em></td>
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<td>1905 Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor</td>
<td>The Dreyfus Affair ends when the French Court of Appeals exonerates Dreyfus of all charges</td>
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<td>1906 Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d'Avignon</em></td>
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<td>1907 Birth of Jean Hyppolite</td>
<td>Death of Octave Hamelin Bergson, <em>L'Évolution créatrice</em></td>
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<td>1908 Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. Quine</td>
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<td>1910 Cassirer, <em>Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff</em></td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911 Death of Dilthey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lask, <em>Die Logik der Philosophie und die Kategorienlehre</em></td>
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<td>Victor Delbos, first French journal article on Husserl: “Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d’une Logique pure” in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1912 H. Cohen, <em>Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls</em></td>
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<td>Natorp, <em>Allgemeine Psychologie</em></td>
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<td>1913 Birth of Albert Camus and Paul Ricoeur</td>
<td>Freud, <em>Totem and Taboo</em></td>
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<td>Husserl, <em>Ideen I</em></td>
<td>Marcel Proust (1871–1922), <em>Swann’s Way</em>, the first volume of <em>Remembrance of Things Past</em></td>
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<td>Jaspers, <em>Allgemeine Psychopathologie</em></td>
<td>First performance of Stravinsky’s <em>Rite of Spring</em></td>
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<td>Scheler, <em>Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik</em></td>
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<td>Unamuno, <em>Del sentimiento tragic de la vida</em></td>
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<td>1914 Death of Charles Sanders Peirce</td>
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<td>Ortega y Gasset, <em>Meditaciones del Quijote</em></td>
<td>Germany invades France</td>
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<td>1915 Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<td>Death of Lask and Windelband</td>
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<td>1916 Saussure, <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
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<td>1917 Death of Durkheim</td>
<td>Lenin, <em>State and Revolution</em></td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1918 Birth of Louis Althusser</td>
<td>First World War ends</td>
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<td>Death of Georg Cantor, H. Cohen, Lachelier, and Georg Simmel</td>
<td>Proclamation of the Weimar Republic</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) founds the Bauhaus School</td>
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<td>1920 Death of Weber</td>
<td>Freud, <em>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</em></td>
<td>Ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution extends suffrage to women</td>
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<td>1921 Rosenzweig, <em>Der Stern der Erlösung</em></td>
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<td>1921 Rosenzweig, <em>Der Stern der Erlösung</em></td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>Scheler, <em>Wesen und Formen der Sympathie</em>&lt;br&gt;Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded (and 1925, 1929) Cassirer, <em>Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen</em> (3 vols)</td>
<td>Freud, <em>The Ego and the Id</em>&lt;br&gt;Kahlil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>Birth of Jean-François Lyotard&lt;br&gt;Death of Natorp&lt;br&gt;Brunschvicg, <em>Le Progrès de la Conscience dans la Philosophie Occidentale</em>&lt;br&gt;Sartre, Raymond Aron, Paul Nizan, Georges Canguilhem, and Daniel Lagache enter the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>André Breton, <em>Le Manifeste du surréalisme</em>&lt;br&gt;Thomas Mann, <em>The Magic Mountain</em>&lt;br&gt;Death of Vladimir Lenin</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze, and Frantz Fanon&lt;br&gt;Death of Frege&lt;br&gt;Mauss, <em>Essai sur le don</em></td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>The Trial</em>&lt;br&gt;First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Birth of Michel Foucault&lt;br&gt;Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl's phenomenology: <em>Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</em></td>
<td>The film <em>Metropolis</em> by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin&lt;br&gt;The Bauhaus school building, designed by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Sein und Zeit</em>&lt;br&gt;Marcel, <em>Journal métaphysique</em></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, <em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
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<td><strong>1929</strong></td>
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<td>Birth of Jürgen Habermas</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway, <em>A Farewell to Arms</em></td>
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<td>Heidegger, <em>Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik</em> and <em>Was ist Metaphysik?</em></td>
<td>Erich Maria Remarque, <em>All Quiet on the Western Front</em></td>
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<td>Husserl, <em>Formale und transzendentale Logik</em></td>
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<td>Wahl, <em>Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel</em></td>
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<td>Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne</td>
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<td><strong>1930</strong></td>
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<td>Birth of Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Félix Guattari, Luce Irigaray, and Michel Serres</td>
<td>Freud, <em>Civilization and its Discontents</em></td>
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<td>Levinas, <em>La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl</em></td>
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<td>Rickert, <em>Die Logik des Prädikats und das Problem der Ontologie</em></td>
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<td><strong>1931</strong></td>
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<td>Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s <em>Cartesian Meditations</em></td>
<td>Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems</td>
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<td>Husserl’s <em>Ideas</em> is translated into English</td>
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<td><strong>1932</strong></td>
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<td>Birth of Stuart Hall</td>
<td>Aldous Huxley, <em>Brave New World</em></td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion</em></td>
<td>BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK</td>
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<td><strong>1933</strong></td>
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<td>Death of Émile Meyerson Cassirer, Cohn, Höningwald, and Marck are dismissed from their university positions owing to the new Nazi civil service law, which declares Jews as non-Germans</td>
<td>André Malraux, <em>Man’s Fate</em></td>
<td>Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany</td>
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<td>(–1934) Heidegger becomes Rector at Freiburg University</td>
<td>Gertrude Stein, <em>The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas</em></td>
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<td>(–1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études University in Exile founded as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>Penguin publishes its first paperback</td>
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<td>Sartre, “La Transcendance de l’égó” in <em>Recherches philosophiques</em></td>
<td>First issue of <em>Life Magazine</em></td>
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<td>1937</td>
<td>Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Picasso, <em>Guernica</em></td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>Death of Husserl</td>
<td>Sartre, <em>La Nausée</em></td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium</td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em></td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3)</td>
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<td>Founding of <em>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</em> (–1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em></td>
<td>John Steinbeck, <em>The Grapes of Wrath</em></td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Death of Bergson, Marcuse, <em>Reason and Revolution</em></td>
<td>Death of Joyce, Arthur Koestler, <em>Darkness at Noon</em></td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and the US enters the Second World War Germany invades the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>1941</td>
<td>Birth of Étienne Balibar, Death of Edith Stein, Camus, <em>L’Étranger</em> and <em>Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l’absurde</em></td>
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<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>La Structure du comportement</em></td>
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<td>Lévi-Strauss meets Roman Jakobson at the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York</td>
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<td>1942</td>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>Death of Simone Weil, Farber, <em>The Foundations of Phenomenology</em></td>
<td>Herman Hesse, <em>The Glass Bead Game</em></td>
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<td>Sartre, <em>L’Être et le néant</em></td>
<td>Ayn Rand, <em>The Fountainhead</em></td>
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<td>Jean Genet, <em>Our Lady of the Flowers</em></td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>Death of Cassirer</td>
<td>George Orwell, <em>Animal Farm</em></td>
<td>End of the Second World War in Germany (May)</td>
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<td>1945 Merleau-Ponty, <em>Phénoménologie de la perception</em></td>
<td>Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of <em>Les Temps modernes</em></td>
<td>Atom bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of war in Japan (September) Establishment of the United Nations</td>
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<td>1950 Death of Mauss Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl’s <em>Ideas I</em></td>
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<td>Beginning of the Korean War</td>
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<td>1952 Death of Dewey and Santayana Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Samuel Beckett, <em>Waiting for Godot</em> Ralph Ellison, <em>Invisible Man</em></td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>Crick and Watson construct the first model of DNA</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>Jaspers and Bultmann, <em>Die Frage der Entmythologisierung</em>&lt;br&gt;Lyotard, <em>La Phénoménologie</em>&lt;br&gt;Scheler, <em>The Nature of Sympathy</em>, appears in English translation</td>
<td>Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20)&lt;br&gt;Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Marcuse, <em>Eros and Civilization</em>&lt;br&gt;Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
<td>Vladimir Nabokov, <em>Lolita</em></td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>Sartre's <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td>Hungarian Revolution and Soviet invasion&lt;br&gt;The French colonies of Morocco and Tunisia gain independence</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em>&lt;br&gt;Founding of <em>Philosophy Today</em></td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em>&lt;br&gt;Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community&lt;br&gt;The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Günter Grass, <em>The Tin Drum</em></td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Death of Camus&lt;br&gt;Gadamer, <em>Wahrheit und Methode</em>&lt;br&gt;Sartre, <em>Critique de la raison dialectique</em></td>
<td>First issue of the journal <em>Tel Quel</em> is published&lt;br&gt;The birth control pill is made available to married women</td>
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<td>1960</td>
<td>Spiegelberg, <em>The Phenomenological Movement</em></td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>Death of Merleau-Ponty</td>
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<td>Erection of the Berlin Wall</td>
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<td>Derrida, <em>Introduction to Edmund Husserl: L’Origine de la géométrie</em></td>
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<td>Bay of Pigs failed invasion of Cuba</td>
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<td>Fanon, <em>Les Damnés de la terre</em>, with a preface by Sartre</td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique</em></td>
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<td>Heidegger, <em>Nietzsche</em></td>
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<td>Levinas, <em>Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité</em></td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Death of Bachelard</td>
<td>Rachel Carson, <em>Silent Spring</em></td>
<td>France grants independence to Algeria</td>
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<td>Deleuze, <em>Nietzsche et la philosophie</em></td>
<td>Ken Kesey, <em>One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest</em></td>
<td>Cuban Missile Crisis</td>
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<td>Thomas Kuhn, <em>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</em></td>
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<td>Lévi-Strauss, <em>La Pensée sauvage</em></td>
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<td>Heidegger, <em>Being and Time</em></td>
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<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>Phenomenology of Perception</em></td>
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<td>appears in English translation</td>
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<td>First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University</td>
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<td>The first artificial heart is implanted</td>
<td>Assassination of John F. Kennedy</td>
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<td>Marcus, <em>One-Dimensional Man</em></td>
<td>The Beatles appear on <em>The Ed Sullivan Show</em></td>
<td>US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin</td>
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<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>Le Visible et l’invisible</em> (posthumous)</td>
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<td>1965</td>
<td>Death of Buber</td>
<td>Truman Capote, <em>In Cold Blood</em></td>
<td>Assassination of Malcolm X</td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>Madness and Civilization</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>Ricoeur, <em>De l’interprétation: Essai sur Freud</em></td>
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<td>Deleuze, <em>Le Bergsonisme</em></td>
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<td>Lacan, <em>Écrits</em></td>
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<td><em>Star Trek</em> premiers on US television</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Derrida, <em>De la grammaalogie, La Voix et le phénomène, and L’Écriture et la différence</em></td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em></td>
<td>Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall, first African American Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<td>Neil Armstrong is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
<td>Assassination of Martin Luther King</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Death of Adorno and Jaspers</td>
<td>Woodstock Music and Art Fair</td>
<td>Stonewall riots launch the Gay Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>Deleuze, <em>Logique du sens</em> Foucault, <em>L’Archéologie du savoir</em></td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Death of Carnap</td>
<td>Millett, <em>Sexual Politics</em> Founding of <em>Diacritics</em> First Earth Day</td>
<td>Shootings at Kent State University</td>
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<td>Adorno, <em>Ästhetische Theorie</em> Foucault, <em>The Order of Things</em> appears in English translation Husserl, <em>The Crisis of European Philosophy</em> appears in English translation Foucault elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France Ricoeur begins teaching at the University of Chicago Founding of the <em>Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology</em></td>
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<td>Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Lyotard, <em>Discours, figure</em> Founding of <em>Research in Phenomenology</em></td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>End of the gold standard for US dollar</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>Death of John Wild</td>
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<td>Watergate break-in</td>
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| 1972 | Bourdieu, *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*  
Deleuze and Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 1. L’Anti-Oedipe*  
Derrida, *La Dissémination, Marges de la philosophie, and Positions*  
*Radical Philosophy* begins publication  
Colloquium on Nietzsche at Cerisy | Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*  
(1978) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*  
*Roe v. Wade* legalizes abortion | President Richard Nixon visits China, beginning the normalization of relations between the US and PRC |
| 1973 | Death of Horkheimer  
Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* appears in English translation  
Lacan publishes the first volume of his *Séminaire* | Derrida, *Glas*  
*Irigaray, Speculum: De l’autre femme*  
*Kristeva, La Révolution du langage poétique*  
*Levinas, Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* | Chilean military coup ousts and kills President Salvador Allende |
| 1974 | Derrida, *Glas*  
*Irigaray, Speculum: De l’autre femme*  
*Kristeva, La Révolution du langage poétique*  
*Levinas, Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* | *Founding of Critical Inquiry*  
*Creation of the first doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous* | Resignation of Nixon |
| 1975 | Death of Arendt  
Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*  
*Irigaray, Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un*  
*Foundation of GREPH, the Groupe de Recherches sur l’Enseignement Philosophique* | *Signs* begins publication  
*The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* | Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize  
Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War  
Death of Franco  
First US–USSR joint space mission |
| 1976 | Death of Bultmann and Heidegger  
Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La Volonté de savoir*  
Derrida, *Of Grammatology* appears in English translation  
*Barthes is elected to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France* | *Foundation of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature* | Death of Mao Zedong  
Uprising in Soweto |
<p>| 1977 | Death of Ernst Bloch | 240 Czech intellectuals sign <em>Charter 77</em> | Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel |</p>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>CULTURAL EVENTS</th>
<th>POLITICAL EVENTS</th>
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| 1977 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* appears in English translation  
| 1978 | Death of Kurt Gödel  
Arendt, *Life of the Mind*  
Derrida, *La Vérité en peinture* | Edward Said, *Orientalism*  
Birmingham School: Centre for Contemporary Culture releases *Policing the Crisis*  
Louise Brown becomes the first test-tube baby | Camp David Accords |
| 1979 | Death of Marcuse  
Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*  
Lytard, *La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir*  
Prigogine and Stengers, *La Nouvelle alliance*  
The first cognitive sciences department is established at MIT | Iranian Revolution  
Iran Hostage Crisis begins  
Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister of the UK (the first woman to be a European head of state)  
Nicaraguan Revolution |
| 1980 | Death of Barthes and Sartre  
Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*  
Deleuze and Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 2. Mille plateaux*  
Derrida, *La Carte postale*  
Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*  
Murder of John Lennon  
Cable News Network (CNN) becomes the first television station to provide twenty-four-hour news coverage | Election of Ronald Reagan as US president  
Solidarity movement begins in Poland  
Death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito |
| 1981 | Death of Lacan  
Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handeln*  
Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France | First cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US  
Debut of MTV | Release of American hostages in Iran  
François Mitterrand is elected as the first socialist president of France's Fifth Republic  
Confirmation of Sandra Day O'Connor, first woman Justice, to the US Supreme Court |
| 1982 | Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt | Debut of the Weather Channel | Falklands War |
| 1983 | Death of Aron  
Lyotard, *Le Différend* | Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*  
Founding of Hypatia |  |
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<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Davidson, <em>Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation</em></td>
<td>Milan Kundera, <em>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</em></td>
<td>Year-long strike of the National Union of Mineworkers in the UK</td>
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<td>Irigaray, <em>Éthique de la différence sexuelle</em></td>
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<td>Lloyd, <em>The Man of Reason</em></td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>First complete translation into French of Heidegger's <em>Sein und Zeit</em></td>
<td>Don Delillo, <em>White Noise</em></td>
<td>Mikhail Gorbachev is named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Habermas, <em>Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne</em></td>
<td>Gabriel García Márquez, <em>Love in the Time of Cholera</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Irigaray’s <em>Speculum of the Other Woman</em> and <em>This Sex Which Is Not One</em> appear in English translation</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Death of Beauvoir</td>
<td>Art Spiegelman, <em>Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale</em></td>
<td>Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR</td>
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<td>Deleuze, <em>Foucault</em></td>
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<td>Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines</td>
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<td>Establishment of the Archives Husserl de Paris at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>Derrida begins his appointment as Visiting Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine</td>
<td>Toni Morrison, <em>Beloved</em></td>
<td>In June, Gorbachev inaugurates the perestroika (restructuring) that led to the end of the USSR</td>
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<td>Discovery of Paul de Man’s wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America</td>
<td>The First Intifada begins in the Gaza Strip and West Bank</td>
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<td>1987</td>
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<td>Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>Death of Sellars</td>
<td>Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska</td>
<td>Fall of the Berlin Wall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guattari, <em>Les Trois Ecologies</em></td>
<td>Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web</td>
<td>Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing</td>
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<td>Heidegger, <em>Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)</em></td>
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<td>Žižek, <em>The Sublime Object of Ideology</em></td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Death of Althusser</td>
<td>The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela is released from prison</td>
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<td>Butler, <em>Gender Trouble</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the Human Genome Project, headed by James D. Watson</td>
<td>Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland</td>
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<td>Reunification of Germany</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars Sandinistas are voted out of power after ten years of war against the US-backed Contras</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?</em></td>
<td>Fredric Jameson, <em>Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</em> The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet</td>
<td>First Gulf War begins Election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president of Haiti</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Death of Guattari Guattari, <em>Chaosmose</em></td>
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<td>Guattari runs unsuccessfully as a regional Green Party candidate in France Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union Dissolution of the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Gilroy, <em>Black Atlantic</em></td>
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<td>Dissolution of Czechoslovakia; Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic Pablo Escobar, Colombian drug lord, is killed</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze and Levinas</td>
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<td>End of Bosnian War World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>Cloning of Dolly the sheep (died 2003)</td>
<td>Death of Mitterrand</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Death of Lyotard Dussel, <em>Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión</em></td>
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<td>Socialist–Green Coalition under Helmut Schmidt in Germany</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Spivak, <em>A Critique of Postcolonial Reason</em> Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Iris Murdoch</td>
<td>Introduction of the Euro Antiglobalization forces disrupt the WTO meeting in Seattle</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Death of Quine&lt;br&gt;Negri and Hardt, <em>Empire</em></td>
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<td>The Second Intifada</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Death of Bourdieu and Gadamer</td>
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<td>Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is elected president of Brazil</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Death of Blanchot and Davidson Completion of the Human Genome Project</td>
<td>Start of the Second Gulf War Start of conflict in Darfur</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Death of Derrida Asian tsunami</td>
<td>Madrid train bombings</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Death of Ricoeur Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>Bombings of the London public transport system</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>Badiou, <em>Logiques des mondes. L’Être et l’événement, 2.</em></td>
<td>Evo Morales is elected president of Bolivia Bombings of the Mumbai train system</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Death of Jean Baudrillard and Rorty</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>Election of Barack Obama, the first African American president of the US</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Death of Lévi-Strauss</td>
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THE HISTORY OF
CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition’s complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations—materialism and existentialism—that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology—between conscious experience and structural conditions—lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology—notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger—as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School.
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s *On Bentham and Coleridge* (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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INTRODUCTION
Leonard Lawlor

In the three decades covered by this volume, Husserl’s rallying cry for phenomenology – “to the things themselves” – takes on new meaning. It must. This is the period that sees the rise of Nazi Germany, which results not only in the devastation of the Second World War, but also in the Cold War opposition between the United States and the Soviet Union. History forces philosophers to require that the things themselves be concrete. No longer is it possible for phenomenological descriptions to be concerned with the abstractions of logic, no longer with idealities, no longer with a subject removed from situations. Now, they must be oriented toward the real problems of existence. In his 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty expresses this shift best: “Husserl’s originality lies beyond the notion of intentionality; it is to be found … in the discovery, beneath the intentionality of representations, of a deeper intentionality, which others have called existence.”1 Hence it is the movement of existentialism that dominates this period. Of course, along with Merleau-Ponty, the central figures of existentialism are Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger. All three develop “ontologies,” that is, attempts to define what it means to exist. In the process of developing an answer to the question of the meaning of being, the tasks of philosophy and literature, especially in France, come to coincide. As we see in Sartre’s novels and plays, both philosophy and literature are able to express existence. The identification of the tasks of philosophy and literature leads to a transformation of aesthetics. Instead of being a limited field of philosophical investigation, aesthetics refers us to a

primary experience – the experience of art – through which we are able to gain access to existence. Here Merleau-Ponty’s “Eye and Mind” and Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art” take on particular importance. As we see in these two texts, artworks are events in which a “world” (Heidegger’s terminology) is “instituted” (Merleau-Ponty’s terminology). Because of the artwork’s event character, it turns out that what most defines existence for Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty is history. The fact that human existence is fundamentally historical leads Heidegger in particular (and already in his 1927 *Being and Time*) to appropriate the nineteenth-century theories of interpretation called “hermeneutics.” Therefore, just as aesthetics no longer refers simply to a field of investigation, hermeneutics no longer refers to the interpretation of ancient texts. Hermeneutics becomes philosophical.

By themselves, however, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre do not define this period. Throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, other movements are fueled by and run parallel to these three great thinkers. Both Sartre’s and Heidegger’s philosophies assert atheism. This assertion results not only in a kind of “existential theology,” but also in a reconsideration of religion (both Christian and Jewish religion). While the drive for the concrete calls forth strong political statements from Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, we find nothing like an ethics in their works (at least in their published works) nor in the works of Heidegger. A figure working in relative obscurity over this thirty year period, Emmanuel Levinas, therefore criticizes Heidegger for having overlooked the fundamental status of ethics. Also stemming from Husserl’s work, in particular his work in the phenomenology of mathematics, and bypassing Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger, the philosophy of the concept develops during the same years when existentialism first comes on the scene. Although we cannot deny the abstractness of this philosophy, it falls under the category of concreteness because it wants to conceive not the static forms of mathematics, but the way mathematics develops or becomes. As the near coincidence of philosophy and literature indicates, problems of expression accompany the experiences of the concrete. Logical positivism and neo-Kantianism, the seeds of what today we call “analytic philosophy,” bring these problems of expression to the fore. As we can see already, the period from 1930 to 1960 has focal points, but around these focal points there are diverse trajectories. And all of them emanate from the drive to concreteness. The new meaning for the phenomenological slogan is indeed announced by the title of Jean Wahl’s 1932 book, *Vers le concret* (Toward the concrete). But it is also important to recall that Wahl was among the first to introduce Hegel’s thought into France.
Prior to this period, there was little interest in Hegel's thought in France. It was dominated by Bergsonism and neo-Kantianism. But as German phenomenology – Husserl and Heidegger – started to dominate, French philosophers looked to another great phenomenologist of an earlier German tradition. From the 1930s to the end of the 1950s we are in the period of the “three H’s”: Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. To French thinkers, Hegel appeared to anticipate ideas found in Husserl and Heidegger. Although Husserl had developed his phenomenological slogan in opposition to metaphysical speculation such as it is found in German idealism, Hegel had already tried to turn philosophy strictly to the things themselves. Merleau-Ponty, for instance, recognizes the principal idea of Hegel's phenomenology: the sense of things must not be determined by an external and static faculty of reason; the sense of things must emerge from the things' own dynamism. But the French philosophers of this period also recognized that Hegel's thought provides an alternative to Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology. Especially in Husserl's idealist version of trans-cendental subjectivity, one could not find the struggle through which existence, human existence, became meaningful. For Wahl however, Hegel's thought is completely concerned with overcoming “unhappy consciousness,” that is, the consciousness of the difference between what one is and what one wants to be, the difference, for instance, between one's desire for freedom and the fact that one is enslaved. Through this interpretation of Hegel’s thought, Wahl opened the way for history to be conceived as the search for meaning. While Wahl focuses on the “Unhappy Consciousness” section of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, Alexandre Kojève focuses on the “Lordship and Bondage” section. Indeed, the dialectic presented here (which resonated with Heidegger's descriptions of “being-with” in Being and Time) powerfully influenced French philosophy of the 1940s. Through Kojève's famous lectures, it appeared to Sartre and Merleau-Ponty that human life consists in an interpersonal struggle; self-consciousness is the desire that the other recognize one's freedom. However as the 1940s came to a close, another Hegel commentator appeared, Jean Hyppolite. Hyppolite tries to show that Hegel's thought was not existential in the popular sense and especially not anthropological, as Kojève had believed. Like the later Merleau-Ponty, whose philosophy started to resemble Heidegger's more and more, Hyppolite shows that Hegel's thought is concerned with the meaning of being, with a foundation below

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and beyond human existence. The impact of Hyppolite’s reading of Hegel would not really appear until the 1960s, when existentialism would start to fade with the advent of structuralism. Stressing Hegel’s concept of difference, Hyppolite’s Logic and Existence would resonate with the main idea that drives structuralism, Ferdinand de Saussure’s view of language as a system of differences, to which we will return below when discussing his influence on the later Merleau-Ponty.

In the 1940s, however, existentialism dominates the French scene. Although there are many figures associated with the movement, Sartre is its center. Sartrean existentialism is at once indebted to Husserlian phenomenology and breaks with it. On the one hand, as with the slogan of “to the things themselves,” the phenomenological method of description calls for concrete descriptions; on the other, phenomenology seems bound up with vestiges of Cartesian thought. It is in his 1936–37 essay The Transcendence of the Ego, that Sartre attempts to show that anything like a Cartesian ego is unnecessary. For Sartre, the ego must be transcended since the “I” that thinks is unsubstantial and spontaneous. The elimination of anything like a substantial ego, as some sort of fixed entity, sets up the dualism that animates Sartre’s major work Being and Nothingness (1943). As the title indicates, there is being, meaning brute reality that does not have the capacity to negate itself and thereby become self-aware; simply being is, and it remains in itself; it is full positivity. But, in contrast to “being-in-itself,” there is consciousness, which has the capacity to negate, and to negate even its own determinations, by means of which it becomes conscious of itself and therefore “for-itself.” Having the capacity to negate any determination of itself, human consciousness is, for Sartre, nothingness. From this dualism, many famous and interesting analyses unfold, including the structure of bad faith and the description of concrete relations with others with its poles of sadism and masochism. But what is most famous and controversial in Being and Nothingness – and what is most indicative of this moment of continental philosophy – is the notion of absolute freedom. A notion already anticipated in The Transcendence of the Ego, absolute freedom refers to the spontaneous movement of the “for-itself.” For Sartre, the evidence for absolute freedom of the “for-itself” or self-consciousness lies in the fact that we ask questions. Questions essentially contain the possibility of a negative reply. As Sartre says in Being and Nothingness, “It is essential therefore that the questioner have the permanent possibility of dissociating himself from the causal series.” But this dissociation has a further implication for Sartre. Alluding to Husserl’s epoché (the “putting out of circuit” or suspension in the belief in the natural determinations of things), he says:

5. Ibid., 58.
For man to put a particular existent out of circuit is to put himself out of circuit in relation to the existent. In this case he is not subject to it; he is out of reach; it cannot act on him, for he has retired beyond a nothingness. Descartes … has given a name to this possibility which human reality has to secrete a nothingness which isolates it – it is freedom.  

This “ontological freedom” (not political freedom) implies therefore that there is no determinism, like the natural causation of actions. But it also implies that I am not, my being is not, any of the natural properties I seem to have. If there is no determinism and how I find myself is not what I am, then I am totally responsible for myself, for my actions, and for the world conditioned by my actions. Total responsibility is a crushing experience, which Sartre expresses by saying that human reality is “condemned to be free.” It is this condemnation and the anxiety of total responsibility that we see portrayed in Sartre’s many literary works. Although a philosophical movement, the immense popularity of existentialism undoubtedly stemmed from its literature. If existentialism is generally defined by the concern to describe concrete experience as it is lived, and not the abstract idealization of science and traditional philosophy, then literature must portray this project. Here Camus’s novels are exemplary. There is no question that in his 1942 novel The Stranger, Camus portrays a universe “divested of illusions and lights.” Without such illusions, human reality experiences itself as “an alien, a stranger.” Although Merleau-Ponty, unlike Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus, never wrote a literary text, he sums up this close association between philosophy and literature when he says, “From now on, the tasks of literature and philosophy can no longer be separated.” This association between philosophy and literature led to a transformation of the field of aesthetics.

II. AESTHETICS AND HERMENEUTICS: MERLEAU-PONTY AND HEIDEGGER

It is important to hear the double sense of the word “aesthetics.” On the one hand, it refers to the investigation of artworks, of the history of art (painting, poetry, literature); on the other, taking the word in a more literal sense (aisthesis:  

6. Ibid., 60.  
sensation), it refers to experience. During this period then, aesthetics is no longer a limited field of philosophical investigation distinguished, say, from metaphysics or ethics. Instead, it becomes “ontological.” In other words, the experience of the artwork becomes the fundamental means of access to the meaning of being. The experience of the artwork takes on this role because in it one experiences a thing not as relative to human use; one experiences it as something still to be determined, in a word, as something new. As we just mentioned, the existentialist movement is inseparable from a literary movement. However, one of the many debates Merleau-Ponty had with Sartre concerned the very function of literature. Through this debate, we can see the transformation of aesthetics more precisely.

Although cofounders – along with Simone de Beauvoir – of the journal *Les Temps modernes* and at times close friends, the relationship between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty was not tranquil. Already in the 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty had criticized Sartre’s concept of freedom. But the 1947 publication of *What is Literature* brought Sartre into conflict with Merleau-Ponty’s views on art and language. For Sartre, the center of literature is the writer who in the clarity of thought uses language as a means for communication. In his prose writing, the writer informs readers of the conditions of the world so that the readers become responsible and committed to political action. Importantly, Sartre classifies poetry with painting as arts that do not produce meanings, which therefore do not communicate. Even more he subordinates silence to words. In contrast, for Merleau-Ponty, whose 1951 “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” (his last publication in *Les Temps modernes*) is a kind of response to Sartre, the center of literature is not the conscious author who has clear intentions to communicate. Always for Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not spontaneous; it is based on a thick past that continues to have effects in the present. Merleau-Ponty understands this past in a variety of ways. Having been the first of many French philosophers to appropriate Saussure’s linguistics, Merleau-Ponty sees that a system of language is based on a series of diacritical differences (the differences between phonemes for example). Any act of speaking (or of writing) is able to function and produce meaningful effects only through these differences. These differences, however, are themselves never spoken. There is no other conclusion than the fact that speaking or writing is based on silences. These silences that have never been spoken give language a latency that the artist is able to express. Hence the title of Merleau-Ponty’s essay. The language of poetry and literature is “indirect,” pointing to that which has never been spoken; the artist’s voice is “the voice of silence.” Although Merleau-Ponty writes about literature, his real interest seems to lie in painting.10 Merleau-

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10. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Metaphysics and the Novel” and “A Scandalous Author,” in *Sense and Non-Sense*, 26–40 and 41–47. “Metaphysics and the Novel” extensively describes
Ponty is a philosopher of perception, and painting concerns nothing but vision. As he says, and this comment is in direct contrast to Sartre:

Art and especially painting draw from this pool of brute sense, about which activism wants to know nothing. Art and painting alone do this in full innocence. From the writer and the philosopher, we want opinions and advice. ... Only the painter is entitled to gaze upon everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees.  

We just quoted from Merleau-Ponty’s key text in aesthetics, “Eye and Mind.” In it, Merleau-Ponty claims that painting is an expression of vision, not the vision that sets up an object over there, nor the vision that classifies and divides; painting expresses the vision that participates in world. What is the nature of this participation? Merleau-Ponty realizes that since vision is always vision from the eyes, since it is carnal vision or even fleshy vision, vision is made of the same “stuff” as what is seen. Made of the same stuff, vision sees itself: the eyes that see can also be seen. Thus there is a sort of mirroring relation in this vision. On the one hand, the mirroring relation means that there is no subject–object separation here. On the other hand, and more importantly, the mirroring relation means that just as there is an interior to my vision, that is, there is a kind of invisibility in me that you cannot see (and vice versa, an interior life in you that I cannot see), likewise there is a kind of interiority or invisibility to all visible things. Hence the mirroring relation implies the title of Merleau-Ponty’s last and unfinished work, The Visible and the Invisible. Painting continues the work of vision’s attempt to bring this invisibility into the visible. Insofar as it continues this work of vision, painting is a kind of institution. It institutes a tradition, in which each painting stands as one of the attempts to bring the latency, the shadows, and the textures of things to visibility. Each painting therefore says something new, which itself institutes more possibilities for expressing the invisible. For Merleau-Ponty, the tradition of painting is never done. These are the final words of “Eye and Mind”:

For if we cannot establish a hierarchy of civilizations or speak of progress – neither in painting nor even elsewhere – it is not because some fate impedes us; it is, rather, that in a sense the very first

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Beauvoir’s novel She Came to Stay (L’Invitée), while “A Scandalous Author” defends Sartre’s literary writings. It is important to recognize, however, that this volume opens with a text on painting, “Cézanne’s Doubt.”

painting went to the farthest reach of the future. If no painting completes painting, if no work even is itself absolutely completed, each creation changes, alters, clarifies, deepens, confirms, exalts, re-creates, or creates in advance all the others. If creations are not acquisitions, it is not just that, like all things, they pass away; it is also that they have almost their entire lives before them.12

Hermeneutics – the nineteenth-century approach to interpreting ancient texts – had already recognized that artworks “have almost their entire lives before them.” But with Heidegger, just as aesthetics becomes ontological, hermeneutics becomes philosophical. Indeed, more than the thought of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, it is Heidegger’s thought that defines this period for the continental tradition. His influence cannot be measured, even today. In Being and Time, Heidegger had announced that phenomenology must become hermeneutical. With this announcement, Heidegger meant that the very concept of the phenomenon had to be rethought. It could not be conceived as something simply present before my gaze. Instead, going back to the ancient Greek word for truth, “a-lētheia,” Heidegger defines the phenomenon as un-concealment. For Heidegger, the hyphen in the literal meaning of “alētheia” implies that phenomena in general tend to conceal and hide themselves. Therefore, since the phenomenon is not simply given, it requires a process of making manifest. This process of bringing to light is interpretation (hermeneuein). In Being and Time, interpretation is based on understanding. For Heidegger, understanding is our basic relation to the world; no knowledge, not even philosophy, is possible without understanding. Yet, unlike Husserl’s desire to make phenomenology a “rigorous science,” Heidegger sees that understanding can never be presuppositionless. Understanding always involves what he calls a “fore-structure,” that is, a structure set up earlier, before. In other words, human existence (Dasein13) always finds itself already with, and is always already using, a set of concepts and projects through which it deals with the world. In short, human existence always finds itself with prejudices. Finding ourselves with preset ways of understanding

12. Ibid., 378.
13. The term “Dasein” is highly charged in Heidegger’s writings. Normally the term would be translated into English as “existence.” But frequently Heidegger hyphenates the term as “Da-Sein” to show that existence always finds itself with a dis-position, positioned in a “Da” (in a “there”); the hyphen is always supposed to indicate that existence is where (again “Da”) Being (“Sein”) happens, the un-concealment that occurs with understanding. Finally, while Heidegger stresses that Dasein cannot be conceived biologically or anthropologically and therefore seems to be distinguished from the human, the only example Heidegger gives of Dasein is human Dasein. That the human is the sole example explains why I have used here the phrase “human existence” to render “Dasein.” I have also done this in order to remove some of the mystery from the German word “Dasein.”
the world, our expectations about the world always seem to be confirmed. We seem to find what we already knew, as if our understanding were moving in a circle. Heidegger calls this confirmation “the hermeneutic circle.” But here both prejudices and the hermeneutic circle – this claim will become explicit in Gadamer’s 1960 *Truth and Method* – do not have a negative value. The “prejudices” provide a framework within which to interpret. But, more importantly, the interpretation must be a “working out” of the prejudices. That is, the interpretation makes the prejudices explicit, so that we can decide if they cover over the things or allow them to be unconcealed. Over the course of *Being and Time*, we learn that the fore-structure refers ultimately to the fact that human existence finds itself always and necessarily constituted historically. The historicity of human existence becomes more apparent for Heidegger in the artwork.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger has one key aesthetical text, his 1935 “The Origin of the Work of Art.” This is a complicated text to which Heidegger would return several times over his career. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger approaches the artwork by means of its “thingly” character. Such an approach is intended to make us think of the artwork not as an object, that is, not as something formal with a determinate set of attributes. Instead, to call the artwork a thing is intended to make us focus on what it does, focus on it as something at work. In order to bring the work character of the artwork to light, Heidegger famously interprets a Van Gogh painting of peasant shoes. His interpretation of the painting draws our attention to what the shoes do, their essence as something used, that is, as equipment. Of course, we know what shoes do; they are for protecting the feet. But, do we really understand the reliability in which the shoes consist? This is Heidegger’s interpretation, which is, undoubtedly, quite moving. Indeed, Heidegger’s words take us somewhere other than what we commonly and obviously know about shoes:

> And yet – From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by the uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, and trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the
world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging 
the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself.14

Through this long quote, we see that the work the artwork does is to bring forth what the shoes really are. In their being or essence, the shoes are the point of a gathering of the world and earth. The world is the set of meaningful relations that a people sets up. In contrast, the earth is that upon which a world is set up; it is a ground, but that ground shelters and conceals. As Heidegger says, “Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction.”15 Thus what the artwork brings forth is the strife between the needs of the world and the refusal of the earth. That the artwork brings forth the being of the shoes as a gathering-strife is an event. The event character of the artwork means that the artwork is historical: it brings forth “a being such as never was before and will never come to be again.”16 The artwork then is an event of truth. As we have already seen, Heidegger appropriates the ancient Greek word for truth, “alētheia.” This appropriation means that, for Heidegger, truth is not correctness, not the adequate relation between a proposition and a state of affairs. Rather, truth is un-concealment, in which something comes to presence but in which, as well, something else remains concealed. Earlier I said that Heidegger’s description of the peasant shoes presented in Van Gogh’s painting takes us elsewhere. Now we can really see where. The description takes us away from the world of technology in which all things are determined through calculation. The earth and the world in their striving bring forth things not as objects, but truly as things, incalculable and uncertain. As his career develops from this point (1935), Heidegger relentlessly criticizes the increasing technologization of the world. He criticizes technology not in order to make us give up our devices, but in order to remind us that the things we possess are gifts. Insofar as they are gifts, they come forth to us mortals (the peasant woman “shivers at the surrounding menace of death”17), through the striving of earth and world, from the holy.

At this point, we are able to be more precise about the differences among the three great thinkers of this period. Sartre is the thinker of freedom and responsibility. But his requirement for freedom and responsibility is spontaneity. Spontaneity in Sartre seems to imply that a decision and the responsibility for that decision must be based in a present that is able to separate itself from the

15. Ibid., 45–6.
16. Ibid., 60.
17. Ibid., 33.
past (and then project itself into the future).\textsuperscript{18} In contrast, for Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, the present is set upon a past within which other possibilities remain concealed. The artwork brings these latencies forth as an event, which means that the artwork, like human existence in general, must be conceived historically. But there is one more difference besides the thickness of the past and the slender present of the instant, between essential historicity and irreducible spontaneity. In “Eye and Mind,” Merleau-Ponty calls objectifying vision “profane vision.” However, he never provides us with a name for the more originary and participatory vision.\textsuperscript{19} Perhaps this vision of the flesh is “sacred.” In this way we could say, echoing Heidegger, that for Merleau-Ponty the thinker says being, while the poet and the painter name the holy.\textsuperscript{20}

\section*{III. God, Concept, and Logic}

The relation between Heidegger and religious thought is complicated. One thing, however, seems clear. With the technologization of the world, the dimension of the holy has come to be closed.\textsuperscript{21} Such a closure is even, Heidegger says, “the sole malignancy” of our times. Nevertheless, by means of his characterization of human existence as “being-in-the-world,” and by means of his association to Sartre’s existentialism, Heidegger seemed to many readers of his works to be an atheist. Moreover, at this point few people knew of Heidegger’s early investigations of the Christian tradition, and how Christian life functioned as a model for his characterizations in \textit{Being and Time} of human existence. Consequently, the movement of existential theology arose as a kind of reaction against atheistic existentialism even as it received its primary impetus from the thought of existence. The impetus is seen most clearly in Rudolf Bultmann’s “existen-


\textsuperscript{19} Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” in \textit{The Merleau-Ponty Reader}, 357.


tial interpretations” of biblical texts. His “demythologization” was intended to show how the Revelation is not about a transcendent and distant God; rather, the Revelation is about an occurrence in existence. Similarly, Paul Tillich wrote out of the experience of the “death of God” (an expression taken both from Heidegger and Nietzsche). But the doubt implied by the death of God, for Tillich, is supposed to make us find the courage to have faith. Reacting against atheistic existentialism, Gabriel Marcel rejected the label “existentialism”; but then, indirectly exhibiting a similarity to Heidegger, Marcel criticizes modern individualism and subjectivism because they render the religious question obsolete. For this movement, the religious question is always a question of what the person is. The fundamental experience of the person, according to Emmanuel Mounier, is the experience of being spoken to. This second-person experience is at the heart of the “I–Thou” relation, as we find it in Martin Buber. The “Thou” refers to each other human other, but within each other there is the eternal Thou, which is God. As Levinas notes, Buber is the “pioneer” of the thought of alterity. The thought of alterity always attempts to escape from the immanence of consciousness. Therefore, for Levinas, the thought of the other is the thought of transcendence. And as his thought develops, Levinas calls the thought of transcendence “ethics.”

Although not using the word “transcendence,” the philosophy of the concept shares with existential theology the project of an escape from consciousness. Even more, as it develops through Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem, and into Michel Foucault, the philosophy of the concept understands itself as moving in the reverse direction from phenomenology. While phenomenology tried to show that the subject constitutes structures, meanings, and science, the philosophy of the concept (especially as Foucault appropriated it) tried to show that structures outside and independent from the subject constitute the subject, turning the subject into a kind of epiphenomenon. At its beginning, however, the philosophy of the concept has a more intimate relation to phenomenology. The phrase “the philosophy of the concept” originates in “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” a posthumously published text written by Jean Cavaillès, a war hero from the French Resistance who was executed by the Gestapo in 1944. In “On Logic and the Theory of Science”, Cavaillès is seeking a philosophy that is faithful to mathematics, in particular, faithful to the becoming of mathematics. For Cavaillès, mathematics is not tautological. If it were, all the discoveries of mathematics that have occurred throughout its long history would have been logically contained in its basic axioms. In other words, if mathematics were tautological, then its discoveries would not be real discoveries. Mathematics, in Cavaillès’ eyes, is genuinely creative, genuinely historical. We can see here how the historicity of human existence (at first illuminated for us through the artwork) is still functioning in the background of Cavaillès’ thought of mathematics. It is precisely this interest in the history of mathematics that leads
Cavaillès to Husserl, in particular to Husserl’s late writings on history, such as his “The Origin of Geometry.” What Cavaillès finds in these late texts is that Husserl thinks that, through a process of “reactivation,” a thinking back into the original activities of the first geometer, one is able to discover the original meaning of geometrical concepts. Yet, Husserlian reactivation, Cavaillès realizes, does not require the concrete study of the history of geometry. What Cavaillès then objects to is that the history of mathematics never contains discoveries that actually change the meaning of mathematics. In Husserl, the current developments are continuous with the past; they do not erase the past. According to Cavaillès, however, when a new theory is invented, the new theory in fact radically modifies the concepts of the former theory. The becoming of mathematics, for Cavaillès, consists in the deepening and eradication of concepts. Therefore Cavaillès famously concludes “On Logic and the Theory of Science” by saying, “It is not a philosophy of consciousness but a philosophy of the concept that can give a theory of science. The generating necessity is not the necessity of an activity but the necessity of a dialectic.”

Like the philosophy of the concept, what was called “logical analysis” and what is now called “analytic philosophy” arises from reflections on scientific knowledge. Also, like the philosophy of the concept (at least if we restrict ourselves to Cavaillès), logical analysis has an intimate relation to phenomenology. The first criticisms of phenomenology arise not in the anglophone world but in the Germanic world, from philosophers deeply aware of Husserl’s writings. At this point, in the 1930s, a rift does not exist between phenomenology and logical analysis. There is no question that the first criticisms took phenomenology seriously. The criticisms of phenomenology (which also target Bergsonism and all life philosophy) coming from logical analysis (and from logical positivism and neo-Kantianism) seem to focus on one relation: the relation of intuition to conceptualization (or experience to linguistic expression). Starting from this relation, the criticisms then seem to go in two directions. Either phenomenology concerns experience without conceptualization or it provides linguistic expressions without experience. The first side of the disjunction applies mainly to Husserl, since according to Husserl the phenomenological method is fundamentally intuitive. So, for instance, Moritz Schlick argued that knowledge could not be reduced to any kind of intuition, the pure content of intuition being inexpressible. The result of such criticisms was that phenomenology was seen as an irrational, nonconceptual intuitionism. Passing from the first side of the disjunction

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*23. For a detailed discussion of these early reactions to phenomenology, see the essay by Michael Friedman and Thomas Ryckman in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.*
(intuitions without concepts), we come to the second side, which applies to Heidegger. Rudolf Carnap’s 1931 essay, “The Overcoming of Metaphysics Through the Logical Analysis of Language,” targeted nonsensical philosophical sentences. Although Carnap presents several examples of such nonsense, what he says about Heidegger’s 1929 address called “What is Metaphysics?” became famous. The criticism is simple. In “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger writes this sentence: “The nothing nothings.” It is grammatically correct and it resembles sentences such as “the rain rains.” However, what Carnap stresses is that Heidegger has made a logical mistake of using “nothing” as a noun. One can meaningfully say “the rain is outside,” since the word “rain” is a noun or a name. And one can say that “nothing is outside,” but here the word “nothing” is not a noun or a name. The sentence consists in a negative existential. It must therefore be reformulated as “There is nothing (nothing exists) which is outside.” The sentence “the nothing nothings” is nonsense according to Carnap, not only because the word “nothing” is being used incorrectly, but also because Heidegger has introduced a word “which never had a meaning in the first place.” Moreover, not being a noun or a name, “the nothing” in Heidegger’s sentence refers to no object. Not referring to an object, it is not possible to verify the sentence. The sentence then must count as metaphysical speculation in the worst sense. It is not clear whether these criticisms hold or not. Questions could be raised, questions Heidegger himself later raises: Is experience restricted to the experience of objects? Is language restricted to logical form? Nevertheless, these criticisms have had their effects. Even today, these criticisms have the result of making phenomenology (and more broadly continental philosophy) constantly defend itself against the charge of obscurantism.

IV. CONCLUSION: “TO THE THINGS THEMSELVES”

With these three last topics (God, concept, and logic), we have started to move beyond the chronological period of this volume. Thanks to Derrida’s 1964 essay, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas,” Levinas’s thought becomes increasingly important. Levinas’s emphasis on alterity, on the wholly other, will produce what has come to be called “a theological turn” in phenomenology. In the early 1960s, Foucault’s archeological


25. For a discussion of this “theological turn,” see the essay by Bruce Ellis Benson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7. Levinas’s work is a focus of Robert Eaglestone’s essay in the same volume.
studies take up the banner of the philosophy of the concept. These early Foucault studies are emblematic of the structuralist movement. But “structuralism’s” attempt to displace the subject and therefore its attempt to displace phenomenology leads to the entire development of the great French thought of the 1960s: not only Foucault, but also Derrida and Deleuze.26 Structuralism turns into post-structuralism, and the development of French poststructuralism (and postmodernism) occurs at the same moment that anglophone analytic philosophy comes to dominate departments of philosophy in the English-speaking world. In the second half of the twentieth century, the divide between what we now call “continental philosophy” and “analytic philosophy” becomes more severe. Yet, as the century comes to a close, what we see is a powerful resurgence of phenomenology. The call “to the things themselves” therefore seems to have an inexhaustible vitality. 27

*26. For a discussion of these and other figures of French poststructuralism, see the essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*

27. I am very grateful to all the authors for their effort and cooperation. Alan Schrift’s direction of this volume in particular and the entire series was invaluable. My thanks as well to Kate Williams at Acumen for her copyediting and to David Agler at Penn State for composing the index.
I. HEGEL IN FRANCE

There have been a number of times in history when the (re)discovery of something from the past by a culture or a community has had a remarkably stimulating and revitalizing effect on the work of that community. The discovery of Aristotle’s texts in the Christian West in the thirteenth century led to a sort of philosophical revolution in the works of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. The works of Plato provided a seemingly inexhaustible source of nourishment and inspiration for the cultural imagination of the Italian Renaissance. Although never lost, St. Paul’s writings from the New Testament were in a sense “rediscovered” by Martin Luther, leading to a revolutionary reformation of the Christian church. Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s experience of the art of the Hellenistic and Hellenic world led to an explosive “classicism” in German writers. The unearthing of the works in Lascaux, and related “discoveries” of “primitive” art around the world led to a revolution in twentieth-century European art. In each of these cases, the revolutionary developments are new; yet, nonetheless, there is an important sense in which they are – and are seen to be – a kind of belated reception of the force of those “original” works. There is a profound sense in which the rediscovered works motivate and shape the original and revolutionary cultural developments, even as those developments themselves give new life and new meaning to those older documents or artifacts.
Something similar could be said about the role of the texts of Hegel in French intellectual culture of the 1930s and 1940s. In particular, Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 demonstrated some of its incredible potency through the huge impact it had on original work in many different areas of intellectual culture. Prior to the late 1920s, Hegel’s philosophy was known almost exclusively through his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. The *Encyclopaedia*, although vast and rich in its content, is opaque and schematic, written by Hegel as a handbook to accompany his lectures. Careful reading of the *Encyclopaedia*, especially by those highly conversant with his central works – the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* – reveals it to be a powerful and exciting work of philosophy; when it was read in isolation from his other texts and without a strong understanding of the principles of Hegel’s philosophy, however, the work appeared dry and, indeed, machine-like in its attempt to categorize systematically the full range of reality. The introduction of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* to French readers – especially through the work of Jean Wahl and Alexandre Koyré – suddenly presented a new Hegel, vibrant, provocative, and revolutionary. Initially through these writers, and subsequently through a multiyear seminar on Hegel’s *Phenomenology* led by Alexandre Kojève from 1933 to 1939, a new Hegel was discovered who spoke powerfully to the existential contradic-

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2. Jean Wahl (May 15, 1888–June 22, 1974; born in Marseille, France; died in France) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1907–10), and received a doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1920. His influences were James, Kierkegaard, Marcel, Nietzsche, and Whitehead, and he held appointments at the University of Besançon (1918), University of Nancy (1920), University of Lyon (1923), Sorbonne (1927–36), Mount Holyoke College (1942–45), Smith College (1944–45), and the Sorbonne (1945–60s).

Alexandre Koyré (August 29, 1892–April 28, 1964; born in Taganrog, Russia; died in Paris, France) was educated at the University of Göttingen (1908–11) and the Sorbonne (1912–14). His influences were Brunschvicg, Husserl, and Meyerson, and he held appointments at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (1922–32, 1950s), Fuad University (later Cairo University) (1932–34, 1936–38, 1940–41), Johns Hopkins University (1950s), and the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study (from 1956).
tions of personal and interpersonal life, to the motor and meaning of historical and political development, to the stifling and alienating conditions of modern social life, to the transformative power of artistic creation, to the dynamism and life of the mind, and to the “irrationality” of reason. In Hegel’s text, vital new resources were discovered for engaging with many of the most pressing concerns of contemporary life.

The reception of Hegel flowed down many different channels. Wahl, Koyré, Kojève, and Jean Hyppolite were engaged in the scholarly interpretation of Hegel. In Jacques Lacan, Hegel’s ideas intersected with the tradition of psychoanalysis. Hegel’s philosophy had a significant impact on the artistic world through André Breton and the surrealists, a trajectory that, in the work of Georges Bataille, also intersects with the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and structuralist anthropology. Indeed, this line of structuralism, with its roots in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, also intersects with Lacan and the psychoanalytic stream, and later flows into the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida. Hegel’s work had a direct and powerful impact on existentialism, through Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, a trajectory itself interwoven, in the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Derrida, with the mainstream trajectory of phenomenology that had been developing through the works of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Many of these thinkers, too, can also be understood to be continuing the tradition of Marxism, and, through the work of Beauvoir, Hegel’s text was involved in some of the most influential work in the founding of contemporary feminism. The explosive influence of Hegel’s thought and texts is thus implicated in, and significantly contributed to, the interweaving of surrealism, existentialism, Marxism, structural linguistics, structural anthropology, psychoanalysis, feminism, phenomenology, deconstruction and the discipline of the history of philosophy. Indeed, as Merleau-Ponty rightly says, “all the great philosophical ideas of the last century – the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, 

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3. Alexandre Kojève (1902–68; born in Moscow, Russia; died in Brussels, Belgium) was educated at the University of Heidelberg (1920–22, 1924–26). His influences included Hegel, Heidegger, Koyré, and Marx and he held appointments at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (1930s).

4. Jean Hyppolite (January 8, 1907–October 27, 1968; born in Jonzac, France; died in Paris) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1925–28). His influences included Bergson, Hegel, Heidegger, and Husserl, and he held appointments at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand (1939–41), Lycée Henri-IV (1941–45), University of Strasbourg (1945–49), Sorbonne (1949–54), École Normale Supérieure (1954–63), and Collège de France (1963–68).

Eric Weil (1904–66; born in Mecklenberg, Germany; died in Nice, France) held appointments at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, and the University of Lille (1955–68).

5. Lacan, Bataille, and Lévi-Strauss are each the focus of an essay in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
and psychoanalysis – had their beginnings in Hegel,” and “there would be no paradox involved in saying that interpreting Hegel means taking a stand on all the philosophical, political, and religious problems of our century.”

Like Hellenistic sculpture, the works of Aristotle and the epistles of St. Paul, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* offers inexhaustible resources. The critical appropriations of this philosophy, however, typically also involved various expressions of critical dissatisfaction. These critical appropriations were interwoven with interpretations of Hegel that ranged from sensitive but imperfect to highly incompetent, and along with a recognition of many of his great insights came a legacy of outrageous misrepresentations that have themselves influentially colored the subsequent developments in French philosophy. The “meaning” of a text or a philosophy – Hegel’s or any other – will always be open-ended, for its meaning will always be its significance as defined by the living parameters of the world in which it is apprehended, and thus the “reading” of Hegel’s text is not simply a matter of reconstituting an already fully accomplished sense but will always be interpretation, will always be transformative. This undecidability of the authoritative meaning of the text does not, however, change the fact that Hegel’s text is itself very determinate, and the text itself thus still offers itself as a standard for judging the adequacy of any “reading,” and the history of the reception of Hegel in French philosophy must be recognized to be as much a history of misrepresentation, (significantly because of the incredible difficulty of Hegel’s text) as it is the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of that text, which defines retroactively what it was able to mean. Nonetheless, through the embrace of Hegelian ideas in response to and within the phenomenological movement, the reading of Hegel grew progressively more substantial and more rigorous, reaching a kind of culmination in the works of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida from the late 1940s through the early 1960s. In what follows, I will address the reception of Hegel as a response to the phenomenological philosophy that had been developing in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. My primary orientation will not be toward the claims about Hegel made by the various figures involved, but toward how they can be seen to be deploying Hegelian themes as those are understood by the best contemporary scholarship on Hegel.

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7. As Merleau-Ponty says, “A man cannot receive a heritage of ideas without transforming it by the very fact that he comes to know it, without injecting his own and always different way of being into it” (“Man and Adversity,” in *Signs*, Richard C. McCleary [trans.] [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964], 224).

8. The quality of scholarship on Hegel underwent a great qualitative improvement in the 1960s and 1970s, largely in tandem with the publication of high-quality research in the journal *Hegel-Studien*. Since the 1970s, many outstanding interpreters have distinguished themselves,
Hegel’s philosophy is the project of being rigorously committed to allowing *whatever appears* to show itself on its own terms, and philosophy is thus a project of bearing witness to the dynamism by which the phenomenon transforms itself for its own reasons. This is what Hegel calls “phenomenology” or “the science of the experience of consciousness.”9 Hegel’s philosophy was revolutionary in the history of philosophy for introducing this new method of philosophy: the method of adopting a stance of descriptive receptivity to the self-motion of the object. Hegel’s philosophy is unique – at least prior to parallel developments in twentieth-century phenomenology – in being rigorously and by definition without a thesis or an author. Hegel’s philosophy is true exactly insofar as it does not present views attributable to the author “Hegel,” but instead is only a site for the self-presentation of the phenomenon itself according to its own standards. This rigorous demand that the philosopher not import a point of view of his or her own equally means that the process of description cannot presume in advance to know what rules to follow or what principles to use in interpretation. Hegel’s method, in other words, is the abrogation of method, and his bearing witness to the *sense* of the phenomenon itself – which Hegel calls variously *die Vernunft, der Geist* or *der Begriff*, that is, in English, reason, spirit, or concept – is precisely a renunciation of all conceptions of an independent reason that could define in advance the terms of meaningfulness. It is the phenomena themselves, in their own self-manifestation, that must be the very *Darstellung* (presentation) of sense, or rationality.

That the sense of things must emerge from their own dynamism, and cannot be measured by some alien, predefined, static “reason,” is probably the single most salient idea in Hegel’s phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty writes:

It was [Hegel] who started the attempt to explore the irrational and integrate it into an expanded reason that remains the task of our century. He is the inventor of that Reason, broader than the understanding, which can respect the variety and singularity of individual consciousnesses, civilizations, ways of thinking, and historical contingency but which nevertheless does not give up the attempt to master them in order to guide them to their own truths.\(^\text{10}\)

Hegel’s *Phenomenology* studies violent struggles for personal recognition and glory, slavery, religious ecstasy, Hellenic funerary practices, the Roman emperor, sun worship and Dionysiac processions. Hegel’s philosophy teaches one not to look “up” to universal principles, but to look “into” the specificities and singularities of determinate realities, and to find sense within things, events, and practices that are pointedly nonuniversal. This conception of reason as immanent sense leads to the prominence of the theme of the philosophical interpretation of history as the phenomenon of freedom realizing itself; as thus self-creative, history is a process that actually accomplishes meaning rather than being a vehicle for an already established sense. This notion is paralleled by Hegel’s emphasis on the primacy of the practical in general, seen especially in his analysis of the distinctive form of self-consciousness – namely, the consciousness of oneself as a competent agent and a participant in the real – that is accomplished through the experience of work.\(^\text{11}\) These aspects of the Hegelian conception of meaning resonated with a number of emerging cultural movements in France in the 1920s.

The Hegelian themes of the inherent meaningfulness of history and work characterize the writings of Marx that self-consciously drew on these Hegelian ideas and that made their own explosive entry into French culture at roughly the same time as the discovery of Hegel, through the discovery of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, and many of Hegel’s ideas were thus obviously significant to the intellectual and political traditions of French Marxism. The demand of Hegel’s “method” that one find an immanent sense within phenomena rather than defining them in terms of a pre-established standard of rationality or normalcy also had a natural affinity with psychoanalysis and its recognition of “illness” as autonomously meaningful. And Hegel’s notion of sense as something that is not established in advance and held in reserve but is

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11. The discussion of work is in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paras 194–6. For contemporary interpretations of these passages, see Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder*, vol. I, 363–70, and my *Reading Hegel’s Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), ch. 6. Themes pertinent to history are found in Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, entitled “Spirit”; these claims are more directly found in the introduction to Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, Hugh Barr Nisbet (trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
realized in giving oneself over to the self-defining life of the particular is what appealed to the surrealists in their enthusiasm for Hegel in the early 1930s.

The surrealist movement aligned itself with the Communist Party, and thus was already in the political ambit of Marx and Hegel, but the connection with Hegel was more significant and more explicit in the definitive “method” of surrealism. André Breton (1896–1966), in his “Surrealist Manifestos” called for a commitment to a vibrant pursuit of meaning through the rejection of the rule of alien reason. Along with an invocation, in the First Manifesto (1925), of Freud as a pathbreaker for “recovering the rights” of imagination against convention and conformity, Hegel’s dialectical method was imagined, in the Second Manifesto (1929), to offer a resource for overcoming the strictures of a bureaucratizing and normalizing “rationality.” In the First Manifesto’s definition of surrealism as an “automatism … by which one proposes to express … the actual functioning of thought … in the absence of any control exercised by reason,” Breton’s words clearly do resonate with Hegel’s “method” of abandoning oneself to the immanent rationality of what appears. A similar resonance is apparent in Breton’s notion of “objective chance,” according to which one gives oneself over in desire to what unexpectedly arrives through the unpredictable development of the object of desire. Finally, the surrealist notion of the generation of novel “syntheses” through the conjoining of seeming aliens clearly drew on a notion of synthesis that was seen to be at work in Hegel’s dialectic. Although his relation with the surrealists was always strained, Bataille’s thought in the 1930s and 1940s is strongly resonant with this movement. Perhaps the strongest connection between Bataille and the surrealists, and also his strongest connection with Hegel, is found in his idea that the regularized relations of normal social life (which he later called a “restricted economy”) do not present the original or ultimate form of meaning, but rather depend on a more fundamental flow of energy (“general economy”) that does not itself answer to the terms of normalized life. This Hegelian idea of a more basic sens that is both the condition of and the source for the undermining of the conformist rationality of social systems was subsequently highly influential on Derrida, Lacan, and others for shaping their own engagement with phenomenology.


Breton and Bataille were not Hegel scholars, but the contemporaneous commentaries on Hegel’s philosophy written by Wahl and Koyré are straightforward works of Hegel scholarship. Wahl, who was Professor at the Sorbonne from 1936 to 1967 (except for a period during the Second World War, when he fled to the United States after escaping from a German prison camp), was highly influenced by the philosophical ideas of Henri Bergson and William James. He was himself highly influential on both Sartre and Levinas, and on French philosophy in general, especially through his early works on Hegel and Kierkegaard. The work on Hegel was a self-conscious attempt to introduce French readers to the perspective of the young Hegel, whose works had been published by Wilhelm Dilthey and Herman Nohl in Germany in 1905 and 1907. What distinguished Wahl’s work on Hegel was its emphasis on the existential concreteness behind the logical forms of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. Wahl, strongly influenced by Kierkegaard, showed Hegel to be of compelling existential importance by rightly recognizing the centrality for Hegel’s philosophy of the figure Hegel calls “the Unhappy Consciousness.” “The Unhappy Consciousness” is Hegel’s name for the ultimate condition of self-consciousness, which is, namely, that we are never fully self-possessed but are always at a distance from our own selves, waiting to receive our own sense of meaning and identity. As Wahl puts it, “consciousness is too small for itself, because greater than itself.” Wahl found in Hegel’s study of unhappy consciousness the “tragic, religious, and romantic” context of meaning – the “fear and trembling” – that so prominently shapes Kierkegaard’s thought. Unhappy consciousness is the experience of a self torn between its being embedded in the finite, and its being drawn to an infinite beyond: it both is and is not itself, is and is not its object, such that its unity is its dismemberment, its duplicity its unity. Philosophy, religion, and the search for meaning that is the motor of human history all begin in the affectivity of this divided consciousness, and Wahl understands Hegel’s *Phenomenology* to be the history of the attempts by unhappy consciousness to fill its inner void, its inability ever to fully “be” itself. Wahl’s interpretation of Hegel is distinguished primarily by this idea that the dialectic of the *Phenomenology* is to be understood as the

working through of this existential situation, an interpretation that privileges affectivity and existentiality over abstract rationality or systematicity. Wahl, (who took himself ultimately to disagree with Hegel), construed the ultimate force of this insight to be the need to reinvest the contingent with the force of the infinite, the initial experience of transcendence being thus folded back into immanence. Wahl’s insight into Hegel’s figure of the “Unhappy Consciousness” – which must also be in a stance of waiting for ourselves – fit well with Koyré’s writings on Hegel’s understanding of time. Koyré, himself explicitly operating in the phenomenological tradition of Husserl and Heidegger, correctly recognized (pace Heidegger) that Hegel’s philosophy operates with a conception of temporality that is defined by the primacy of the future.

These two interpretations of Hegel, like the work of the surrealists and Bataille, draw from Hegel the notion of the openness of sense, and, correspondingly, of the way in which our existential condition is one of being necessarily both excluded from participation in a fully established rational system and responsible for engaging with the issue of meaning. These themes obviously resonate powerfully with the existential movement in French philosophy in the 1940s, and the Hegel-inspired works of these intellectuals had a direct influence on that movement. In fact, though, because of the work of Kojève, the Hegel-interpretation begun in Wahl and Koyré was temporarily eclipsed by the less competent and much more influential Hegel-interpretation of Kojève, a situation that was not corrected until the work of Jean Hyppolite.

III. EXISTENTIALISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY IN THE 1940S: SENSE AND THE OTHER

The most manifest impact of Hegel on French philosophy is found in the writings of the existentialist philosophers of the 1940s. In 1927, Heidegger, in Being and Time, launched an “existential analytic of Dasein.” This study argued that we are always already “in-the-world” and that experience could not be understood as a “product” of a preexistent and independently defined transcendental meaning-giving power. Whether the transcendental ego, as that is understood by Husserl, ultimately is such a detached, autonomous meaning-giving power is by no means obvious, but the effect of Heidegger’s work was to inaugurate an “existential” approach to phenomenology that challenged such a “transcendental”

phenomenology that was identified with Husserl. The existentialist philosophers, in advancing this “antitrascendental” orientation, found Hegel’s phenomenology a welcome ally, partially because of the Hegelian–Marxist focus on engagement, but especially because of Hegel’s emphasis on the experience of others and the “dialectic of recognition.”

Hegel’s phenomenology aims to describe accurately the various forms experience takes, and one of its central studies is the description of the experience of self-consciousness. In the sections of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* entitled “The Struggle to the Death” and “Lordship and Bondage,” Hegel shows that the definitive desire of explicitly self-conscious beings is a “desire of the other,” that is, we desire to be the object of the other’s desire, and we are inherently responsive to the experience of being subjected to the gaze of other explicitly self-conscious beings. His description captures the various strategies we live out in response to this experience that run from (i) trying to obliterate our “outside” as embodied in the perspective of the other upon us so as to maintain an experience of total self-possession (the struggle to the death), through (ii) trying to subordinate and control that outside/other (lordship and bondage), to (iii) embracing the shared intersubjectivity of our self-identity (the reciprocal recognition of “spirit,” the “I that is We and We that is I”). These latter two developments are interpersonal relations that are only possible through a kind of institutionalization, which means they are relations that are inherently mediated by law and language. The half dozen pages of the *Phenomenology* in which Hegel describes this dialectical development were perhaps the most influential pages for French philosophy of the 1940s.

These pages made their entry into French thought primarily through Kojève’s seminar on Hegel’s *Phenomenology* at the École Pratique des Hautes Études from 1933 to 1939. Kojève worked through the entirety of Hegel’s text with seminar participants who included Raymond Queneau, Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, Aron Gurwitsch, Eric Weil, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. As Wahl before him had seen the power of Hegel’s figure of the “Unhappy Consciousness” for

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22. This opposition of Husserl and Heidegger is expressly discussed in Trân Duc Thao, “Existentialisme et matérialisme dialectique,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 54 (1949), according to which Husserl’s *epoché* puts the transcendental ego “outside the world,” whereas Heidegger recognizes that there must be “a concrete and temporal self”; Trân Duc Thao rejects Hegelianism, but nonetheless draws substantially on Marx and on notions derived from Hegel.


24. Hegel defines spirit (Geist) as the “I that is We and We that is I” in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, para. 177.

25. These lectures were published as *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* in 1947, selections translated in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* in 1969.
interpreting a wide range of human affairs, so Kojève found in the figures of “The Struggle to the Death” and “Lordship and Bondage” a powerful key for unlocking the significance of the whole range of human experience. Through Kojève's direct or indirect influence, an entire generation of French intellectuals saw the importance of the idea that self-consciousness is the desire of the other and that this definitive structure naturally ushers in a dialectic of interpersonal struggle that weaves together the psychological and the political, and that situates law and language at the heart of human identity.

Sartre apparently did not himself attend Kojève's seminar, but his Being and Nothingness (1943) is nonetheless highly alive to these ideas from Hegel that were popularized by Kojève. Sartre argues that all experience must be characterized by a prereflective cogito, a tacit awareness of oneself as an experiencing subject that must be constitutive of any experience, and he makes a parallel argument for what he describes as a sort of “cogito of the other.” Just as I always necessarily experience myself tacitly as an “I” or subject, I also tacitly experience myself as a “me,” that is an object for another. “The look” of the other to which I am subjected is also a constitutive feature of all experience, and my self-consciousness is thus (irremediably) divided between a sense that I am what I take myself to be and a sense that I am what others take me to be. What I am, in other words, is from the start not in my possession but is determined by others, and thus “the original meaning of being-with-others is conflict” because my own reality is inherently a site of contestation between the definitive authority of myself and that of others. In a manner highly reminiscent of Hegel's discussion of “Lordship and Bondage,” Sartre argues that we are always trapped in unsuccessful strategies for embracing our own subjectivity in a way that also embraces the subjectivity of others, for our strategies all result in some form of relationship of domination and subordination.

In these sections of Being and Nothingness, Sartre draws on Heidegger's discussion in Being and Time of the constitutive being-with-others that characterizes our being-in-the-world, and the discussion of the experience of the alter-ego in the fifth of Husserl's Cartesian Meditations, but uses the resources of Hegel's phenomenology of self-consciousness to bring to this theme a richness and a dynamism unexplored in these other texts. His deploying of this Hegelian theme of “the Other” is especially powerful for challenging what critics imagined to be the excessively “immanentist” theme of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. One of the main perceived problems of the “transcendental” approach to phenomenology is that Husserl's conception of a “sense-giving” transcendental

27. Ibid., 475.
ego that is a “constituting power” is the conception of an agent that is actually constructing experience that, in one form or another, ends up making experience into a kind of representation of the other. If there can be sense only within the purview of the transcendental ego, then both the forms of meaning brought to experiential material and the very materials with which the forming power works must be within the domain of that transcendental ego, so in a profound way the “I” will only ever deal with itself. Transcendental phenomenology is thus accused of being ultimately solipsistic, and providing only a model for a self-absorbed subjectivity. Heidegger’s existential analytic, Levinas’s writings on phenomenology throughout the 1930s and 1940s (which seem to have been highly influential on Sartre), and Sartre’s existentialism all emphasize a primary realm of sense that cannot be understood on the “representational” model of a self-absorbed subject. Ek-sistent or ek-static *Dasein* (in Heidegger’s language) is outside itself, engaged with what is other. *Dasein* is not “consciousness” but engagement, being-in-the-world. Sartre’s emphasis on the experience of the other underscores the essentiality of this point. For it to count as experience of the other, that experience must necessarily not be immanent, must not be a representation, but must be precisely what cannot be found within the internal horizons of my ego. The experience of the other is precisely, on Sartre’s account, the

28. This basic orientation is captured in these remarks by Paul Ricoeur: “Thus Husserl … conceives of phenomenology not only as a method of description … but also as a radical self-grounding. …

[But] in its effective practice phenomenology already displays its distance from rather than its realization of the dream of such a radical grounding in the transparence of the subject to itself. …

It is because we find ourselves first of all in a world to which we belong in which we cannot help but participate, that we are then able, in a second movement, to set up objects … that we claim to constitute. … The subject-object relation – on which Husserl continues to depend – is thus subordinated to the testimony of an ontological link more basic than any relation of knowledge” (“On Interpretation,” in *Philosophy in France Today*, Alan Montefiore [ed.], Kathleen McLaughlin [trans.], 175–97 [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983], 188–90). Basically, this “transcendental I,” this constituting power, is a position that “I,” as an engaged, perspectival being-in-the-world, can never occupy. In the 1930s, in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936) and “Husserl’s Central Idea” (1939), Sartre himself defends Husserl against a “representational” view, which he attributes to Descartes and neo-Kantianism, although he does criticize Husserl for an analogous problem of reifying reflecting consciousness.

29. Sartre also emphasizes the practical and situated character of the self, both in *Being and Nothingness* and in his later *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Like the emphasis on the experience of the gaze of the other, this notion of the engaged subject brings out the way that subjectivity is something in-the-world rather than in consciousness. Hegel’s and Marx’s analyses of work are highly influential on Sartre’s notions of situatedness, action, and history. In “*Merleau-Ponty vivant,*” in *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, Sartre credits Merleau-Ponty with teaching him about the importance of this theme of the “action that since Marx and Hegel has been called praxis” (*The Debate Between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, Jon Stewart
experience of the insufficiency of “my own” constitutive powers to be adequate to the sense of world in which I find myself. Here, then, Sartre draws on a powerful Hegelian insight in order to highlight the way in which phenomenology must always recognize an unclosable gap in the experience of meaning.

Closely related developments are found in the works of Simone de Beauvoir. In both The Ethics of Ambiguity (1947) and The Second Sex (1949), the influence of Hegel is prominent and explicit. In studying the inherently situated character of freedom, Beauvoir brings together explicitly the rich themes of being-with-others developed by Sartre and his notion of “bad faith,” and she develops what is roughly a systematic model of the forms of intersubjective bad faith. Sartre in his notion of “bad faith” and Heidegger before him in his notion of the “das Man” had both emphasized the way in which our freedom (in Sartre's vocabulary) can be lived authentically or inauthentically, that is, we can live in a way that owns up to our free nature (authenticity) or in such a way that the image we present of our nature through our actions contradicts the freedom that is the true condition of those actions (bad faith). This idea that a form of behavior can be at odds with itself such that its manifest character contradicts its inherent nature is one of the primary characteristics of the dialectical self-transformations of experience as described by Hegel. Sartre had already begun to make manifest something like this link between bad faith and intersubjectivity inasmuch as he demonstrated the ways in which our attitudes toward our being-with-others contradict themselves and transform themselves in accordance with those contradictions. This structure is at the core of Beauvoir's Ethics of Ambiguity, the second chapter of which shows both how our attitudes are rooted in the dynamic development of free self-consciousness from childhood and how the different adult attitudes we adopt can themselves each be understood to respond to tensions generated by the contradictions in other attitudes. The attitudes Beauvoir addresses are all one-sided in actively or passively embracing the inherent duality of freedom that is both transcendence (i.e. we are always faced with defining anew the significance of what we have done) and facticity (i.e. through the choices we make we are always defining who we are). Beauvoir portrays this work as significantly

[ed.] [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998], 582). These themes of engagement and history in Sartre's philosophy are helpfully discussed in Baugh, French Hegel, 101–17. For other thinkers as well, Hegel and Marx also provided the basis for a philosophy of nature and history that seemed missing in Husserl’s phenomenology. See Trần Đức Thảo: “Marxism imposed itself on us as the only conceivable solution to the problems posed by phenomenology itself” (Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique [Paris: Éditions Minh-Tân, 1951], 5). Compare also Jay Lampert, “Husserl and Hegel on the Logic of Subjectivity,” Man and World 21(4) (October 1988).

31. This is the subject of chapter 2 of Beauvoir, The Ethics of Ambiguity.
Hegelian, and it is strongly Hegelian in its emphasis on our essential intersubjectivity, on its emphasis of the dynamism within and between attitudes, and, in general, in its emphasis on the self-contradictory character of forms of behavior. *The Second Sex* is even more direct in its appropriation of Hegel because of its wholesale taking over of Hegel’s dialectic of the relationship of lordship and bondage to explain the formation of women’s and men’s identities in Western culture.32

Although neither *The Second Sex* nor *The Ethics of Ambiguity* presented itself expressly as a response to phenomenology, they both operate within the tradition of the existentialist appropriation of phenomenological philosophy so prominently and powerfully introduced by Sartre, and demonstrate the importance of the reception of Hegelian ideas to the history and vicissitudes of the phenomenological tradition. Just as we have already noted that the reception of Hegel ran along many avenues that coalesced and intersected with each other in various ways, so here do we see in Beauvoir’s work how the Hegelianized existential phenomenology itself grew into a cultural significance far beyond the exclusive field of official, intradisciplinary philosophical discourse. *The Second Sex* in particular stands out not only for its impact in a larger field but indeed for its virtual inauguration of the field of contemporary feminism. In the roughly contemporary work of Lacan, we can also see the impact of Hegel outside intradisciplinary philosophical discourse.

We noted above a certain natural affinity between the project of psychoanalysis and the results of Hegel’s phenomenological inquiry into human experience. This connection was powerfully developed by Lacan, who used the parameters of the development of self-consciousness mapped out by Hegel (and interpreted by Kojève) as the model for understanding the child’s psychological development through the Oedipus Complex that Freud had outlined. Freud’s own psychological writings certainly presumed the important place of the experience of the other in psychological development, but they never justified the idea that desire is inherently motivated to care about the other as a self-consciousness;33 Lacan’s insight was to see that Hegel’s description of the desire of self-consciousness as the desire of the other supplied the understanding of desire that would complete the Freudian model. And, following Hegel, Lacan, too, saw that the dialectic of self-consciousness depends on the mediation of desire through the estab-

32. This is the subject of the concluding section of *The Second Sex*.
lishing of law and language.34 Because desire defines itself through the other, growing up into the world requires social integration, which is the insertion of oneself into a system of normalizing relations ("the law of the father") that effectively constitute a universal language. This very system of universal interpretation, however, draws its resources for meaning from the originary propulsion of desire, which will itself never be fully assimilated by or adequately articulated in the terms of this universal order. Through and behind the regularized, "literal" language of culture, desire – the unconscious – speaks in its own language of metaphor/condensation and metonymy/displacement. The interest in an imminent "reason" beneath the surface of regularized rationality that initially defined the common terrain of Hegel, psychoanalysis, and surrealism is hereby shown by Lacan to be translatable into a matter of signs, with the result that the central existential and humanistic questions of meaning are displaced into the domain of linguistics and semiology.35 Lacan's early work was initially influential among the surrealists, but it was in the 1950s that the trajectory of these developments intersected with the main development of phenomenological philosophy in the work of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida.

IV. FROM EXISTENTIALISM TO DECONSTRUCTION THROUGH THE 1950S: METHOD AND DIFFERENCE

The central place of Hegel's dialectic of recognition in the existentialism of Sartre and Beauvoir is reproduced in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception (1945), especially in his discussions of the "metaphysical" dimension of sexuality and the role of expression as "confirmation."36 Merleau-Ponty's engagement with Hegel, however, goes far deeper than this. The first and most obvious


“Hegelianism” of the *Phenomenology of Perception* is found in its structure and method.

Like Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which describes the dialectical development of experience from its most immediate form (“Sense-Certainty”) to its most developed form (“Absolute Knowing”), the *Phenomenology of Perception* is a phenomenological description of experience that runs from its most immediate form (“The Sensation as a Unit of Experience”) to its richest development (“Freedom”). Merleau-Ponty’s work is also organized around a triadic structure of subject (Part I: “The Body”), object (Part II: “The World as Perceived”), and their relation (Part III: “Being-for-itself and Being-in-the-World”). In these respects, there is a strong mirroring of Hegel’s work in Merleau-Ponty’s own.

The most striking and important parallel, however, is in the method Merleau-Ponty follows in his phenomenological description. Merleau-Ponty’s manner of proceeding in his description and analysis of each successive topic in his work is not to assert and defend the position he advocates, but rather to take up familiar approaches to the phenomenon in question and, through careful attention to their responsiveness to the phenomenon they purport to explain, to allow them to demonstrate their own insufficiencies. More or less with respect to each topic, Merleau-Ponty first describes an empiricist interpretation (i.e. one that interprets the subject as inherently passive), which description typically reveals an insufficient account of agency, and then turns to a rationalist interpretation (i.e. one that interprets the subject as inherently active) as an alternative, which description typically reveals an insufficient account of passivity. The positive characteristics of the phenomenon revealed through these accounts, together with their mutual insufficiencies, are then shown to point to the need for a third form of accounting for the phenomenon that reveals the subject (and *mutatis mutandis* the object) to be being-in-the-world, a condition that, indeed, necessarily underlies and makes possible the sorts of attitudes that empiricism and rationalism presume to be primary. Although somewhat more formulaic than Hegel’s approach in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (indeed, in external form it resembles more closely the method of Bergson in *Matter and Memory* in particular, which work is organized around the idea that neither idealism [rationalism] nor realism [empiricism] can adequately account for experience, and which proceeds, like Merleau-Ponty, by considering in turn the errors of each method in order to make possible the articulation of Bergson’s own account), this method of allowing one-sided accounts (i) separately to demonstrate their own need for supplementation by what they exclude as opposite, and (ii) mutually to demonstrate their reliance on a more basic form of experience that is not itself defined in terms of the antithesis that characterizes the two opposites, is very much the method of dialectical observation demanded by Hegel. The *Phenomenology of Perception* can, therefore, with equal legitimacy,
be called a book of Hegelian or Husserlian (or, for that matter, Heideggerean) phenomenology.

Merleau-Ponty thus represents the strongest version of the reception of Hegel’s phenomenology as a response to Husserl’s phenomenology inasmuch as his work is effectively an argument for the identity of those two phenomenologies. Merleau-Ponty, too, reproduces the comprehensiveness of Hegel’s philosophy – which is a call to openness – inasmuch as he similarly calls for an identification of phenomenology with linguistics, psychoanalysis, and art. Indeed, all the streams of “Hegel-interpretation” that we identified in French culture themselves come together explicitly in Merleau-Ponty’s work. The very openness of phenomenology – its very comprehensiveness – ultimately erases its unique and distinctive status as an exclusive discipline.

Merleau-Ponty’s writings from the 1940s resemble very much the writings of Sartre and Beauvoir in that they are occupied with the “human drama” of existence. Like Heidegger, however, Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on experience is not “anthropological” or “humanistic,” but rather provides an opening for engaging with the “question of being,” and Merleau-Ponty’s writings of the 1950s and early 1960s explicitly emphasize this “ontological” dimension. If, as Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger argue, we are essentially being-in-the-world and if, therefore, the very opposition of “self and world” is a meaning that occurs within being-in-the-world, then the terms of that opposition cannot explain the source of meaning – indeed, they cannot explain themselves. Just as the oppositions of rationalism and empiricism are shown in the Phenomenology of Perception to point to a more fundamental source from which they derive their meaning but that they cannot explain, so does this “ultimate” opposition of self and world point to a more basic source that gives it meaning and that it is inadequate to explain. Like Heidegger’s, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy ultimately points to something like being as the ultimate sense-giver.

This development within the French existential response to phenomenology from a focus on human experience as the site of meaning to a focus on the human as responsive to being is paralleled in the development in Hegel interpretation manifest in Hyppolite’s Logic and Existence (1952). Hyppolite was important in the tradition of French Hegelianism initially because of his translation of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit into French in 1939 and 1941, and subsequently because of his commentary on the same book, Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit (1946). This book was particularly notable because of its continuation of the line of interpretation developed by Wahl, which rightly recognized the figure of “the Unhappy Consciousness” as the essential form of self-consciousness in Hegel’s understanding. In this respect, Hyppolite’s book was an important corrective to the exciting and provocative, but substantially misrepresentative interpretation developed by Kojève in his lectures (which
Hyppolite avoided). Kojève drew powerful lessons from the analysis of Hegel’s description of the relation of lordship and bondage, but he failed to understand the logic and organization of Hegel’s argument in his description of self-consciousness, and wrongly presented the relationship of lordship and bondage as the completed form of self-consciousness.

In *Genesis and Structure*, Hyppolite continues Wahl’s emphasis on the tragedy and division that inherently characterize human experience, and he understands the movements of the dialectic as our attempts to deal with the questions of meaning within this context, drawing this especially from the analysis of “unhappy consciousness.” This book, which is primarily a careful and detailed commentary on Hegel’s text, emphasizes the permanent dilemmas that characterize our human situation, rather than finding in the text a fundamental drive toward “systematization” or the “overcoming” of tensions. Elsewhere Hyppolite writes, “Hegel maintains the tension of opposition within the heart of mediation, [with the result that] … he would reject the possible disappearance of the ‘tragedy of the human situation.’ … It is in the existential tragedy of history that Hegel apprehended the Idea.” It is this tragedy that points to the essentiality of forgiveness for human life, and Hyppolite’s work stands out from Hegel’s *Phenomenology* for its emphasis on this topic: the violence and the tensions of human life are not erased, but we become reconciled with them and, through this, we become reconciled with each other. Finally, the figure of “Unhappy Consciousness” points, as the ultimate goal of our existence, and hence of Hegel’s philosophy, to a reconciliation between the here and now and the beyond; such a reconciliation, however, must neither deny our permanent experience of self-division nor reduce either side of the opposition to the other. Because there is no “other world” beyond human history, history is the domain invested with ultimate meaning; at the same time, history itself – the empirical reality of humanity – is not a self-defining realm of meaning (as Kojève might ultimately have it), but is itself the site for the revelation of God (in the language of religion) or of

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39. Like Hyppolite, Eric Weil also rejected Kojève’s claim that the end of history had arrived, instead arguing that our world has reached a point where in principle the goal of history can be articulated, but it has not been accomplished (*Hegel et l’état* [Paris: Vrin, 1950], 77–9, 102). In *Hegel et l’état*, Weil also challenged the view that Hegel was a defender of the Prussian state, seeing, on the contrary, ways in which Hegel’s philosophy was precisely a critique of that state, a point ultimately made most powerfully by Jacques d’Hondt in *Hegel en son temps* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1968).
the self-showing of the absolute (in the language of philosophy). Hyppolite thus interprets Hegel’s philosophy as a site for uniting existentialist themes of meaningfulness with the Marxist theme of the dialectic of history, and, ultimately, with the Heideggerian theme of Being.

*Genesis and Structure* was an important corrective to Kojève, but it was with *Logic and Existence* that Hyppolite developed the interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy that showed how it could contribute to the “ontological” approach to phenomenology developing in the works of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. The strength of Hyppolite’s analysis in *Logic and Existence* is that it argues for the essentiality of the *Science of Logic* and its engagement with the problematic of “being” for Hegel’s philosophy, as a corrective to the “humanistic” views that saw the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the definitive work and as a work whose value was found in separating it from the *Science of Logic*. Whereas earlier interpreters had made of *Science of Logic* an otherworldly importation of reason, Hyppolite rightly recognized that what Hegel calls the concept (*der Begriff*) is the immanent *sense* of whatever is. Hyppolite argues, in *Logic and Existence*, that the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology* form a pair, each of which presupposes the other, and neither of which can be reduced to the other. Against the “anthropological” approach of Kojève, Hyppolite’s argument is that the human experience that is the subject of the *Phenomenology* is not itself “the absolute,” but is rather the site for the self-showing of the absolute (i.e. being). In this way, humanity is not the ultimate subject of history; rather, history, language, and human practice are the contingent, determinate modes of articulation through which this self-showing of being accomplishes itself. In this interpretation of Hegel, Hyppolite is clearly drawing on Heidegger’s discussion of language as “the house of being” in his “Letter on Humanism,” itself recognized as an important gesture of distanc ing phenomenology from anthropology and humanism. While it is not at all clear that it is correct to call the existentialism of the 1940s “anthropological,” it is certainly correct to describe Kojève, and his interpretation of Hegel, in this way. In addition to his (misrepresentative) emphasis on the dialectic of lordship and bondage, Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel was also especially significant for its interpretation of Hegel’s notion of the “end of history” from Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of history. Kojève presented Hegel as maintaining that history had reached an end, meaning there was fundamentally nothing further to be accomplished politically. Hyppolite’s much more accurate interpretation of Hegel

41. See Jean Hyppolite: “Man is the house of the Logos, of the being which reflects on itself and thinks itself” (*Logic and Existence*, Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen [trans.] [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997], 74); and “Through this freedom, which Hegel say is the absolute Idea of history … man does not conquer himself as man, but becomes the house of the Universal, of the Logos of Being, and becomes capable of Truth” (*ibid.*, 187).
comes closer to recognizing that Hegel’s references to the “closure” of history are precisely a demand for infinite openness, and that, far from claiming the accomplishment of human happiness, it is the condition of “unhappy consciousness” that is the permanent and final condition of humanity. The openness of “the Concept” and, likewise, the “unhappiness” of self-consciousness are both situations of an unclosable divide between reality and its own meaning, the permanent condition of a humanity defined as a site for the self-disclosure of being and a reality, as Koyré noted two decades earlier, defined as inherently futural. Hyppolite’s interpretation is important in the tradition of the French reception of Hegel primarily because it begins to come to terms with Hegel’s understanding of being as an originary self-differing, a notion very similar to what Merleau-Ponty had been developing in his own “ontological” writings of the 1950s under such headings as “interrogation,” “flesh” and “écart.”

Hyppolite’s Logic and Existence strongly influenced the development of French philosophy in the 1960s. Inasmuch as this work (like his Genesis and Structure) is a massive improvement over the interpretation offered by Kojève, this influence had a salutary effect on the reception of Hegel. But insofar as engagement with Hyppolite’s interpretation seems often to have functioned as a substitute for the actual engagement with Hegel (much as engagement with Kojève played such a role for an earlier generation of French intellectuals), Hyppolite, who is by no means the best modern interpreter of Hegel, is also responsible for the perpetuation of many unfortunate misrepresentations of Hegel’s philosophy. Much of the focus on language in such writers from the 1960s as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault (all of whom were students of Hyppolite⁴²) seems directly inspired by their studies of and with Hyppolite, and this is perhaps even truer of the focus on difference. The recognition of the notion of constitutive and irreducible differing discussed above marked a significant advance in the interpretation of Hegel’s Science of Logic and of Hegel’s philosophy in general. Hyppolite, however, also put his authority behind the perpetuation of more familiar cartoons of Hegel’s engagement with the themes of dialectic, synthesis, and contradiction, with the result that Hegel’s own profound reflections on the relationship between difference, opposition, and contradiction have largely been lost on a generation of philosophers who made a point of distancing themselves

⁴². Deleuze dedicated his first book, Empiricism and Subjectivity (1953), to Hyppolite; and Foucault, who succeeded him at the Collège de France, acknowledged his importance on several occasions, including at his memorial at the École Normale Supérieure, where, noting Hyppolite’s influence as a teacher, he said: “All the problems which are ours – we his former students or his students of today – all these problems are ones that he has established for us” (“Jean Hyppolite: 1907–1968,” in Dits et écrits, Daniel Defert and François Ewald [eds] [Paris: Gallimard NRF, 1994], vol. I, 785).
from a notion of difference-as-contradiction that they attributed to Hegel but that has very little connection with anything in Hegel's actual philosophy.

Derrida, in his “deconstruction,” is obviously and explicitly influenced by Hegel in many ways. Although Derrida at a number of points avows a distancing of himself from Hegel, it is to his actual works that one must turn to determine the relationship of deconstruction and Hegel's dialectical phenomenology. It is particularly in Glæs (1974) that Derrida demonstrates most effectively his appreciation of Hegel's philosophy, but the Hegelianism of Derrida's thinking is already manifest in his writings on phenomenology from the 1950s and early 1960s. Most definitively he, like Merleau-Ponty, embraces Hegel's method, and the ontology of difference.

Hyppolite's discussion of Hegel rightly showed that “the absolute” both can never appear as such and yet nevertheless must always be appearing in and as something or other. This is the relation between the ontological and the anthropological, between the “origin” and the site that conditions the origination of that origin. This description conforms almost exactly to the notion of différance that Derrida introduced in his discussion of Husserl in Speech and Phenomena in 1967, and these notions were already present in his writings on Husserl between 1954 and 1962. Especially in The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology (1954), and Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry (1962), Derrida grapples with this theme of the emergence of the ontological within the phenomenological, or of the ideal within the historical.

In The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Phenomenology, Derrida looks at Husserl's works from the Philosophy of Arithmetic through The Crisis of the European Sciences to note the abiding tension between, on the one hand, the ideal value of universal and necessary truths (mathematics), “transcendental”


44. Excellent treatments of these texts are Leonard Lawlor, Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), and Joshua Kates, Essential History: Jacques Derrida and the Development of Deconstruction (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005).

45. See also Jacques Derrida, ““Genèse et structure’ et la phénoménologie,” in Entretiens sur les notions de genèse et de structure, Maurice de Gandillac (ed.) (Paris: Mouton, 1965); revised and published in English as “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology,” in Writing and Difference, 154–68.
ideas such as “the thing in general,” and essences, and, on the other hand, the empirical genesis of meaning within experience. Derrida’s argument is analogous to Merleau-Ponty’s in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, which sees each philosophical *topos* as motivating both a rationalist account that begins from the necessary pre-givenness of ideal truths (in order to account for the apodicticity) and an empiricist account that begins from the necessary historical accomplishment of meanings (in order to account for the relevance to experience).

Following Husserl’s own analyses of the origin of sense, Derrida shows that this “original“ must *already* be characterized by an irreducible alterity. In his working through of Husserl’s *Lectures on Internal Time-Consciousness*, Derrida shows that, in Husserl, the “original” “absolute” must be an engagement with the real that is a temporally thick moment, a duration, which means that the experience of meaning is already characterized by a relationship to – a retaining of – the past (and future), and thus, by its own terms, is already not first: it is itself delayed with respect to itself, self-differing. Husserl’s own search for an entirely immanent, self-constituting/constituted meaning thus completes itself in the discovery of a moment that transcends itself; an immanence that is already inherently characterized on its own terms as a relation to outside.46 Sense is thus irreducibly characterized by what Derrida came to refer to as “*diff érance,*” here understood through the irreducible temporality of sense.47

In the “Introduction” of 1962, these same themes are replayed with special attention to the nature of writing (a theme introduced in Husserl’s text on the origin of geometry), and this provides the occasion for Derrida to develop a further understanding of this notion of *diff érance* through the irreducible role of signs in sense. Basically, any “moment” of sense can function only by being determinate – having a meaning of its own – and by serving as a pointer to other sense – having its meaning outside itself. Determinacy is thus a sign inasmuch as it embeds itself/is embedded in a contextualizing system of reference. A sign is a mark, a contingent, historical, empirical specificity that, by invoking a transcending meaning, inaugurates the engagement with an inexhaustible sense that can be universally repeated. Meaning is thus founded in the sign, always second to a graphic difference (as Saussure argued) which itself has its character of sign only on condition of its revelation of an inexhaustible sense.48

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47. In some respects this work, like that of Trân Đức Thao, may be functioning primarily to establish the necessity to reinterpret Husserl’s transcendental ego in terms of Heidegger’s being-in-the-world, thus reflecting more the emphasis of the “humanist” appropriations of phenomenology from the 1940s.

and the determinate, the ideal and the empirical, are thus intertwined, each the origin of the other, irreducibly different but mutually implicated: “contaminated.” The “original” is always already delayed, a meaning always interpreted by the very sense it inaugurates, always thus a “representation” of an infinitely repeatable sense that exceeds this trace, and thus always already available to others, and thus always inherently in dispute.

The phenomenological tradition, which began with Husserl as the imperative to describe what presents itself thus concludes, in Derrida, with the recognition that “what presents itself” is the unpresentable, that is, appearing is always the disappearing of the writing that is its condition (a theme that was seen to intersect with Lacan’s psychoanalysis, and the notion of an originate desire always disappearing behind that normalizing language that mediates its presence, its “presentability”). Descriptive phenomenology will never be present at the origin of meaning, but will always be instead the revelation of its own condition in a givenness for which it can never account but to which it must respond and from which it is given its resources.

Derrida’s taking up of Husserl in these early works is highly influenced by Hegel. The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Phenomenology and “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” (1959) both draw explicitly on Hegel, although the sense of Hegel that Derrida deploys is not highly refined. In the “Introduction to Husserl’s Origin of Geometry,” however, Derrida’s relationship to Hegel is significantly more refined, apparently through the direct influence of Hyppolite. In this work, Derrida remarks that Logic and Existence “lets the profound convergence of Hegelian and Husserlian thought appear.”

We saw above that Hegel’s notion of an originary differing – the core of Derrida’s notion of différence – is a prominent theme in Logic and Existence, and the importance of this for the development of Derrida’s appropriation of phenomenology is made clear in a note in his 1964 “Violence and Metaphysics”: “Hegel’s critique of the concept of pure difference is for us here, doubtless, the most uncircumventable theme. Hegel thought absolute difference, and showed that it can be pure only by being impure.” Presumably through the direct influence of Hyppolite, Derrida was able to recognize in Hegel the very terms of his own most central philosophical (non)concept.

These early works of Derrida from the 1950s and 1960s parallel very closely in time and in content the work done by Merleau-Ponty himself on the theme of the origin of geometry, both in the “Cogito” chapter of the Phenomenology of Perception and in his lecture course on Husserl’s “The Origin of Geometry” from

49. Ibid., 67 n.62.
1959–60, entitled “Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology.” In these works of Derrida, as in the work of Merleau-Ponty generally, the philosophy that emerges is not a criticism of Husserlian phenomenology but rather stays with Husserl to the point that phenomenology shows its own limits, shows its own reliance on what exceeds it. This method of staying with the phenomenon and allowing it to demonstrate its own nature without external imposition is, of course, the method called for by Hegel, and, indeed, with both philosophers, their resulting philosophy can with equal legitimacy be called Hegelian or Husserlian, although both of these philosophers rhetorically identify themselves more primarily with Husserl.

But although Derrida and Merleau-Ponty are remarkably similar in their philosophical projects (and, indeed, are remarkably close to Hegel), the works ultimately have a rather different style. In his earlier works especially, (less so in late works such as Aporias, for example), Derrida uses the fundamental insights about writing as a motivation to work from the themes of language and to focus on the character of written texts (in the familiar sense of that designation), whereas Merleau-Ponty works much more from the phenomena of human engagement. The result of this is that Derrida’s work links him much more with the traditions and trajectories of structural linguistics and literary criticism, while Merleau-Ponty’s work intersects more obviously with “humanist” phenomenology and existentialism and with psychology. Structuralism in linguistics had already been embraced as a response to “humanism,” as a way to displace the human subject’s centrality by showing the embeddedness of meaning in “inhuman” systems (a tradition for which the Hegelianized psychoanalysis of Lacan was already significant). While Merleau-Ponty, in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence,” had already established a connection with Saussure’s linguistics, it was much more the work of Derrida that had the transformative force of allowing the seemingly more humanistic tradition of existential phenomenology to be displaced from the center of French thought by the tradition of structural linguistics in the later 1960s.51

Throughout each of the stages of its development from the 1920s to the 1960s, French philosophy took powerful and productive inspiration from Hegel’s philosophy. This intellectual world also produced, in Jean Wahl, Alexandre Koyré, and Jean Hyppolite, three of the most sympathetic and insightful of Hegel’s interpreters. The engagement with Hegel was hearty: it was enthusiastic and polemical, and it was rooted in a real sense of the power of Hegel as an interlocutor, and of the importance of grappling with the specifics of his text. The generation of French thinkers that followed this period, however, seem in many cases to have accepted a “received” Hegel, which carries on the misrepresentations and

inadequacies of these earlier Hegel interpreters as much as it carries on their insights. It seems unfortunate that the work of Hegel, which was so consistently essential to this history of the development of French philosophy, now suffers misrepresentation at the hands of later French thinkers who consistently adopt a received anti-Hegelian rhetoric in their philosophizing, rather than generating their own, reinvigorated Hegel. It is worth remembering that Wahl, Koyré, and Hyppolite produced their Hegel-interpretations in large measure to correct existing misrepresentations, and it is this spirit, rather than the imperfect letter of their interpretations, that should be carried on.

MAJOR WORKS

Jean Hyppolite


Alexandre Kojève


Alexandre Koyré


Jean Wahl


Eric Weil


I. THE ORIGINS OF EXISTENTIALISM IN PREWAR FRANCE

Today, “existentialism” broadly construed refers to the lives and works of a number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary and philosophical figures. Fyodor Dostoevsky, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche¹ are commonly regarded as the predecessors of a diverse set of twentieth-century thinkers, including Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers (Germany);² Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Emmanuel Levinas, Gabriel Marcel, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre (France);³ José Ortega y Gasset, Miguel de Unamuno, and Xavier Zubiri (Spain).⁴

¹ Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche are discussed in detail in essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*.
² Jaspers and Heidegger’s early works are discussed in essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.
³ Simone de Beauvoir (January 9, 1908–April 14, 1986; born and died in Paris, France) was educated at the Sorbonne (1926–29). Her influences included Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, and she held appointments at the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly, Paris (1929), and several lycées in Marseille, Rouen, and Paris (1930–43).
⁴ Albert Camus (November 7, 1913–January 4, 1960; born in Mondovi, Algeria; died in Villeblevin, France) was educated at the University of Algiers (1930–33). His influences included Heidegger, Husserl, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche.
⁵ For more on Marcel, see the essay by Andreas Grossmann in this volume.
⁶ The focus of this essay on existentialism in France has made it impossible to integrate the Spanish existentialists into the following account. But their work is too important to pass over without comment. For that reason, readers will find a brief introduction to the work of Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, and Zubiri in the Appendix to this essay.
and Frantz Fanon (Martinique). Although Sartre and Beauvoir are the figures most readily identified with existentialism, generally speaking what unites existentialists, or philosophers of existence, in the twentieth century is the analysis of “concrete” or “lived experience” – “existence” broadly construed – as opposed to a second-order reflection on the sciences. The existentialists coupled the rejection of scientific reflection with the rejection of ideal reflection, especially a reflection directed toward ideal values.

The term “existentialism” gained immense popularity in France in the 1940s; however, it was not immediately embraced by anyone to whom it was applied and was ultimately rejected by most. Beauvoir recounts her embarrassment at not even understanding “the meaning of the word ‘existentialist’” as late as 1943. Nevertheless, Beauvoir and Sartre’s lives and works became inescapably linked to the term. By the end of the 1940s, Sartre and Beauvoir were not only forced to adopt the label “existentialist,” but were also expected to define and defend “existentialism.” While Sartre’s 1945 lecture “Existentialism is a Humanism” is the most famous of these explanations/apologies, Beauvoir also wrote several popular defenses of existentialism in the immediate postwar period, and her own philosophical works were published next to Sartre’s under the same banner. Others were less willing to accept the label mainly because of its association with Sartre. After Marcel first applied the term to a “resistant Sartre” in 1945, he ironically found himself having to distinguish his own version of “existentialism” from that of Sartre – even though he preferred the term “neo-Socratic” for himself. Other members of the previous generation who directly influenced Sartre also found themselves having to distinguish their work from his: Jaspers rejected the term as only partially representative of his work because the anal-

5. Frantz Fanon (July 20, 1925–December 6, 1961; born in Martinique, French Antilles; died in Washington, DC) studied medicine at the University of Lyon (1947–51). His influences included Césaire, Freud, Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre and he held appointments in the psychiatry department, at Blida-Joinville Hospital, Algeria (1953–56).


ysis of existence makes up only one of three main parts of his philosophy;\textsuperscript{10} Heidegger regarded the analysis of human existence as merely a means to the understanding of Being and so preferred the term “ontology.”

The application of the term existentialism was problematic for Sartre’s own generation as well. Sartre applied the label to Camus, who he claimed inaugurated a new “existentialist literature”;\textsuperscript{11} but later, both Camus and Sartre distinguished the latter’s “existentialism” from the former’s “absurdism.”\textsuperscript{12} Merleau-Ponty preferred the term “philosophy of existence,” but later even rejected that description of his work. Although Levinas has come to represent “the philosophy of the Other,” his early work in fact focused on the relationship between existents and existence; indeed, he was the only member of the generation to include the term “existence” in the title of his major early work (\textit{Existence and Existents}). Thus, both Sartre’s immediate predecessors and contemporaries had to situate their work in relationship to his. The same is largely true for the next generation of thinkers educated in France. Fanon, one of the most significant social and political theorists of the next generation who has subsequently come to be known as the father of black existentialism,\textsuperscript{13} also situated his work explicitly in relation to Sartrean existentialism. This chapter will focus on French (or francophone) existentialism as it emerged in response to Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerean ontology. It is organized primarily around Sartre, who occupies a privileged place in the history of existential phenomenology as the dominant figure to whom everyone (including those who influenced him) was required, in some way, to respond.

The origins of existentialism as a twentieth-century philosophical movement, to a great extent, can be traced back to an influx of German philosophy in France, primarily the works of Nietzsche, Husserl, Scheler, Scheler, and


Heidegger, and secondarily those of Hegel, Marx, and Kierkegaard, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. With respect to phenomenology, the late 1920s witnessed the first book-length study of phenomenology in France; translations of key phenomenological works; Husserl’s Parisian lectures; and the Heidegger–Cassirer disputation in Davos, Switzerland, attended by young intellectuals from both sides of the Rhine.\(^{14}\) The early 1930s added two more book-length studies of the phenomenological movement (one by Georges Gurvitch and another by Levinas\(^{15}\)), and saw the publication in 1932 of Jean Wahl’s Vers le concret, very much informed by Wahl’s reading of Being and Time,\(^{16}\) and French translations of Husserl’s Cartesian Meditations and two essays by Heidegger.\(^{17}\) This largely receptive phase of the phenomenological movement in France was followed by a wave of original works.\(^{18}\) While phenomenology exercised some influence on established thinkers such as Gabriel Marcel and Eugene Minkowski,\(^{19}\) the first great series of original phenomenological studies was produced by Sartre, including The Imagination: A Psychological Critique (1936), The Transcendence of the Ego (1937), Nausea (1938), The Emotions: Outline of a Theory (1939), and The Imaginary (1940). Today, two essays by Levinas – “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism” (1934) and On Escape (1935) – also stand out from this early period owing to recent interest in political phenomenology. The decade

\(^{14}\) The first book-length study was Jean Hering’s Phénoménologie et Philosophie religieuse. Max Scheler’s The Nature of Sympathy was the first work by a phenomenologist translated into French and was followed by Karl Jaspers’s General Psychopathology, which was proofread by Sartre and Nizan. See The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Volume 1: A Bibliographical Life (Evaston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974). The Heidegger–Cassirer disputation was attended by, for example, Eugen Fink, on the German side, and Levinas and Jean Cavaillès, on the French side.


\(^{16}\) In Search for a Method, Sartre mentions Wahl’s text as enjoying a “great success” among his generation (Search for a Method, Hazel E. Barnes [trans.] [New York: Knopf, 1963], 19).

\(^{17}\) Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?” and “On the Essence of Ground,” both in Pathmarks, William McNeill (ed.) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 82–96 and 97–135, respectively. “What is Metaphysics?” was originally published in Bifur 8 (1931); Sartre’s “Légend de la vérité” was also published in the same issue.

\(^{18}\) For the characterization of the first phase of the phenomenological movement as primarily a receptive phase, to be distinguished from the next productive phase of the movement, beginning with Sartre, see Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction, 3rd rev. and enl. ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 425–47.

\(^{19}\) See, for example, the essays published in Recherches philosophiques, including Marcel’s “Esquisse d’une phénoménologie de l’avoir” (vol. 3, 1933/34) and “Aperçus phénoménologiques sur l’être en situation” (vol. 6, 1936/37); Minkowski’s “Esquisses phénoménologiques” (vol. 4, 1934/35) and “Le problème du temps vécu” (vol. 5, 1935/36).
immediately preceding the Second World War thus marked, as Merleau-Ponty recounts in “The Philosophy of Existence” (1959), “the moment of [his generation’s] great initiation into the philosophy of existence.”

At the time of his death in 1938, Husserl’s main published works could have given the impression of reducing the whole of conscious life to theoretically “pure” (or representational) acts. Yet, prior to Husserl’s death, both Sartre and Levinas also saw what the latter called “the very wide extension of the Husserlian notion of intentionality” (TIH 44). For each, the fecundity of the Husserlian notion of intentionality depended on freeing it from the restrictions imposed by Husserl’s concerns for the foundations of the formal sciences (logic, arithmetic, and geometry). Following Scheler and Heidegger’s lead, both Sartre and Levinas sketched the structures of intentionality in affective and practical life. For them, being is irreducible to its mode of appearance to “pure” consciousness: the world itself is essentially a wanted or a hated world – beautiful or ugly, alluring or repulsive, charming or horrifying. Again, following Heidegger, Sartre and Levinas saw in Husserl the possibility of getting beneath traditional subject–object dualism and, so, beyond the impasse between idealism and realism. In The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology (1930), the work that introduced Sartre to phenomenology, Levinas argues that “[t]he precise function of intentionality [in Husserlian phenomenology] is to characterize consciousness as a primary and original phenomenon, from which the subject and the object of traditional philosophy are only abstractions” (TIH 48). Sartre’s The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness also denied the primacy of the “I think.” By distinguishing between a prereflective, spontaneous consciousness and reflexive consciousness and by describing how the act of reflection constitutes an empirical ego, he shows how the subject–object correlation depends on the existence of an “absolute, impersonal consciousness” (TE 106). Later, in the Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty would note that “Husserl’s originality lies beyond the notion of intentionality; it is to be found in the elaboration of this notion and in the discovery, beneath the intentionality of representations, of a deeper intentionality, which others have called existence.”

“consciousness of…” thus opened the possibility of an analysis of concrete life beyond its representational function.

French existential phenomenologists also emphasized not serene reflection but “limit-situations” (an idea inherited from Jaspers and employed effectively by Heidegger in *Being and Time*) as providing concrete access to the level of existence, which remains hidden to theoretical life. Beauvoir aptly describes the significance of the limit-situation thus: “[I]t is in these privileged cases that man discloses and manifests his essence in a way that is more pure and necessary than in daily life.”23 While in *Being and Time* Heidegger had presented anxiety as a privileged mode of access, interestingly, in the 1930s both Sartre and Levinas, each apparently without knowledge of the other, presented nausea as a revelatory experience. In *Nausea*, Sartre describes how in the experience of nausea existence loses its status as an abstract philosophical category and appears as “the very paste of things.”24 Nausea reveals existence to be contingent, without reason, absurd – superfluous, yet also impossible to abandon: “Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness and dies by chance. … Existence is a fullness which man can never abandon.”25 In *On Escape*, Levinas similarly presents nausea as an experience that shows existence to be a fact from which it is impossible to escape. Nausea is a desperate “effort to get out [of] the fact of being riveted” to oneself: “We are there, and there is nothing more to be done, or anything to add to this fact that we have been entirely delivered up, that everything is consumed.”26 For Levinas, then, “The experience that reveals to us the presence of being as such, the pure existence of being, is an experience of its powerlessness, the source of all need” (OE 69). The profound link between Sartre’s and Levinas’s early works and the major works of existential phenomenology in the 1940s is a shared concern for and manner of approaching the common theme of “existence” inspired by, if not entirely faithful to the letter of Husserlian phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty’s utilization of abnormal psychology (for example, Minkowski’s analysis of the schizophrenic’s lived experience of space) functions in the same way as these first-person descriptions in Sartre’s and Levinas’s early works. Conversely, for Beauvoir and Fanon, the significance of being a woman or having black skin in a white man’s world, respectively, is concretely revealed from the start by the shock of not being able to escape the surveillance of another – which marks the end of all naïveté.

Against the background of war, existentialism emerged as a major cultural phenomenon in the 1940s largely because of popular literary and political writings by Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and Camus, including the publication of the newspapers *Les Temps modernes*, edited by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Beauvoir, and *Combat*, edited by Camus. The war’s end also brought with it a major wave of criticisms from the general public as well as from intellectuals on the political Left and Right, directed particularly against Sartrean existentialism. Sartre famously catalogues some of the criticisms from both the Marxist Left and the Catholic Right in the opening pages of “Existentialism is a Humanism.”\(^\text{27}\) Beauvoir succinctly summarizes the charges against existentialism in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*: “[I]t is … claimed that existentialism is a philosophy of the absurd and of despair. It encloses man in a sterile anguish, in an empty subjectivity. It is incapable of furnishing him with any principle for making choices.”\(^\text{28}\) The more philosophically significant objections were aimed at Sartre’s presentation of his ontology in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). *Being and Nothingness* thus serves as an essential point of departure for approaching a series of foundational texts of French existential phenomenology, especially those by his contemporaries and closest associates: Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* and Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

Camus’s thesis of absurdism was an important point of reference in the reception of existentialism. Although Sartre and Camus were one in their insistence on the meaninglessness of the world, Camus’s absurdism was largely born of his reading of nineteenth-century philosophical and literary texts, especially those of Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. In his 1942 *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus describes the feeling of absurdity as “born of the confrontation between the human call and the unreasonable silence of the world.”\(^\text{29}\) The feeling of the absurd arises in the human being’s confrontation, for example, with mortality or the baselessness of absolute ideals. Consciousness of the absurd, however, does not simply destine the human being to meaninglessness, which could be used to justify crime, oppression, and murder. Instead, for Camus, “the man of the absurd” may also be a “man of revolt” who transforms values. Camus’s philosophy of revolt would not be developed until later, in *The Rebel* (1951), but

\(^{27}\) Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 17–18.


already in the early 1940s one hears the emergence of an ethics of the absurd that orients human beings to a concern for injustice in the world. Although Camus’s absurdism was formulated independently of Sartrean ontology, its moral and political meaning would be subsequently deepened in relation to Sartre’s own attempts to work out the implications of existentialism.30

Sartre opens Being and Nothingness by making a distinction between two irreducible regions of being characteristic of inert objects, on the one hand, and consciousness, on the other, which also make up two aspects of the self: being-in-itself and being-for-itself. For Sartre, things simply are: “being in-itself is what it is.”31 This is not to say that things are in the sense that their meaning is forever fixed and unchangeable. Things are, rather, determinations of being whose meaning is disclosed by the for-itself. Being-for-itself, to the contrary, is not simply what it is: being-for-itself is “being what it is not and not being what it is” (BN 28). Sartre’s contradictory formulation is meant to express the essential noncoincidence of human reality.32 To be human is to exist in such a way that one is not simply present to oneself in the manner of things. Being-for-itself is a negation of being and a desire for being – a lack of being, nothingness, or negating activity (“nihilation”), which at the same time discloses the meaning of being-in-itself in this very act of negation.

Sartre further describes human reality in terms of a tension between transcendence and facticity. Negatively, transcendence refers to the capacity of consciousness to escape being-in-itself; positively, the desire “to be” transcends being-in-itself by projecting possibilities into the future – possibilities that it is not, but that it has to be. Positively, the desire to be such-and-such aims to accomplish the kind of identity that is specific to the being of things, but which is essentially impossible for conscious beings. Conversely, facticity refers to the way in which transcendence is essentially bound up with already given facts, for example, my place, my past, my environment, my fellowmen, and my death. The characterization of human reality as a tension between transcendence and facticity was meant to reveal a central point: that the meaning of being is not simply given, but is constantly negotiated through the projection of possibilities. The for-itself constantly escapes being-in-itself by projecting itself toward a yet to be determined or possible future; however, this escape can never be total, since it is always bound to given material, social, and historical conditions. The impossibility of realizing the desire to be what one is, that is, of attaining

30. See section III of this essay.
32. “La réalité humaine” was the French translation of Heidegger’s term for existence, Dasein.
the identity of being-for-itself and being-in-itself, is what leads Sartre to define "man" as a "useless passion" (BN 615).

The refusal to accept what one is (facticity) or the affirmation that one is simply what one is not (transcendence) is at the root of the phenomenon of bad faith: “The condition of the possibility for bad faith is that human reality, in its most immediate being, in the intra-structure of the prereflective cogito, must be what it is not and not be what it is” (BN 112). In bad faith, one treats oneself as an object. Temporally speaking, one identifies with either one's past (facticity) or one's future (transcendence). The fact that the transcendence of the for-itself is essentially tied to past, or to the world within which one finds oneself always already entangled with things and others, implies that human reality is essentially being-in-situation. For Sartre, being in a situation is, at once, being-there and being-beyond (BN 703). The idea that consciousness projects itself toward the future and thereby escapes its given condition, unlike the being of things, was inspired by Heidegger's conception of the thrown-project in Being and Time. The circle of selfhod (ipseity) – the tension between transcendence and facticity, or what is not yet and what already is and has been – thus articulates the temporal structure of human reality.

"To exist" in this sense is not to be alone among inert things within the world, but to be in relation to others; being-for-others is an essential fact of human reality. Furthermore, since each individual aims to re-create the given world in its own image, Sartre saw intersubjective conflict as the fundamental relation to others. Sartre utilizes Hegel’s master–slave dialectic, in which each participant desires the death of the other, as his point of departure for his descriptions of concrete relations to others. To aim at the “death” of the other for Sartre is first and foremost to attempt to subordinate the other’s freedom to one’s own. Sartre develops this struggle to the death through an analysis of “the gaze” or “the look” (le regard). The Other, he maintains, “is on principle the one who looks at me” (BN 345). The fact of being affected by the look of the Other introduces essential modifications into the structure of human reality. To exist is also to be an object within another’s world. The meaning of my existence is not solely determined by me. In the phenomenon of shame, for example, I experience myself as I am seen by the Other. The gaze of another reduces me to the status of a thing: “Shame reveals to me that I am this being” (BN 351).

The linchpin of Being and Nothingness – its various analyses of concrete experience and the basic structures of being they are meant to disclose – is what Sartre refers to as his “ontological understanding of freedom” (BN 612). More fundamental than political freedom, ontological freedom is the originary spontaneous movement of the for-itself, which tends beyond given facts toward possibilities projected into the future. To be “absolutely” free, however, is not the capacity to do what can be conceived without contradiction, nor is it the ability
to satisfy one’s desires or to achieve one’s goals. Ontological freedom is an origin-
ary relation to the given world; in other words, freedom is essentially situated: “the
situation … is an ambiguous phenomenon in which it is impossible for the
for-itself to distinguish the contribution of freedom from that of brute existence” (BN 627). A corollary of the thesis of absolute freedom is total responsibility. If
I am never wholly determined by the givens of my situation, then I am totally
responsible for myself and for the world conditioned by my acts, whether these
acts are due to explicit, reflective decisions or prereflective, spontaneous choices.
To choose not to act, as in, for example, the phenomenon of apathy, is still a
choice for which I am responsible. Sartrean freedom even renders one respon-
sible for that which one seemingly could not have even chosen: the very shape
of the social and historical world into which one is born. To be free is not to be
determined to be or to do this or that by “the facts”; it is to be unable to escape
the fact that I am absolutely responsible for everyone and everything – human
reality is irrevocably “condemned to be free.”

Sartrean ontology – including its apparent dualism between the in-itself and
the for-itself, his conflictual model of human relations or being-for-others, as
well as his de-emphasis of the constraints of facticity in his hyperbolic formul-
ations of freedom – was the subject of controversy from the start. Perhaps the
most significant critique of *Being and Nothingness* was leveled by Merleau-
Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty’s magnum
opus can be conceived as offering an alternate ontology in light of what he takes
to be the defects of Sartre’s ontology. Merleau-Ponty criticizes Sartre for main-
taining an untenable dualism between being-for-itself and being-in-itself and,
hence, for his conception of the subject as self-transparent and absolutely free.
Merleau-Ponty, therefore, draws more attention (than Sartre) to the funda-
mental ambiguity inherent to human existence. By making the body the middle
term between consciousness and being, on the one hand, and that by which
one participates in a common existence with others in a shared world, on the
other, he emphasizes the opacity and weight of being – the obscure, anonymous
background of existence. He thus highlights the limits of self-consciousness and
freedom:

Our freedom, it is said, is either total or non-existent. … If indeed we
place ourselves within being, it must necessarily be the case that our
actions must have their origin outside us, and if we revert to consti-
tuting consciousness, they must originate within. But we have learnt
precisely to recognize the order of phenomena. We are involved in
the world and with others in an inextricable tangle. The idea of situ-
ation rules out absolute freedom at the source of our commitments,
and equally, indeed, at their terminus. (PP 454)
These and other, often implicit, points of contention between Merleau-Ponty and Sartre would become more explicit in their political debates throughout the 1940s and 1950 (see section III, below).

Beauvoir’s position vis-à-vis the opposition between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty is an ambiguous one. On the one hand, Beauvoir might be thought to have launched an implicit defense of Sartrean ontology against Merleau-Ponty’s criticisms, when she developed the concept of ambiguity – a term exploited by both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty – in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. There, Sartre’s work takes pride of place, but remarkably she never mentions Merleau-Ponty, despite the fact that she had favorably reviewed the *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945. On the other hand, in *The Prime of Life* she recounts having arguments at this time with Sartre about the situation. Additionally, her review of the *Phenomenology of Perception* might be read as indicating that she found Merleau-Ponty to offer a richer ontological framework. Nevertheless, Beauvoir’s philosophical development was not merely parasitical on the debates between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. In her first philosophical essay, “Pyrrhus and Cineas” (1944), she began to develop her own original analyses of concrete existence, subsequently deepened in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. In opposition to the absurdity and despair that characterized the mood of the period and colored the reception of existentialism, she identified the spontaneous creation of meaning through the project as “the joy of existing” and characterized the world as “a source of joy” (EA 41). Further, she emphasized the weight of the situation and the difficulties it posed for the oppressed, an insight that would reveal its larger significance in *The Second Sex*. Finally, while Beauvoir presented conflict with others as necessary, this conflict was counterbalanced, if not underwritten, by an ethical relation, which she characterized as being one of concern, responsibility, and generosity. This authentic relation would function as the measure and signify the proper end of action – even of conflict.

Beauvoir’s analyses of intersubjectivity (or being-for-others) were perhaps her most significant philosophical achievements at the time. In them she maintains that the individual is both separated from and connected to others. For Beauvoir, my existence as a free project fundamentally appeals to the existence of others. In particular, without the Other, my own freedom would harden into “the absurdity of facticity” (EA 17). Beauvoir thus describes this ambiguous relation as a conflict between two freedoms, and she further develops it within an ethical register. Because I am the Other’s facticity, and thereby the condition of the Other’s situation, the Other’s freedom concerns me:

I am there, and for him, I am confused with the outrageous existence of all that is not him. I am the facticity of his situation. The other is free based on that, totally free based only on that, but free facing this and not that, facing me. The fate that weighs on the other is always us.35

When, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir contends that to will one's own freedom is, simultaneously, to will the freedom of all, she may appear to be merely reiterating Sartre's formulation of this idea from his 1945 “Existentialism is a Humanism,” but she had already begun to prepare the ground for this claim in “Pyrrhus and Cineas”.

While the works of Sartre, Camus, Merleau-Ponty, and Beauvoir attracted the attention of intellectuals and the wider public in postwar France (and indeed around the world), Levinas's first major work, *Existence and Existents*, was largely ignored at the time. The book, begun before the war and mostly written while interned in a German prisoner of war camp for French soldiers, includes an apology “for the absence of any consideration of those philosophical works published, with so much impact, between 1940 and 1945.”36 The reference is presumably to Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Instead of directly addressing the works of his contemporaries, Levinas presents his analyses primarily in opposition to Husserl and Heidegger, with whom he had studied in 1928–29: “[W]here the continual play of our relations with the world is interrupted, we find neither death [Heidegger] nor the 'pure ego' [Husserl], but the anonymous fact of existing” (EE 8).37 The centerpiece of *Existence and Existents* is accordingly an analysis of horror as the concrete mode of access to impersonal or anonymous existence (being-in-general), or what Levinas calls the “there is” (*il y a*). Horror reveals a more fundamental dimension of existence than personal existence within the world, a condition that Levinas regarded as not simply given. Freedom in this situation outside of the world is merely a *thought*: “The concept or the hope of freedom explains the despair which marks the engagement in existence in the present” (EE 90). Limited for the most part to the analysis of the relationship between an existent and its existence, the book nevertheless provides a first sketch of an analysis of “the relationship to the Other, as a movement toward the Good” (EE xxvii), which Levinas presents as an asymmetrical, face-to-face,

35. Simone de Beauvoir, “Pyrrhus and Cineas,” in *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, 126.
37. Henri Bergson also served as an important point of reference for Levinas in his early works, although not to the same extent as Husserl and Heidegger.
I–thou relation, contrary to Heidegger’s description of being-with-others in *Being and Time*. Levinas thus shares with Sartre the rejection of Heidegger’s being-with as the primordial relation to others. He first characterized existence as toward others in *Existence and Existents*, but shortly thereafter as being for others – where the “for” has an ethical sense.

Although Levinas did not have a personal relationship with Sartre, like others in the immediate postwar period, he found Sartrean existentialism an unavoidable point of reference. Chief among the works published during this period that address Sartre is “Time and the Other,” a series of four lectures delivered in 1946/47 and published in 1948, which reframes and extends the analyses of *Existence and Existents* in terms of the antinomy between Marxism and existentialism. In this context, Levinas’s critique of Sartre is twofold. On the one hand, Sartre does not fully take account of the limitation imposed on freedom by the materiality of existence: “In Sartre’s philosophy there is some sort of angelic present. The whole weight of the past, the freedom of the present is already situated above matter” (TO 62). On the other hand, Sartre mistakenly conceives of intersubjectivity as a fundamental relation between two opposing freedoms: “[T]he relationship with the Other is entirely different from what the existentialists propose as it is from what the Marxists propose” (TO 79). To a large extent, this entails challenging the primacy of the master–slave dialectic common to both Marxism and existentialism. Levinas’s analysis of intersubjectivity, particularly the relation to “the feminine” in “Time and the Other,” was subsequently attacked by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949). That same year, Levinas employed Sartrean language to express the core idea of his philosophy: “the primary fact of existence is neither the *in itself*, nor the *for itself*, but the ‘for the other.’” Here, as alluded to above, we find for the first time an ethical significance attached to the “for.”

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38. Levinas explicitly connects this relation to the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber.
40. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, H. M. Parshley (trans.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), xxii; hereafter cited as SS followed by the page number. When Beauvoir criticizes Levinas’s description of the relation to the feminine, she fails to note that Levinas’s account took place within a critique of Sartre’s ontology.
Whereas the interwar period may be characterized in terms of the political opposition between French liberalism and German National Socialism, the postwar political situation in France may with some right be characterized in terms of the opposition between the United States and the USSR, or liberalism and communism, with France and, in particular, existentialism somehow caught in the middle. The formation of the broadly leftist *Les Temps modernes* in 1945 by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir, and others was in fact initially conceived as an alternative venue for addressing social and political issues. The review marked the fruitful collaboration between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, but it also instigated an eventual, hostile break, which saw the two develop in different political directions. With the onset of the Korean War, Merleau-Ponty became increasingly withdrawn from politics and repudiated his earlier sympathies with Marxism. Although Sartre’s last interviews would ultimately suggest a break with Marxism, during the 1940s and 1950s Sartre became more committed to politics and more immersed in Marxist thought,ironically in large part owing to his association with Merleau-Ponty. Sartre’s relationship with Camus would likewise suffer as a result of Sartre’s increasing sympathies for Marxism. The postwar political situation thus provided the context for the further development of existential social and political theory. These developments were not limited to the Marxist framework, within which the debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and that between Sartre and Camus were largely played out. First, Levinas and Beauvoir, and then Fanon also made significant contributions, particularly with regard to the complexities of the lived experiences of identity politics.

Sartre’s leftist sympathies provided the ground for the public and hostile break between Sartre and Camus. Both Sartre and Camus equated communism and violence, but whereas Camus rejected communism as rationally justified murder, Sartre embraced revolutionary violence. Camus’s *The Rebel*, published in 1951, presented a notion of “revolt” inspired by Sartre’s “for-itself” but distinguished his sense of revolt from the revolutionary violence that Sartre defended. He identified an originary impulse of freedom beneath historical revolt, the latter of which he claimed transformed revolt into murder in an attempt to overcome the absurdity of human existence. Communism was simply the modern form of this attempt. In the final chapter of *The Rebel*, and without mentioning Sartre or his works by name, Camus distinguished himself from “the existentialists” by

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*42. For a discussion of French Marxism with an emphasis on Sartre, see the essay by William L. McBride in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. McBride also discusses the response to Camus’s *The Rebel*.**
attacking Sartre’s play *The Devil and the Good Lord* for its justification of revolutionary violence. Sartre promised to review the book in *Les Temp Modernes*, but continually delayed his response owing to their friendship. Sartre eventually allowed Francis Jeanson,⁴³ his younger colleague and defender, to review it. Jeanson, like most others on the Left, vehemently opposed and criticized it. The publication of *The Rebel*, and the (silent) debate between Sartre and Camus that took place surrounding it, marked the end of their friendship and solidified their own opposing political positions. While Camus favored a “revolt” that would lead to reform and solidarity, Sartre favored a “revolution” that acknowledged the material needs and experience of the oppressed.⁴⁴

The major criticism of Sartre from the Marxist Left was that his ontology represented the most recent expression of bourgeois individualism and, more generally, that it was incapable of addressing (if not unconcerned with) the pressing ethical, social, and political issues of the time. In this context, Sartre presented his most widely read and controversial essay, “Existentialism is a Humanism.” There, Sartre defines existentialism by the principle according to which “existence precedes essence.” The formulation was at the center of Heidegger’s critique of Sartre in “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” where Heidegger accuses Sartre of simply reversing metaphysics, which had traditionally privileged essence over existence. Sartre later stated that he deeply regretted the over-simplification of the formulation and explained that his formula was meant to be heard within the context of phenomenological analysis in which concrete experience discloses and articulates the essential structures of existence. When Sartre claimed that “existence precedes essence,” he did not intend these terms to be heard in their traditional metaphysical sense, as Heidegger heard them. Sartre’s claim, in fact, was meant to reiterate Heidegger’s own formulation in *Being and Time*: “The essence of Dasein lies in its existence.”⁴⁵ Similarly, in the opening lines of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty highlights this point as phenomenology’s attempt “to put essences back into existence” (PP vii); and Beauvoir, for her part, distinguished existential phenomenology from a philosophy “separating essence from existence.”⁴⁶

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⁴³. Francis Jeanson (1922–2009) was, in addition to being on the editorial board of *Les Temps modernes*, the author of over twenty works, including several on Sartre, Beauvoir, and Algeria. He is perhaps best known for his underground activities in support of the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, for which he was sentenced in absentia in 1960 to ten years in prison (pardoned in 1966).
meant to express his agreement with Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics, the point he drew from the claim was an emphasis on freedom and responsibility:

[T]he first effect of existentialism is to make every man conscious of what he is, and to make him solely responsible for his own existence. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.47

“Existentialism is a Humanism” is significant because it contains Sartre’s initial attempt to work out the ethical and political implications of his ontology.

Prior to the 1945 essay, Sartre had only gestured at the ethical and political import of existentialism. At the end of The Transcendence of the Ego, for instance, he claimed that the existential theory of consciousness sketched there provided the ground of an ethics and a politics that would be “absolutely positive” (TE 106). Similarly, in Being and Nothingness, Sartre gestured twice toward an ethics that would be consistent with his thought.48 But Sartre explicitly formulates the relationship between his “ontological understanding of freedom” and political freedom for the first time in “Existentialism is a Humanism.” There he claims that to will one’s own freedom is simultaneously to will the freedom of all, a formulation, again, that Beauvoir too would favor. In defining human reality in terms of freedom, Sartre expressed the idea that within one’s conscious act is projected a future in which all of humanity is free. The choice that defines the existent’s project is simultaneously the choice of a specific shape of the world in which the freedom of all is realized. Sartre’s emphasis on freedom seems to create an unbridgeable gap between existentialism and Marxism since, according to Marx’s famous formulation, “being determines consciousness,” whereas it would seem that for Sartre “consciousness determines being.” Sartre’s formulation of existentialism as a humanism, however, should not be confused with classical, Western humanism, of which Sartre himself was a staunch critic as early as Nausea. Rather, Sartre meant to establish a new humanism on existentialist principles; that is, on an analysis of sociohistorical struggle based on an open future, but guided by the idea of freedom.

Sartre’s first major attempt at a synthesis of Marxism and existentialism appears in several essays initially published in Les Temps modernes in the early 1950s and later gathered under the title The Communists and Peace. (His first extended critique of contemporary Marxism took shape in “Materialism and

47. Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism, 23.
48. In a footnote to the section on bad faith, Sartre promised an ethics to come (BN 116), and he concluded Being and Nothingness with some preliminary reflections on ethics.
Revolution” in 1946.) Merleau-Ponty in turn wrote several essays collected in Adventures of the Dialectic in 1955. The book concluded with a chapter entitled “Sartre and Ultrabolshevism,” where Merleau-Ponty argued that Sartre’s extreme subjectivism made his ontology irreconcilable with dialectical materialism. In “Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartreanism,” Beauvoir explicitly defended the early Sartre against Merleau-Ponty’s charges and showed how Sartre’s thought had developed between Being and Nothingness and The Communists and Peace. Nonetheless, Sartre’s Critique of Dialectical Reason may still in great respects be seen to respond to Merleau-Ponty’s criticisms in his synthesis of existentialism and Marxism. In Search for a Method, Sartre states that he “accepts without reservation the thesis set forth by Engels in his letter to Marx”: “Men themselves make their history but in a given environment which conditions them.” In the Critique of Dialectical Reason, he uses a quote from Marx’s The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte to make the same point: “Men make their own History … but under circumstances … given and transmitted from the past.” As he would write, regarding Paul Valéry: “Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual, no doubt about it. But not every petit bourgeois intellectual is Valéry. The heuristic inadequacy of contemporary Marxism is contained in these two sentences” (CDR 56). Sartre thus opposes the determinism of orthodox Marxism at the time in favor of “the permanent and dialectical unity of freedom and necessity” (CDR 35). With regard to material existence, the thrown project remains fundamental, but he concretizes it by grounding the project in material needs and the practical field defined by scarcity. With respect to intersubjectivity, Sartre maintained his analysis of “the look,” but he redescribed its significance in terms of a social situation of alienation produced by a process of serialization. The possibility of the formation of practical groups thus required transcending this alienated condition.

In The Second Sex and Black Skin, White Masks (1952), Beauvoir and Fanon demonstrate the positive value of Sartre’s account of the look in their respective analyses of gender and racial oppression. Phenomena such as race and gender

50. Sartre, Search for a Method, 85.
52. Interestingly, whereas Merleau-Ponty had initially criticized Sartre’s existential Marxism for its distance from Marxism proper, Fanon criticizes Sartre for his proximity to Marxism. This is not to say that Fanon did not recognize the significance of socioeconomic conditions, but rather that its sole focus on class was inadequate for understanding racial colonialism. Fanon’s criticism of Sartre’s subordination of the Négritude movement to a larger socioeconomic dialectic took place in response to Sartre’s “Black Orpheus,” an introduction to an anthology of
may be said to exist not as the result of essential determinations, nor as the mere reflection of group solidarity, but rather as the effect of a lived reality of oppression. Fanon says, for example, “the black soul is a white man's artifact” (BSWM 14). In his account of the colonialism of the Malagasy, he writes, “the Malagasy alone no longer exists … the Malagasy exists with the European … something new had come into being on that island” (BSWM 97). In this sense, it is the white man who gives identity to the black man. Analogously, Beauvoir claimed “man defines woman not in herself but relative to him” (SS xxii). In perhaps the most famous and oft-cited formulation in the history of feminist theory, Beauvoir claims, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (SS 267), a formulation of the lived experience of social oppression that came to represent the revolutionary claim that sex and gender are distinct. Sartrean existentialism thus opened the possibility of accounting for the reality of social identities without falling into essentialism by means of an analysis of racial and gendered experience within determinate social and historical situations. Beauvoir and Fanon, however, were not merely disciples of Sartre. Fanon, for example, was deeply influenced by Merleau-Ponty’s account of the “corporeal schema,” the Négritude movement, and psychoanalysis. Beauvoir’s work actively engaged the histories of philosophy and literature, as well as that of the natural and social sciences. Fanon and Beauvoir offer some of the most provocative and creative analyses of social identity to date.

A number of shorter pieces, including “Some Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism,” show Levinas already addressing the question of Jewish existence prior to the war. After the war, Levinas continued to develop this line of thought, but now primarily in relation to Sartrean existentialism in general and Sartre’s Anti-Semite and Jew in particular. Anti-Semite and Jew provoked harsh criticisms, and Sartre himself admitted many years later that he did not properly treat the subject matter. His most controversial claim was that the anti-Semite makes the Jew. For Sartre, in other words, the sociohistorical conditions of anti-Semitism, rather than the past or a futural purpose, is what makes the Jew a Jew. While Levinas admitted that “Sartre’s notion that Jewish destiny is determined in function of anti-Semitism can be most disappointing,” he also highlighted the positive significance of Sartre’s attempt to criticize anti-Semitism using existentialist principles: “The most striking feature of Sartre’s struggle lies less in his victory than

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[1] For further discussion of Fanon, see the essay by Lewis R. Gordon in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
in the arms he employs. They are absolutely new. He attacks anti-Semitism with existentialist arguments.” 53 Much later, in “A Language Familiar to Us” (1980), Levinas also came to Sartre’s defense, not on the grounds of his account of the Jew, but on the grounds of his account of freedom, which, Levinas says, offered a “fundamental lesson of freedom” or “a message of hope” for a generation for which it had been lost – “regardless of all he might have thought and said” about the Jews (UH 92). In the meantime, Levinas spent much of the 1950s developing the Judaic dimension of his thought, including the notions of “Jewish humanism” and “holiness.” 54 Humanism of the Other (1972), which opens with an essay on Merleau-Ponty, shows, moreover, that the ongoing French debate over humanism and antihumanism provided the cultural context for the publication of Levinas’s last major work, Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence (1974).

IV. THE INVESTMENT OF FREEDOM: THE 1960S AND BEYOND

By the end of the 1960s, Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze would emerge as major voices of a new generation of French philosophers who sought to get out from under the immense shadow cast by existential phenomenology. But neither the birth of a new generation, the deaths of Camus in 1960 and Merleau-Ponty and Fanon in 1961, nor the passage to old age spelled the downfall of existential phenomenology. In fact, the 1960s and 1970s brought forth a second and third wave of major works: beginning with the first volume of Sartre’s Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960), Merleau-Ponty’s Signs (1960), Fanon’s Wretched of the Earth (1961), and Levinas’s Totality and Infinity (1961). These works would be followed by Sartre’s multivolume work on Flaubert, The Family Idiot (1971–72), Levinas’s Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, and Beauvoir’s The Coming of Age (1970), while Beauvoir’s The Second Sex became a major inspiration for feminism’s second wave. As the debate concerning humanism and antihumanism came to the fore, Levinas’s critique of Heideggerian ontology came to be seen in terms of the same debate. In this context, the possibility of an ethics on existential-phenomenological grounds remained a central concern, that – despite their differences – served to unite Sartre and Levinas in opposition to those who would dissolve the subject into the situation (or reduce consciousness to being). The relationship between the existential phenomenology of Sartre and Levinas thus represents one of the major issues of the later period.

53. Emmanuel Levinas, Unforeseen History, Nidra Poller (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 73. Hereafter cited as UH followed by the page number.
54. Many of Levinas’s essays on Judaism were later collected in Difficult Freedom, Seán Hand (trans.) (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, [1963] 1997).
Contrary to the Sartrean conception of freedom as an originary spontaneity, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas refers freedom back to a more fundamental passivity, that is, to a preoriginary alterity that incessantly troubles the identity of the same. Nevertheless, in referring freedom back to an originary passivity, Levinas employs Sartrean language against Sartre:

> Existence is not in reality condemned to freedom, but is *invested* as freedom. Freedom is not bare. To philosophize is to trace freedom back to what lies before it, to disclose the investiture that liberates freedom from the arbitrary. Knowledge as critique, as a tracing back to what precedes freedom, can arise only in a being that has an origin prior to its origin – that is created.55

Contrary to Sartre’s originary spontaneity, Levinas presents the identity of the same as always already troubled by the demands of the Other:

> The subject is “for itself” – it represents itself and knows itself as long as it is. But in knowing or representing itself it possesses itself, dominates itself, extends its identity to what of itself comes to refute this identity. This imperialism of the same is the whole essence of freedom … the Other imposes himself as an exigency that dominates this freedom, and hence as more primordial than everything that takes place in me.56

In his last major work, *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas similarly characterizes responsibility for the other, or the-one-for-the-other, as prior to “committed” (or “engaged”) subjectivity.57

From this perspective, Sartre and Levinas may be seen to defend radically opposed conceptions of subjectivity. However, toward the end of his life, in a series of controversial conversations posthumously published as *Hope Now*, Sartre began to conceive of ethics as foundational to consciousness:

> By “ethics” I mean that every consciousness, no matter whose, has a dimension that I didn’t study in my philosophical works and that few people have studied, for that matter: the dimension of obligation.

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... In my opinion, each consciousness has this ethical dimension; no one ever analyzes it, and I should like us to.58

Sartre formulates a notion of freedom that simultaneously carries “the nature of a requisition” (HN 70) from the thought of ethics in his prior work:

I was looking for ethics in a consciousness that had no reciprocal, no other (I prefer other to reciprocal). Today I think everything that takes place for a consciousness at any given moment is necessarily linked to, and often is even engendered by, the presence of another … To put it differently, each consciousness seems to me now simultaneously to constitute itself as a consciousness and, at the same time, as the consciousness of the other and for the other. It is this reality … that I call ethical consciousness. (HN 71)

The proximity of Sartre’s later thought to Levinas’s was pointed out by Levinas himself in a later interview, where he links his use of the term “for others” to Sartre’s use in Hope Now: “Existing for others does not mean appearing to others but being devoted to others. This position is very close to my idea of both ethics and the general role of the category of ‘for the other’ in the very position of the ego or rather in the deposition of the ‘ego’” (UH 98). Interestingly, in “Meaning and Sense,” an essay (included in Humanism of the Other) in which Levinas frames his thought in relation to Merleau-Ponty’s theory of meaning, Levinas appeals to Sartre’s “striking observation that the Other is a pure hole in the world.”59

These interviews with Sartre were criticized by Beauvoir and others for distorting Sartre’s thought. Indeed, Beauvoir’s own Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre, which included her own interviews with Sartre, largely sought to discredit Hope Now, describing Benny Lévy as having taking advantage of an old man. Others, like Jean-Pierre Boulé, defended the interviews against Beauvoir, insisting that the interviews represented a new stage in Sartre’s thought. Ronald Aronson has suggested that most reactions to Hope Now may be read as various forms of ageism and that a more balanced and responsible approach to the text would be to locate Sartre’s own intention within “several fields of tension,” including the complex relationship with Lévy.60 Sartre was careful to insist that his rethinking of ethics as requisitioned freedom was not foreign to his earlier thought. Indeed,

he claims to have never conceived of the subject as a closed whole: “I really did envisage something that needed to be developed … the dependence of each individual on all other individuals,” where “dependence” does not signal nonfreedom, but rather a constraint that keeps intact free choice (HN 71–2). He thus regarded this “later phase” neither as a break with his earlier thought nor as a distortion of that thought. Rather, he identified an essential moment implicit in his work that needed to be deepened and explored. He refers this moment back to Being and Nothingness and suggests that “requisitioned freedom” as an ethical, “inner constraint” at the foundation of consciousness – that is, a self engendered by otherness in an ethical signification – can be found throughout his writings.

If Sartre gives to us a further determination of the ethical investment of freedom, Levinas’s thought might represent the sustained interrogation of this moment left implicit within Sartre’s philosophical works. For both Sartre and Levinas the ethical demand that “requisitions” or “invests” freedom means that freedom is not arbitrary but ethically elected. Contrary to the traditional opposition between the self-sufficient ego and the self as a mere moment within a general structure or historical movement, both Sartre and Levinas delineate a more primordial relation to others – an ethical demand at the root of political commitments. Indeed, both can be seen as negotiating the sense of responsible freedom within history – a sense given by the needs of others and articulated in terms of one’s response to them.

APPENDIX: EXISTENTIALISM IN SPAIN

The three most important Spanish existentialist philosophers were arguably Miguel de Unamuno, José Ortega y Gasset, and Xavier Zubiri. Unamuno (September 29, 1864–December 31, 1936; born in Bilboa, Spain; died in Salamanca, Spain) was educated at the University of Madrid (BA 1883, doctorate, 1884). His influences included James and Kierkegaard, and he held appointments as Rector at the University of Salamanca (1900–1924, 1930–36). He was a novelist, essayist, poet, playwright, philosopher, philologist, and political figure. The existentialist elements in Unamuno’s works can be found in his two most philosophical works: The Life of Don Quixote and Sancho (1905) and The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and Nations (1913). Both present the two pillars of Unamuno’s thought: (i) the battle between faith and reason, and (ii) the longing

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62. The authors wish to thank Marianna Alessandri for providing this appendix on the Spanish existentialists.
for immortality. The tragic sense of life, for Unamuno, consists in a universal fear of death and longing for immortality, and is something that reason alone cannot alleviate or eradicate. As a self-proclaimed “irrationalist,” Unamuno rejected systematic philosophy and turned to a philosophy of the whole human being, or the “man of flesh and bone.” His thought thus emphasizes not just reason but also imagination, illusion, desire, fear, love, faith, and so on.

Nineteen years Unamuno’s junior, and a philosophical rival, José Ortega y Gasset (May 9, 1883–October 18, 1955; born and died in Madrid, Spain) was educated at the University of Deusto, Bilbao (1897–98), Complutense University of Madrid (1898–1904; doctorate, 1904) and University of Marburg. He was influenced by German neo-Kantianism (Cohen, Natorp) and phenomenology, and he held appointments at the Complutense University of Madrid (1910–36). Ortega was a philosopher, essayist, and literary critic, a student of Hermann Cohen, and an intellectual descendent of Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger. For Ortega, philosophy’s strength is its capacity for conceptual transparency, intelligibility, and clarity. José Ferrater Mora helpfully classified Ortega’s work into three phases: Objectivism, Perspectivism, and Ratio-Vitalism. Ortega’s first phase expressed a preference for abstract, rational ideas above all else, while the second considered the relationships between things to be crucial to understanding any idea. Famously repeating the phrase “I am myself and my circumstance,” Ortega claimed that distinguishing between an individual and her surroundings perpetuates a mistaken description of the world. Ortega’s third phase was his most existential in proclaiming reason as a product of living: “I think because I live.” His main philosophical works are Meditations on Quixote (1914), Invertebrate Spain (1921), and The Revolt of the Masses (1930).

As a student of Ortega, Xavier Zubiri (December 4, 1898–September 21, 1983; born in San Sebastián, died in Madrid) was educated at the University of Madrid (doctorate, 1921) and held appointments at the University of Madrid (1926–36), Institut Catholique, Paris (1936–39), and the University of Barcelona (1940–42), before returning to Madrid where he delivered private cursos (seminars) to a large group of dedicated followers. Zubiri argued for the importance of historical and existential context of thoughts and ideas. He also attempted to combine Aristotelian thought with the phenomenological tradition by claiming that the foundation for thought is not life, but the perception of reality. Like Ortega, Zubiri rejected the portrait of the subject presented in the history of philosophy as somehow detached from life. Instead, he posited that human beings possess “sentient intelligence,” so that what we apprehend is real, although this reality has not been adequately accounted for in the history of metaphysics. His main works include Nature, History, God (1942), On Essence (1962), and the three-volume work, Sentient Intelligence (1980–83).
Jean-Paul Sartre’s fateful encounter with Husserlian phenomenology was the result, in part, of a casual meeting with his erstwhile École Normale Supérieure classmate Raymond Aron, at which the latter, just returned from a fellowship year at the French cultural center in Berlin, waxed enthusiastic about this new approach to philosophy and urged Sartre to apply to do the same thing as he had done. Aron’s main point was that phenomenology, unlike the broadly idealist approach that was still dominating the French intellectual landscape in the early 1930s, opened the way for philosophers to give concrete descriptions even of everyday objects. Sartre applied, and was awarded the grant, which he utilized during the academic year 1933–34.

During this period Sartre did indeed study a number of Husserl’s principal works and wrote a short expository article, “Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l’intentionnalité,” which was first published in

1. Raymond Aron (1905–83) was Professor of Sociology at the Sorbonne (1957–68) and held the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France (1970–83). A close friend of Sartre and Beauvoir during the 1920s–30s, their relationship was strained after the Second World War, as Aron’s politics turned toward classical liberalism. A prolific writer, Aron published over thirty books of philosophy, sociology, history, and political analysis, including *Introduction à la philosophie de l’histoire* (Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the Limits of Historical Objectivity), *La Sociologie allemande contemporaine* (German Sociology), and *L’Opium des intellectuels* (The Opium of the Intellectuals).
2. Jean-Paul Sartre (June 21, 1905–April 15, 1980; born and died in Paris, France) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1924–29). His influences included Heidegger, Husserl, Marx, and Nietzsche, and he held appointments at the Lycée du Havre (1931–33, 1934–36), Lycée de Laon (1936–37), Lycée Pasteur, Paris (1937–39, 1941), and Lycée Condorcet, Paris (1941–44).
the *Nouvelle revue française* in January 1939, in other words five years later, but which Sartre’s bibliographers Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka characterize as extremely important because it marked a major development in his thought and the beginning of a more original philosophical perspective on his part. Far from being esoteric, it stresses the distance of Husserlian phenomenology from the fixation – common, according to Sartre, to both the idealisms and the realisms of the past century – on knowledge as all-absorbing and on subjectivity and the inner life rather than a robust appreciation of things in the world. In short, this essay treated Husserl as a realist, but a realist of an entirely new sort: Aron had been right.

Another product of Sartre’s Berlin year, one that was longer and philosophically more original than “Une idée fondamentale,” was “La Transcendance de l’ego: Esquisse d’une description phénoménologique.” It first appeared as a long article in the journal *Recherches Philosophiques* (1936–37), and was only re-edited and published as a small separate volume in French in 1965. Meanwhile, however, in 1957, an English translation (by Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick) had been published in book form and was widely read and studied by Sartre scholars in the anglophone world. *The Transcendence of the Ego* expresses Sartre’s disappointment with Husserl’s introduction into his thought of the notion of a transcendental ego, which occurred in his Sorbonne lectures of early 1929, *Einleitung in die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, and had first been published in an expanded version in French translation (by Gabrielle Peiffer and Emmanuel Levinas) in 1931: in other words, two years before Sartre was to become aware of phenomenology. Against these *Cartesian Meditations*, the title by which everyone now knows this work, Sartre argues that the hypothesis of a transcendental ego is unnecessary and misleading, since the “I” that thinks is best understood as unsubstantial and spontaneous, not a fixed entity of any kind, whereas the conception of myself and of others as having such-and-such qualities is always a construction, and a corrigible one at that, which is best characterized by using the pronoun-object, that is, “le Moi” or, in English, “the Me.” This work clearly anticipates, in a number of basic respects, the ontological position that Sartre was to spell out in such detail in his *chef d’œuvre*, *Being and Nothingness*, although in the earlier work Sartre had still not developed the systematic terminology (in particular, the three regions of being: in-itself, for-itself, and for-others or for-another) for which the later work is so well known, and he strongly insists there on the impersonality of consciousness in a manner that readers previously familiar only with *Being and Nothingness* usually find

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surprising. The Transcendence of the Ego concludes, in its final paragraph, with a ringing defense of phenomenology against charges that it is ultimately a version of idealism; rather, Sartre contends, phenomenology is the most realistic philosophical movement “in centuries,” opening the way for philosophers to be critical of the world’s many evils (suffering, hunger, war) and hence quite sympathetic with historical materialism without, for all that, subscribing to the “absurdity” of metaphysical materialism. This interesting anticipation of Sartre’s later engagement with Marxism is the only such reference in the essay, but it furnishes valuable evidence against the claim, once quite commonly voiced by some critics, that that engagement constituted a radical break, on Sartre’s part, with the phenomenological tradition as he understood it.

Back in France in the fall of 1934, teaching at a secondary school in Le Havre, Sartre returned to a set of topics that had interested him well before his introduction to Husserl and had, in fact, been the theme of the thesis that he wrote for his diplôme d’études supérieures in 1927: images and the imagination. The first portion of what he completed, intended as an introduction to the full work, was published separately in 1936 under the title L’Imagination; the title of the later English translation is the same, The Imagination. Since it is primarily a historical survey of various earlier theories (associationism, Bergson, the Würzburg School, etc.), one can readily see how Sartre was able to rely primarily on adaptations of his earlier research for much of its content. Only in the brief final chapter does he present Husserl’s phenomenology as the gateway to truly understanding what an image is. But at the same time he is not uncritical, suggesting that, while for the most part Husserl seems to observe the distinction, crucial for Sartre at this point, between imagining and perceiving, he does not provide a full account of what the hyle of an image is, and suggests that there may be a need to go beyond eidetic description (although this must remain the starting-point) to experimentation in order to complete the account. In the final sentence of this book, Sartre promises to undertake a future work containing a phenomenological description of the image structure.

In fact, this work was already largely completed; it had been the decision of the publishing house (Félix Alcan), to publish only the portion that we know as L’Imagination. But the remainder eventually appeared in print in 1940, that is, four years later, under the title L’Imaginaire, psychologie phénoménologique de l’imagination. (To make the bibliographer’s task just a bit more confusing, an early English translation of this was given the title The Psychology of the Imagination, whereas a recent [2004] and much better translation restores

the spirit and letter of the French title: *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination.*) Here, Sartre explores many different forms of image and image-related phenomena, from symbols to dreams, referring to many other writers in addition to Husserl, and concludes with a discussion of art and the aesthetic attitude. Throughout, he remains firmly wedded to the idea that imagination, as that type of consciousness that evokes the “irreal,” is a form of consciousness distinct from such other forms of consciousness as perception, which focuses on the real. As a whole, the work is probably Sartre’s most sustained effort consistently to carry out phenomenological description, and little else, within the framework of Husserlian methodology as he has adapted and reinterpreted it, and in certain ways, in style and range of content, it is anticipatorily reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty’s later and much longer *Phenomenology of Perception*, where this Sartrean study will in fact be cited from time to time.

The next several years saw Sartre involved in various literary efforts, the most important being the ongoing revision of the manuscript of his most famous novel, *Nausea*, and at the same time continuing his secondary school teaching, the venue of which changed from Le Havre to Laon for one year, and then to the Lycée Pasteur in Paris in the fall of 1937. It was then that he undertook, as he explains in his posthumously published *Carnets de la drôle de guerre* (*The War Diaries*),5 to write a long treatise, still in the Husserlian tradition while maintaining a distance from the letter of Husserl’s philosophy, to be entitled *La Psyché*. If we are to believe him (and why not, given the absolutely prodigious quantity of those of his writings with which we are acquainted?), he wrote 400 pages of it in three months, then stopped in order to complete editorial work on his book of short stories (*Le Mur*), and never returned to it. One small portion of it, and only one, was published as a short monograph in 1938: *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions* (*The Emotions: Outline of a Theory*). This work – self-contained, clear, and rather original – analyzes emotions as kinds of “magic” responses that we adopt as ways of coping with new situations, without ever fully succeeding in identifying ourselves with any of our emotions (e.g. never becoming entirely saturated with the anger that we display). It anticipates, in a very interesting way, Sartre’s much more complex critique of traditional views of the human person as consisting of certain fixed qualities, traits of “character,” and so on that will be one of the central messages of *Being and Nothingness*.

Just how does Sartre explain his abandonment of *The Psyche*? Above all, he says, it had to do with his increasing discomfort with what he saw as idealist tendencies in Husserl and his increasing dissatisfaction (of which he only became fully aware in retrospect), during that time, with at least two fundamental issues

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that he found it impossible really to resolve within the Husserlian framework as he had inherited it: the issue, previously mentioned, of the “passive matter” in consciousness to which Husserl had given the name *hyle*, and the question of how to assure oneself that other minds do indeed perceive the same world as I do. At the same time, the gathering war clouds contributed to his distraction from his more austere methodological concerns of the past and motivated him to take seriously, for the first time, the work of Heidegger, which he had previously dismissed as somewhat barbaric. There exists no complete, sustained, systematic Sartrean account of exactly how this first in-depth reading of Heidegger, especially of *Being and Time*, reshaped his own thinking to such an extent as to play a major role in inducing him so quickly to conceive and compose *Being and Nothingness*: we have only some occasional, scattered references to this development in the *Diaries* and in his contemporaneous letters to Simone de Beauvoir. Some scholars have even voiced the suspicion that the systematic ontology elaborated over several hundred pages in *Being and Nothingness* is derivative, not so much from Heidegger despite the numerous texts in which Sartre engages with and critically discusses the latter, but rather from the mind of Beauvoir, who was his closest companion and the prepublication reader of all, or almost all, of his manuscripts (as he was of hers). This suspicion has been further fueled by the relatively recent discovery of diaries that Beauvoir wrote when an adolescent, parts of which evince greater background knowledge of philosophy and greater philosophical creativity during those early years than had previously been attributed to her, as well as by a new awareness that Sartre had read, at an earlier stage than had previously been believed, a draft of her novel, *L’Invitée (She Came to Stay)*, which contains numerous philosophical reflections reminiscent of some basic ideas (particularly concerning relations with others) contained in *Being and Nothingness*. “Thus,” comments a leading Beauvoir scholar, “Beauvoir’s novel, long assumed to be an application of Sartre’s philosophy in his essay, was instead discovered to be one of its sources.”\(^6\) There should be no doubt that Beauvoir was a stronger and more original philosophical thinker than she, partly out of deference to her companion with respect to the domain of philosophy, ever acknowledged. Indeed, her *The Second Sex*, while remaining indebted in some basic ways to Husserlian phenomenology, plows new conceptual furrows that neither Sartre nor any of her other contemporaries came close to exploring in such depth. Nor should there be doubt that she exerted a considerable influence on his thinking. But so did he on hers. Continuing research on the details of exactly how each influenced the other will almost certainly prove valuable, but

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engaging in polemics with a view to disparaging one or the other is unproductive. It is time now to call a (temporary) halt to my chronological narrative and to confront directly the landmark phenomenon that is *Being and Nothingness*.

It is very important, for understanding the evolution of philosophy in the twentieth century, not to forget that the subtitle Sartre gave this work was “Essay in [literally, “of”] Phenomenological Ontology” (*Essai d’ontologie phénoméno-logique*). Ontology had not been a central preoccupation of Husserl’s, although he had left the door open for it as a possibility within the framework of his grand research project. For Heidegger, on the other hand, no aspect of philosophy was of greater importance, even though he gradually came to eschew the word, “ontology,” itself, because of what he came to regard as its deeply misleading connotations. *Being and Nothingness* begins with a somewhat forbidding introductory chapter that purports to establish, giving due credit especially to Husserl and Descartes, that, if we are to overcome the dualism of appearance and being as well as most of the other dualisms (such as realism and idealism) that have long dominated philosophical thought, there must be a “region” of being that is “transphenomenal,” that is, not exhausted in any or all appearances, and yet at the same time is not of a different order of reality from the appearances (in other words, is not some hidden “noumenon”). He calls this region (the term, “region,” is derived from Husserl) “being-in-itself” and concludes that all that we can validly say about it is that it is, that it is what it is, and that it is in itself. In the course of this same analysis he makes reference to consciousness, accepting Husserl’s famous statement that every consciousness is a consciousness-of, and determines that consciousness must belong to a different region of being, which he denominates “being-for-itself.” It would not be a great oversimplification to say that all the rest of this long book is an extended analysis of the interrelationships and interactions between these two regions of being, although almost halfway through Sartre will introduce yet a third “mode of existence” that he will insist is as fundamental as being-for-itself and that he will call “being-for-others” (*pour autrui*, more literally “being for another”).

Sartre proceeds to approach his exploration of the nature of the *pour-soi*, the for-itself, by first examining some familiar experiences of negation and negativity (for which he coins the general term “néagtités”), such as that, dear to the hearts of Kierkegaard and Heidegger before him, of anguish or dread, or that of vertigo, or the discovery that someone whom one is expecting is not present as expected, and so on. The inference that he draws from these analyses is that the for-itself is literally nothing (“nothingness,” *le néant*), in itself. Contrary to

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7. As is, alas, all too often the case, the generally trustworthy, although of course not impeccable, English translation by Hazel Barnes bears a slightly, but importantly, misleading subtitle: *A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*.
Descartes’s conception of the cogito as an immaterial but substantial mind that thinks, consciousness for Sartre is insubstantial but active, spontaneous, free; in his deliberately paradoxical formula, it is the being “that is what it is not and is not what it is.” It is in this early context of elaborating on our experiences of negation that Sartre introduces, as a particular instance to be explored in greater detail, his analysis of “bad faith,” a lie that one tells to oneself, which has since become perhaps the book’s single best-known chapter. Faith itself, he concludes, is what he calls a “metastable” phenomenon.

Sartre’s for-itself can never, as it were by definition, exist apart from the in-itself. Hence, the idea of “facticity,” already proposed by Heidegger, is of crucial importance to him: I always exist, to employ another favorite Sartrean expression (one that gave the title to his ten-volume series of shorter essays, Situations), in situation. As examples of facticity he selects, and analyzes in some detail, my place, my past, my environment, my fellowman, and my death (while assigning to this last a much less central role than it plays in Heidegger’s thought) – in addition to a long discussion of the body as facticity, about which Sartre writes more interestingly and in a more nuanced way than brief summaries of his work usually acknowledge. Although one cannot hope to do more here than skim the surface of the themes developed by him, and then only in a highly selective way, I may note a few more highlights that have attracted particular attention and helped shape a large body of philosophical discussion that was generated in the book’s wake. One is his treatment of values as constructed rather than “given” or “natural”; his famous remark, already adumbrated in The Transcendence of the Ego if not even earlier, to the effect that there is no such thing as a fixed “human nature” epitomizes this. Another highlight is his lengthy treatment of temporality, drawing in some ways on both Husserl and Heidegger and sharing in their critiques of the often taken-for-granted idea of the priority of physical time, but placing in a rather original perspective all three temporal dimensions of past, present, and future. (For Sartre, the past is certainly a part of facticity, as already noted, and yet through our free choices we can and often do alter the meaning of the past, or of any portion thereof; the present takes a certain priority over the other two dimensions; and our “projects” toward the future are fundamental to explaining what it means to act.) Yet a third highlight is Sartre’s proposed solution to the problem of “the Other,” which is to focus on the common experience of being looked at, and hence objectified, by another – an experience that, without involving deductive reasoning or any other type of logical inference, establishes with undeniable certainty that I live in a world with other selves; this notion of the “look” (or “gaze” – le regard) of the Other as a defining characteristic of human experience has been of great influence over a wide range of later thinkers, especially in France. (It is not unreasonable to regard this aspect of Sartre’s philosophy as his response to the dissatisfaction
that he had felt with Husserl’s treatment of intersubjectivity.) A fourth highlight is his chapter on “concrete relations with others,” in which he deals with various possible attitudes and behaviors, particularly of a sexual nature (such as desire, love, sadism, and masochism), starting with the premise that conflict – not always actual, of course, but always potential, given the inevitability of mutual objectification disclosed in the analysis of “the look” – is fundamental to all such relations. Not nearly so unremittingly gloomy as a bare, abstract summary of its topics and themes is likely to make it sound, this series of descriptions of certain concrete human relations is a rather bold venture into territory left mostly unexplored by other philosophers; at the same time, it represents a kind of response to Freud. (This fact is made clearer in parts of the final regular chapter of Being and Nothingness, where Sartre proposes, as a suggestion for others to implement, the development of what he calls “existential psychoanalysis,” to be rooted in his unswerving assumption of the priority of human freedom both as an ontological truth and as basic to the explanation of all human behavior, as opposed to Freudian, or other, determinisms.)

As even this very short condensation of just a few of the principal themes of Being and Nothingness should have made abundantly evident, its atmosphere, if not so clearly in the introductory chapter then certainly thereafter, is light years away from the dominant atmosphere of Husserl’s writings, with their strong emphasis on developing a rigorous methodology. Sartre still makes considerable use, throughout the book, of techniques of phenomenological description – his famous illustrations of “bad faith” beginning with the too-perfect cafe waiter are good examples of this – but most usually at the level of everyday experiences and without observing some systematic protocols that Husserl would have considered necessary. The very centrality for Sartre of the enterprise of ontology, mentioned earlier, is in itself a significant departure from Husserl’s concerns, much closer to Heidegger’s, but also differing considerably from the latter by virtue of the basic contrast between Heidegger’s orientation toward Being and Sartre’s anthropocentrism. (One has only to read and compare Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism” with Sartre’s later-published lecture, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” to see this contrast. While it is true that the lecture is a popularization that makes no mention of the distinction between two or more different kinds of “humanism” that is to be found elsewhere in Sartre’s writings, and while it is also true that Heidegger emphatically denies that his rejection of the “humanism” that he takes Sartre to be endorsing there makes his own position antihuman, the root differences of philosophical perspective are clear.) In addition, Being and Nothingness is suffused with numerous hints, although often they are little more than that, concerning various aspects of value theory: something conspicuously absent from most of Husserl’s work, at least until his final years. Besides the previously mentioned section on “the For-Itself and the Being of Value,” one may cite as
examples Sartre’s famous footnote at the end of his chapter on bad faith that holds out the possibility of a radical escape from bad faith in the form of “authenticity” – a discussion of which, however, he says has no place there; his dismissal of the hypothesis of a God as being the impossible pure confluence of in-itself and for-itself, and his concomitant view of the ultimate human project as that, again an impossibility, of becoming God; and, most important, his promise in the book’s final paragraph to write a book on ethical issues in the future. In short, Being and Nothingness played a key role in opening up an exciting new philosophical and, more generally, intellectual world, one that was to resonate with the spirit of the time that began in France, with the Liberation of Paris in late summer 1944, a little over a year after its publication, and gradually and to some extent came to prevail in much of the rest of the West. Cautious philosophers might refer to the rise of “existential phenomenology” or even of “phenomenological existentialism,” but to the broader public it was simply the vogue of “existentialism.”

Although, of course, Sartre’s more strictly literary works commanded a wider early audience than his long and somewhat difficult philosophical treatise, it would be an error to think, as some have claimed, that Being and Nothingness remained virtually unknown and unappreciated during its first years in print. A survey of early reviews of it reveals a few that were written (e.g. Gabriel Marcel’s first review, published somewhat later but dated “November 1943”8) and others that were already published before or close to the time of the Liberation (e.g. one by an anonymous reviewer for the Revue de métaphysique et de morale and another by Alexandre Astruc, from 19449), a time at which any such activity was necessarily rather difficult. Thereafter, beginning in 1945 (Izard in the Argentine journal Sur, A. J. Ayer in Great Britain, A. de Waelhens in Belgium, P. Godet in Switzerland, and R. M. Albérès, F. Alquié, J. Beaufret, R. Campbell, M. de Gandillac, C.-E. Magny, J. Mercier, and R. Troisfontaines in France), and continuing from early 1946 (H. Arendt, W. Barrett, I. Lepp, J. Wahl, et al.) onward, one finds quite an array of reviewers and their reviews in various publications both in France and elsewhere, with a considerable majority concurring in recognizing the great importance of the new philosophy that it contained – even including those, such as Ayer and Barrett, who for one reason or another did not like it.10 The case of Marcel, at the time probably the best-known original

philosopher among the names I have just mentioned, is especially instructive and interesting in this regard. Although he had invited the young Sartre to present a paper at one of his regular, popular prewar at-home receptions and had encouraged him to expand on the idea of a psychoanalysis of things that had been his theme in that paper, Marcel later developed an ever-increasing bitterness with regard to Sartre’s thought, identifying it with atheism, immorality, and the younger generation; nevertheless, or perhaps in part just for this reason, Marcel did not attempt to deny Sartre’s significance and influence. By 1945, Sartre had achieved the celebrity status that he continued to have for the next decade or so, and it was his philosophy, as much as and probably more than his dramas, his prose fiction, or his rapidly expanding work as an essayist and editor identified with the new journal, *Les Temps modernes*, that gave him this status.

Given the principal theme of the present volume, which is three crucial mid-century decades of responses to phenomenology, I think it would be a mistake to devote space in this essay to Sartre’s extensive work between 1943 and 1960 in the other genres that I have just mentioned (with the partial exception of a couple of the essays). On the other hand, 1960 is the perfect cut-off year for a presentation of Sartre’s historical role as a philosopher, because it was in 1960 that Volume One of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, the only part of that work to appear during his lifetime, was published. 11 However, although for many years few Sartre scholars were aware of this, Sartre devoted considerable effort during the immediate postwar years to writing what was to have been his promised work on ethics, only to decide eventually to abandon it. Despite this decision, he did not discard the abandoned manuscript, and it finally appeared posthumously in print in 1983, edited by Sartre’s adopted daughter and literary heiress Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, under the title *Cahiers pour une morale* (*Notebooks for an Ethics*). It is a mélange, composed of two notebooks totaling more than 650 pages, plus two brief appendices: one on “the good,” dated from a time in December 1945 when he was taking a long sea voyage to the United States; the other on oppression, focusing on the American slave experience. It is filled with interesting insights and details, but it is by no means a finished effort. Since, moreover, it obviously had no impact on the philosophical world at large prior to 1983, and has had relatively little impact even since then, it does not merit extended attention here. But I will first pick out for mention, in passing, a few of its interesting aspects, then consider possible broader implications of Sartre’s decision not to edit it or publish it.

It is clear from the earliest pages of the first notebook that history has begun to play a much more central role for Sartre than in his earlier work.

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*11. Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is discussed in detail below and in my essay in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.†
He is beginning to believe that an acceptable ontology must be fundamentally historical, and he gives numerous indications of the influence that his careful reading of Alexandre Kojève’s work on Hegel is exerting on him. At the same time, especially since Kojève is notorious for insisting on the close connection between Hegel and Marx but also no doubt in light of the enormous importance being accorded to Marx and to Marxism within the French intellectual climate, Sartre in the Cahiers shows much greater interest than before in such notions as class struggle, labor, alienation, and, of course, dialectics, as well as in the meaning of history. While critical of the Communist Party for its prevarications and inclined to consider Hegel a better philosopher than Marx and the atomic bomb as of greater importance than the Russian Revolution, Sartre now takes very seriously the idea of the “end of history,” which he sometimes equates with the idea, already mentioned occasionally in Being and Nothingness, of a “radical conversion,” but now treated, often implicitly and sometimes explicitly, as a social, even global, rather than merely individual, future possibility. From this point of view, Sartre sometimes treats his earlier work dismissively, as at best a description of “the hell of the passions”\textsuperscript{12} rather than of the full range of human capabilities, and recognizes (quite rightly, in my opinion) the inadequacy of its treatment of the “we,” of humanity as collective. He now sees “revolutionary socialism” as the ideal, although perhaps only a regulative ideal, and fluctuates between critiquing traditional ethics as a study in the \textit{status quo} and looking for a new Ethics beyond traditional ethics that would seek to overcome oppression and realize true equality and freedom. Within this general context he engages in fascinating, quite original phenomenological (in the broad sense) descriptions exploring such diverse themes as the basis of law in violence; prayer (or pleading), threats, and demands (or requirements); failure, ignorance, and stupidity; the relations of parents to children; and the oppression of women.

Another, albeit mostly implicit, influence on Sartre in the Cahiers is the much-discussed little book on “the gift” written by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss.\textsuperscript{13} Sartre connects this concept with the virtue of generosity, which at some points he seems to treat as the capstone of a value hierarchy in the sought-for new ethics. (A deep irony that he may not have fully appreciated is that this same phenomenon, generosity, was accorded a sort of capstone role by Descartes in his Passions of the Soul.) This may go further than any of the other proposed explanations (such as that noted by Beauvoir, in her autobiography of the period, to the effect that Sartre became firmly convinced that ethics was

\textsuperscript{12} “The hell of the passions” (Jean-Paul Sartre, \textit{Notebooks for an Ethics}, David Pellauer [trans.] [Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 499).

\textsuperscript{13} Mauss is discussed in the essay by Mike Gane in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}. 

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simply a manipulative bourgeois trick designed to help us live with a world filled with oppression) by way of accounting for Sartre’s eventual abandonment of the entire project embodied in the extant *Cahiers*: he was simply unable satisfactorily to bring together so many disparate strands of thinking. For example, it is difficult if not impossible to envisage a future ethic that would be in some sense axiological (a hierarchy of values) without putting into serious doubt the radical critique of traditional notions of value that characterizes his treatment of that theme in *Being and Nothingness* and even of some other texts in the *Cahiers*. Sartre also came to realize that the latter exhibits certain obvious elements of idealism, which he had always attempted to shun, and decided that this work was a failure. In several important senses he was right, although its variety of rich insights makes it worth reading nonetheless.

Of course, Sartre’s concern with ethical issues never really “went away.” It is arguable that his long, probing biography of the playwright, Jean Genet, entitled *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr* (1952), in which Genet’s having been branded a thief when still a child is hypothesized as helping to explain many aspects of his later, conflict-filled life, is among other things a masterly study around the fundamental moral question of the meaning of good and evil. His 1964 Gramsci Institute paper on “Ethics and Society,” the background manuscript for which has yet to be published in its entirety, constitutes a serious although sketchy effort at developing a socialist ethic, aimed at bringing about a genuine human society for the first time (*faire l’humain*), and influenced as much by the Algerian struggle for independence as by anything in classical Marxism. (This institute, in Rome, was among other things a gathering-place for Italian communist intellectuals, with whom Sartre, who vacationed frequently in Rome, felt more at home than with most of their more rigid and dogmatic French counterparts.) Of equal interest are the notes that Sartre sketched for presentation in lecture form at Cornell University but never gave because he felt obliged to cancel his planned visit (in 1965) in protest against the United States government’s escalation of its war against Vietnam; in them, as well, through the exploration of themes as diverse as the decision of a group of Belgian mothers to have their infants aborted when it was discovered that they had become severely deformed through the mothers’ having been prescribed the drug thalidomide, and the Kennedy–Humphrey Presidential primary contest in West Virginia, in which Kennedy’s Catholicism was a central issue, Sartre focused primarily on ethical issues. It could even be argued, as some have attempted to do, that there are the germs of yet a new Sartrean ethic in the three published dialogues, given the collective title *L’Espoir, maintenant* (*Hope Now*), that Sartre had with his secretary and confidant, Benny Lévy, at a time that proved to be the eve of his death (1980). And it can also be argued, quite plausibly, that the later Sartrean work with the most extensive ethical implications,
even if they must be inferred obliquely, is the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, to which I will turn shortly.

One quite short essay that Sartre wrote after having set aside the *Cahiers* and that he also failed to publish occupies a special niche: it is *Vérité et existence* (*Truth and Existence*), written in 1948 and finally published in 1989. In her introduction to it, Arlette Elkaïm asserts that it is, to her knowledge, the only posthumously published mature work of his that gives the appearance of being a finished piece.¹⁴ If one were to try succinctly to characterize its single central theme, a task made difficult by its excessively grandiose and sweeping title, it would be that of the so-called “meaning [or truth] of history,” one of the principal issues that were to come into play in Sartre’s 1952 quarrel and rupture with Camus. In *Truth and Existence*, Sartre attempts to occupy a middle ground between the relativist view that there is no such thing as a truth of history and its absolutist opposite, that there is a single such truth. He is very clear that truth must be anchored in intersubjectivity, and hence that the understanding of the past is bound up with the changing perceptions of successive generations of human beings. Thus, there can be no final truth of history, even if (and when) humanity ceases to exist, since even at that point there will be no one and no outside entity to close humanity’s eyes. Meanwhile, a certain degree of ignorance will and must always accompany our historical projects, whatever they may be: if we could foresee our “destiny” with certainty, we would no longer be free. The idea of a universal truth is a pure abstraction, he says, yet to acknowledge this is by no means equivalent to denying that there are historical truths, based on the availability of evidence. This little essay is one of the most important keys, in my opinion, to understanding the connection between the so-called “early” (ontologically oriented) and “later” (more historically oriented) Sartre, showing with great clarity that there was a process of intellectual evolution rather than a truly “radical conversion.” Indeed, as he himself points out in the essay’s first paragraph, every conversion doctrine runs the risk of being ahistorical.

History certainly played a commanding role in Sartre’s life and thought during the tumultuous Cold War years between 1945 and 1960. One of his most discussed and influential monographs/essays of that period was *What Is Literature?*, first published in segments in six successive monthly issues (in 1947) of *Les Temps modernes*, which probes above all the question of whom one writes for and concludes that, given the nature of the writer’s contemporary readership and of the times in which they were living, the only acceptable type of prose literature would have to be one of commitment (or “engagement”: littérature engagée). Writers could no longer remain “above the battle.” But in the context of that

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period particularly in France, and in fact to some extent worldwide, one could not avoid taking some stance with respect to Marxism as part of that engagement. Less well known but of comparable importance in understanding Sartre’s evolution is a shorter essay from mid-1946, “Materialism and Revolution,” in which Sartre had endeavored to delineate just such a stance for himself. Its message is one of solidarity with the revolutionary ideal that was espoused by the so-called “orthodox Marxists” who dominated the then quite powerful French Communist Party, of an understanding of the value of that Party’s crude historical materialist ideology in helping to rally workers to the cause (because materialism implies a fundamental equality among all human beings, undercutting any claims to superiority on the part of some privileged individuals), but of an ultimate rejection of such materialism as a myth because its dogmatic determinism seeks to deny the reality of human freedom. In this essay, Sartre calls for the creation of a philosophy of freedom that would be dedicated to the same revolutionary ideal without needing to rely on the materialist myth. Sartre’s later essays of the same early postwar period, during a portion of which (in the early to mid-1950s) his practical efforts at collaborating as much as feasible with the communists while not joining the Party or giving up his intellectual independence reached their height, are heavily oriented toward political issues: the struggle against the remnants of colonialism, especially in Africa; the cruel and hopeless French war in Indochina; the prosecution of a young French sailor, Henri Martin, for distributing leaflets opposing that war; the outbreak of the Korean War and his somewhat related, somewhat disconnected break with his increasingly anticommunist colleague Merleau-Ponty; and so on. The appearance in mid-1955 of Merleau-Ponty’s Les Aventures de la dialectique, the long final chapter of which famously accuses Sartre of “ultra-Bolshevism,” must have intensified Sartre’s desire to meet the challenge of creating a new, freedom-based revolutionary philosophy that he had himself posed in “Materialism and Revolution.”

In early 1956, one of history’s predictably unpredictable watershed events occurred, to wit, Nikita Khrushchev’s denunciation, meant to be kept secret but soon made available to the world, of the many crimes and excesses of his predecessor, Stalin. This ushered in the period of the so-called “Thaw” in the Cold War, which incidentally provided the opportunity for Sartre to move beyond occasional political essays to serious, systematic social and political philosophy, culminating in the Critique of Dialectical Reason. The mechanism for this was a Polish intellectual journal, Twórczość, the editors of which decided to profit from the relatively greater intellectual freedom permitted under the new dispensation to prepare a special issue (in 1957) on contemporary thinking in France and invited Sartre to be one of the contributors. He accepted, and the resulting essay, published separately in English translation under the title Search for a Method but appearing in French as the preliminary essay, “Questions de
méthode,” in the same volume as Volume One of the Critique proper, constitutes a major statement of Sartre’s view of the then-current situation of philosophy. It begins with the outline of what amounts in fact to a rather simplistic conception of the history of philosophy, according to which every major period is defined above all by one or at most a couple of great systematic thinkers: Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and so on. Our period, says Sartre, is the period defined by Marx, and so every other contemporary philosophical position must be understood as either somehow dependent on or reactive against his thought. From this perspective, existentialism must be seen as an “ideology” (Sartre’s use of this word here is unclear and out of step with most recognized usages) that is subordinate to Marxism, but is nevertheless a needed corrective to the course taken by mainstream Marxism proper, which has effectively come to a halt and grown out of touch, in certain important ways, with reality. What existentialism most emphasizes, while recent Marxism has neglected it, is the individual human being with his or her particular characteristics and the freedom to choose his or her individual projects, albeit within the framework of larger sociohistorical structures. Today’s Marxists, Sartre remarks at one point, speak as if a person comes into existence only on beginning his or her first job, as if he or she had had no childhood. Freidians certainly acknowledge and even emphasize childhood, but fail to recognize other aspects of complete human existence. Behavioral social scientists neglect the dimensions both of freedom and of history. To explain why an individual turns out in one way rather than in any other possible way, Sartre argues, a new method is needed that would involve first undertaking a kind of “archeology” (to employ Foucault’s term anachronistically), uncovering the social and historical layers underpinning that individual’s environment, and then a reconstruction of his or her personality as it develops and manifests itself through that person’s life. Sartre borrows the term “progressive-regressive [more accurately, regressive-progressive] method” from an article written by his Marxist contemporary, the sociologist/philosopher Henri Lefebvre, as the best available label for this sought-for approach to anthropology (in the broad, European sense of that word); he accordingly describes his task as being that of developing “a structural and historical anthropology” and calls the Critique proper a “prolegomenon to any future anthropology,” and his lengthy, much later study of Gustave Flaubert (who is used frequently as an example in Search for a Method), The Family Idiot, will be identified at the outset as a detailed attempt to carry out this very approach.

Sartre began writing the Critique in late 1957 and was able to hand the manuscript of Volume One, subtitled “Théorie des ensembles pratiques” (Theory of practical wholes), to Gallimard for publication in early 1960. It was an enormous effort, undertaken under great stress brought on by both personal and political factors (this period was the height of France’s extremely self-destructive
effort to preserve its hegemony in Algeria), and its often verbose, unedited style reflects this. Volume One is, in effect, a detailed manual of the regressive part of Sartre’s “method;” Volume Two, which, although long, is obviously unfinished and would ideally have ranged over much wider territory than its posthumously published version actually contains, is nevertheless an illustration of the progressive part of the method, as its subtitle, “The Intelligibility of History,” suggests. The focus of the largest part of Volume Two is Stalin’s Soviet Union during a period in the 1930s; while it is quite interesting in a number of respects, I will not try to summarize it here, since its very belated publication and the fact that it is still studied only quite infrequently by philosophers, even by comparison with Volume One, makes it of marginal relevance to the overall presentation of Sartre’s thought between 1930 and 1960 that I have been attempting. It is true, to be sure, that Volume One itself has been much less frequently commented on than its earlier counterpart, Being and Nothingness, but it deserves somewhat greater attention here than its sequel both for its content, which is philosophically quite challenging, and because of its role, as I believe we can now see in retrospect, as the embodiment of the end of an era.

The overall scheme and structure of this often highly complex work are themselves fairly simple to recount. After a long introductory section that pursues the methodological concerns raised in Search for a Method but at a much higher level of both systematicity and abstraction, Sartre introduces an imaginative structural picture of the individual human being working on inert matter (e.g. as a peasant farmer) under conditions of material scarcity in order to produce enough to satisfy his basic needs and stay alive. The human being, in this account, is characterized above all by “praxis,” the more action-oriented, less purely intellectual term, taken from the early Marx, that serves the same basic function as did “for-itself” in Being and Nothingness. (Inert matter is the counterpart of “in-itself,” as Sartre himself affirms in a long footnote well into the text that involves one of the very few cross-references to his early work to be found in the Critique.) This necessity-driven activity creates a domain that Sartre denominates the “practico-inert,” a domain in which there comes to be an appearance of role reversal, with the free being of praxis, the human being, becoming objectified in the struggle against recalcitrant matter. This is the point at which Sartre introduces the element of collectivity, of intersubjectivity, that will be his principal concern in the Critique: human beings in such a passive, dominated condition are forced to work together – basically, again, in order just to survive – in social structures that Sartre denominates “series,” their common condition being given the designation of “seriality.” Sartre offers many concrete illustrations, in the form of (loosely) phenomenological descriptions, some of them rather unforgettable. Examples are the actions of the Chinese peasantry succeeding, over generations, in cutting down the trees along the banks of the
Yangtze for such uses as firewood, thus inadvertently contributing, through erosion, to the devastating annual floods (an especially good illustration of the historical phenomenon that Sartre calls “counter-finality”); or, in a less sinister vein, the commuters queuing for a bus at a stop in Paris, each remaining as oblivious as possible of the identities of the others; or the broadcast of propaganda over a government-controlled radio station to thousands of listeners who are impotent to respond; and so on. After much detailed analysis of such serial conditions, Sartre moves to the book’s climax, in which we are confronted with the possibility of an alternative form of social formation, a manifestation, at least in its initial phases, of human freedom expressed collectively, which he calls “the group.” The group formation that he famously chooses as his principal illustration is the taking of the Bastille by residents of one incipient working-class district of Paris who felt themselves to be under threat of being massacred by government forces and who somehow conceived the idea of seizing and occupying this large fortress-prison that loomed over the only route of access to the neighborhood. These individuals engage in a genuinely free common *praxis*, which, however, as Sartre insists, is always constituted rather than constitutive and can never become a single “organism.” Initial success, however, if there is such, soon gives way to the need to begin to develop some forms of organization – for instance, in this historical case, the need to assign hours of standing guard to warn against any possible attempt by the authorities to regain control – and this process will ultimately lead to the taking of some sort of pledge, or oath, of solidarity, and eventually to much more advanced forms of institutionalization and finally of bureaucratization. And so the circle will be closed, so to speak, and something closely resembling the original condition of seriality, but far more complex, will return.

Despite the apparent pessimism of this scheme, to say nothing of Sartre’s depiction of human beings under primitive conditions of scarcity as cruel and destructive, he insists throughout that the dialectical progression being sketched is at every point reversible and by no means necessary. He keeps his commitment to the reality of freedom even while obviously admitting to far more elements of determinism in the world than the reading of *Being and Nothingness* would have led us to expect, and there are even a few isolated passages in which, while they do not contain the old language of “radical conversion,” seem to hold out the possibility of a world, or at least of isolated milieux, in which free group *praxis* could be sustained indefinitely. The last principal section of the volume is entitled “From the Group to History,” and, while including a number of references to the concept of class and related notions and allusions to recent history, is intended above all to pave the way for reflections on the history of our increasingly “one World” (Sartre prefers to use this English-language expression, something that is quite unusual for him) as ultimately a single “totalization”
– his word for ongoing and indefinite forward progress (although certainly not necessarily in the Enlightenment sense of “progress!”) across time – which he consistently contrasts with “totality,” the view of a society or a segment of history from the outside, as frozen.

This, then, to paraphrase Hegel near the end of his own Philosophy of History, is the point to which Sartre’s consciousness had attained by 1960: the completion of the first volume of a new magnum opus, one that is far richer and more varied than can possibly be conveyed in a brief summary, but one that never became the succès fou that Being and Nothingness had been. Soon, the voices of other philosophers – Althusser, Foucault, Derrida – would begin to be listened to more attentively than Sartre’s, at least in his own country. It may well be, of course, that eventually the Critique of Dialectical Reason as well as some of his even later work will achieve greater recognition from the learned philosophical public, while some or all of these then-new vedettes will fade from consciousness: that remains to be seen, since history is open. As for Marxism, Sartre in his last years lost faith in it, concluding that it was not, after all, reconcilable with his views of freedom nor with some of his other intellectual interests. He first made this clear, as far as I know, in a long interview that he gave to three interlocutors acting on behalf of the editor of the American series, Library of Living Philosophers. Since he had by then become too blind to be able to read the critical articles written by contributors to the volume that had been prepared on his philosophy, much less to write responses to them as is the usual practice, these interlocutors summarized some points from the articles as well as from questions drawn up separately for this purpose by the contributors. Responding to a question that I had requested that he be asked and to which others had also alluded, to wit, whether he still considered himself to be a phenomenologist – “Have you ever left phenomenology?” posed by Susan Gruenheck – he answered: “Never. I continue to think in those terms. I have never thought as a Marxist, not even in the Critique de la raison dialectique.”15 Although, as far as I can see, the entire Critique contains only one, rather casual and incidental reference, near the beginning, to Husserl, it is obvious that the latter’s long shadow continued to fall across the philosophical landscape of the twentieth century well past the year 1960.

MAJOR WORKS


The phrase “continental aesthetics” is itself a surprise. For one thing, continental philosophy during the middle of the twentieth century has been engaged in a critique of the Cartesian theory of perception and the subject as origin of philosophy, and whereas one meaning of the “aesthetic” is perception or sense experience (aisthesis), there is something of a paradox in conjoining “continental” with “aesthetics.” The other meaning of “aesthetic” having to do with philosophy of art or philosophy of fine art, common only since the time of Alexander Baumgarten and Kant’s Critique of Judgment, shows this bias toward subjectivism clearly in its dominant terms of taste, pure feeling, imagination, and genius. For another thing, “continental aesthetics” is far from a unified field of study. No one has made this clearer than Theodor Adorno, whose Aesthetic Theory, published in German posthumously in 1970 and still the most recent attempt to develop something like a comprehensive aesthetic theory on the European continent, found that “the unusual situation of aesthetics is discouraging.”

Like a weather vane it is blown about by every philosophical, cultural, and scientific gust; at one moment it is metaphysical and in the next empirical; now normative, then descriptive, now defined by artists, then by connoisseurs, one day art is supposedly the center of aesthetics and natural beauty merely preliminary, the next day art beauty is merely second-hand natural beauty. (AT 332)

Therefore, rather than a unified field of study we find a pluralism of meanings. The situation is complicated further with the introduction of phenomenology, for, on the one hand, there are those responses that take up phenomenology and develop various forms of a “phenomenological aesthetics” – these would include most prominently Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Mikel Dufrenne, and Hans-Georg Gadamer – and, on the other, there are those instances of continental aesthetics that develop based on explicitly antiphenomenological premises and themes – these would include Adorno himself, as well as Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, and, from some points of view, Jean-François Lyotard (whose first book, in 1954, was a critical introduction to phenomenology).²

Thus, it will be up to us to sketch out what we will mean by “continental aesthetics” as we find it in the mid twentieth century. It is true to say that aesthetics are “continental” because they are written in a language other than English, principally French and German. However, beyond such a linguistic and geographic qualifier, there seem to be a number of features of the figures of this period that distinguish the period from earlier aesthetic thinking, particularly from the aesthetics of giants such as Kant and Hegel. These will be more or less pronounced from one figure to another. One feature we have already mentioned: these philosophers – Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and so on – develop their aesthetic thinking in opposition to philosophies of subjective perception and philosophical categories such as taste and pure feeling. This means, second, that they understand art and the aesthetic as the disclosure of Being, and this means the work of art is exemplary of the meaning and truth of experience. The artwork and aesthetic experience give us the outline and architecture of an ontology similar to the way natural science, especially mathematical physics, functioned in the thinking of Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers, or the way religion dominated the philosophies of the medieval period. This is why, third, aesthetics turns, for the first time, away from abstract philosophical categories such as the imagination, and toward the study and comprehension of specific artworks. In a very direct sentence in his “Draft Introduction” that Adorno may well have modified if he had lived to work on its revision, he wrote that “Hegel and Kant were the last who, to put it bluntly, were able to write major aesthetics without understanding anything about art” (AT 334). From Heidegger through Sartre to Merleau-Ponty and Dufrenne, we find the study of specific artists and artworks: Hölderlin and Rilke, Calder and Giacometti, Velásquez and Magritte, Beethoven and Mozart. Even here, we note again another pluralism with respect to which of the arts comes in for attention, whether poetry, sculpture, painting, or music. Two painters stand out, Paul Cézanne and Paul Klee,

for they influenced the aesthetic thinking of nearly every one of our continental philosophers, most prominently Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, but Adorno, Gadamer, Benjamin, and Foucault as well. A fourth feature might be that aesthetics becomes central in philosophy in an unprecedented way. The ontology of art comes to be taken as an opening, as an analogy, for understanding broader domains of human experience such as language, history, and politics. We find, ranging from Sartre to Foucault, the injunction to “make of our life a work of art,” as well as Merleau-Ponty’s statement that “we would undoubtedly recover the concept of history in the true sense of the term if we were to get used to modeling it after the example of the arts and language.”

We thus rough out a beginning and a way for our thinking of “continental aesthetics” to proceed. Within “phenomenological aesthetics,” the ontology of art is so central that our beginning will be with Heidegger. Then we will move to Merleau-Ponty. This brings us to Sartre by way of his dispute with Merleau-Ponty, as well as Roland Barthes, over the meaning of art and “engaged” literature. We will pause to give some consideration to the variations on the ontology of art introduced by Ingarden, Dufrenne, and Gadamer. Then we will consider an objection from Levinas. Prominent among the “antiphenomenological” reactions, the work of Adorno and Benjamin must be considered before arriving at Foucault’s commentary on Velásquez’s Las Meninas (The Maids of Honor) in The Order of Things. Throughout, owing to limitations of space, we will be forced to be more cryptic and less nuanced than I would prefer. The recent, valuable Continental Aesthetics Reader (2000) runs to some 618 pages, just to give some sense of the scope of what is involved and the reduction that is necessitated here.

I. HEIDEGGER ON THE ORIGIN OF ART

The key work by Heidegger bearing on continental aesthetics is “The Origin of the Work of Art,” originally given as a lecture in Freiburg in 1935, then repeated in Zurich in early 1936 and subsequently reworked as three public lectures in Frankfurt in late 1936. It was eventually published in the 1950 volume entitled Holzwege. Also of considerable import are four lecture courses that Heidegger taught at the University of Freiburg-im-Breisgau from 1936 to 1940 on Nietzsche, the first two of which take up the theme of “The Will to Power as Art.” “The

Origin of the Work of Art” has three sections: “Thing and Work,” “Work and Truth,” and “Truth and Art,” and as this structure suggests, Heidegger’s aim was to establish a close relationship between the artwork as “thing” and truth as “unconcealment.”

The question of the “origin” of the work of art is not to be understood in a historical or even genealogical sense, but rather as the question of the “essence” of the artwork (OWA 143). Heidegger approaches this question by considering the “thingly” character of the artwork and the three traditional interpretations of the “thing” stemming from ancient ontology: (i) the thing as a substance with accidents or properties, or as a subject with certain predicates; (ii) the thing as the unity within the mind of a manifold of sense-impressions; and (iii) the thing as matter invested with form. Although all three interpretations distort the essence of the artwork, Heidegger argues, the interpretation in terms of matter and form has gained a special dominance, which Heidegger believes is due to its derivation from the familiar mixture of matter and form we find in tools or equipment. Here we come in “The Origin of the Work of Art” to the much discussed text about a common sort of equipment, a pair of peasant shoes, and Van Gogh’s several paintings of them. Heidegger’s text deploys the equipmental character of the shoes as serviceable and reliable to introduce the two most central concepts for his understanding of the essence of the artwork, “world” and “earth:” “In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth. … This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman” (OWA 159).

The “world” of the peasant woman that is rural and agricultural might seem to suggest an individual horizon or context for her work in the plowed fields, but Heidegger’s equally famous narrative about a Greek temple as artwork makes it clear that “world” is a historical and cultural setting for life that belongs to a people (OWA 167). Every human being is born into a fundamental horizon of disclosure that Heidegger calls “world,” the background and usually unnoticed understanding that determines for a historical people what, for them, fundamentally there is. Thus, “world” in “The Origin of the Work of Art” is continuous with Being and Time, in which Heidegger identifies it as an “ontological structure” that emerges from the ready-to-hand.5 Heidegger’s essay seems to suggest two somewhat different understandings of the relationship between the artist/artwork and world: first, a role of making manifest or revealing a world that is already present; second, what has been called a Promethean view that art creates world. In the temple passage we find both in close proximity. The first reading that emphasizes revealing, making manifest, and preserving is far more politically neutral than the much stronger Promethean reading that, in

the 1930s historical context of “The Origin of the Work of Art,” has been taken by some as an implicit reference to a new world established by the agenda of National Socialism, its art and architecture, and the Nuremberg rally. Another complication is that there is a discrepancy between Heidegger’s interpretations of the Van Gogh painting and the Greek temple, for it is really not the painting per se that opens up a world, nor the painting that evinces equipmentality, but the subject in the painting, those shoes, whereas the Greek temple itself is reliable and serviceable in the world of the Greek people as a place that “lets the god himself be present” (OW A 168). The narrative of the Van Gogh painting is also at odds with Heidegger’s own rejection of the institutional view of the artwork, that it is the “art industry” of museum boards, directors, and curators who specify the nature of art (OW A 166).

Whereas the meaning of “world” and of the artwork as “truth setting itself to work” is only moderately troubled, the meaning of “earth” is much more difficult in Heidegger’s essay. Heidegger himself rules out a literal reading of “earth” or the native “ground” either as a mass of matter deposited somewhere or as the idea of a planet in the solar system (OW A 168). Rather, the meaning of earth circulates between two thoughts in the essay: the thought of sheltering and stability, that earth has more solidity and durability than either world or artwork and thus offers them shelter and protection; and the thought of concealment, even ineffability in the work of art, that leads in the direction of Heidegger’s


7. In the early versions of “The Origin” from Heidegger’s Freiburg and Zurich lectures, Heidegger does not discuss Van Gogh’s shoes painting. Cf. Hugh J. Silverman, Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction (New York: Routledge, 1994), ch, 13, “The Autobiographical Textuality of Heidegger’s Shoes,” 250 n.5. Another fascinating aspect of Heidegger’s reading of the Van Gogh painting is a correspondence that occurred between Heidegger and Columbia University art historian Meyer Shapiro much later in the 1960s, about which Shapiro published “The Still Life as a Personal Object” in 1968. Shapiro effectively demonstrated that Van Gogh had not painted a pair of peasant’s shoes at all but, indeed, his own shoes. These would have been the shoes of a poor artist struggling to exist and even afford paints through the winters of 1886 and 1887 living in Paris, in Montmartre – boots really, in one of which the overturned shoe reveals the distinctive white of extending nails. Derrida, in The Truth in Painting, Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), has further compounded the discussion between Shapiro and Heidegger by questioning whether the paintings even show us a “pair” of left and right matched shoes and whether they are the shoes of a man or of a woman. Part of the trouble that generates these questions is that Heidegger does not name the specific Van Gogh painting that he is narrating, and Van Gogh made several – five, in fact – different paintings of shoes during the years of 1886–88, at least one of which Heidegger would have seen at a 1930 exhibition in Amsterdam. Cf. Silverman, “The Autobiographical Textuality of Heidegger’s Shoes,” 137.
language of the sacred and the “holy.” Just as in Heidegger’s thinking of the essence of truth, every revealing is also a concealing, so this notion that artist/artwork disclose a world must be given its other side of darkness, unfathom-ability, depth, and mystery. Being also “withdraws,” “closes,” and “conceals itself,” and this thought is part of the meaning of “earth” (OWA 172).

In world and earth we can also hear an echo of Nietzsche’s aesthetic theory of Apollo and Dionysus.8 We find Heidegger engaged explicitly with the interpretation of the Apollonian and Dionysian in the chapter entitled “Rapture as Aesthetic State” in Nietzsche, Volume I. In the last analysis, Heidegger refers the meaning of these terms to the German poet Hölderlin, who draws the contrast as one between “holy pathos” and the Occidental “sobriety of representational skill.”9 “The Origin of the Work of Art” often speaks of earth as site of the “holy,” leading us to believe that Hölderlin’s terms provide the best reading for interpreting the meaning of earth and world.

Heidegger describes the relationship between world and earth as “strife” (Urstreit), “conflict,” and even “warfare” between the forces of disclosure and those of concealment. “The conflict is not a rift [Riss] as a mere cleft is ripped open; rather, it is the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other” (OWA 188). Heidegger imported the notion of strife rather directly from Heraclitus, Fragment 53, to mark the conjunction of dualities that “earth” conveys as contradictory tendencies: “what is holy and unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave” (OWA 169). Thus, truth in the work of art does not just “happen,” but must be won. Heidegger himself later came to see that the language of strife in “The Origin of the Work of Art” was a mischaracterization of the happening of truth in the work and he replaced it by the idea of Ereignis, which we should not attempt to summarize here, but in rough outline is the meaning of advent, also of an irruption, a happening or “event” that introduces discontinuity and alters the course of things.10

At the time of “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger was very clear that the great work of art brings together a living community and gives to a people their outlook upon themselves (OWA 202), and what does this, above all, is poetry (poiesis), for only in it, much more so than in painting, music, or

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10. Young’s systematic study of Heidegger’s philosophy of art states: “after the transition to ‘Ereignis-thinking’ in 1936–38, it [Urstreit] makes no further appearance either in connection with art or with anything else” (Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art, 64).
architecture, do we find the clearest articulation of truth and world that gather a people and a people’s history. This gives us essentially a Greek template, or medieval template, for understanding the essence of art. After seeing the paintings of Cézanne and the artwork of Klee in Basel in the late 1940s, Heidegger came to realize that under what we might call the heroic-historical requirements of “The Origin of the Work of Art,” these artworks could not be great art and realized his philosophy of art needed a broader, more pluralistic cast. We have only Heidegger’s conversations with Heinrich Petzet during the 1940s and 1950s to hint at the shape of such a rethinking.11

II. MERLEAU-PONTY ON ART AND THE ONTOLOGY OF THE INVISIBLE

Merleau-Ponty’s signature contribution to aesthetics is “Eye and Mind” (1961) and, like Heidegger, he finds in art the germ of an ontology that he would further develop in The Visible and the Invisible, published posthumously (1964). Unlike Heidegger, however, Cézanne had been central to Merleau-Ponty’s thinking from his earliest works, The Structure of Behavior (1939) and Phenomenology of Perception (1945). Also unlike Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty works from quite specific artists and artworks by name, photographs of eight of which are included in “Eye and Mind”: Giacometti, Cézanne, de Staël, Matisse, Klee, Richier, Rodin, and the unknown Alain de la Bourdonnaye. The number of artists upon whom Merleau-Ponty draws in the essay includes a dozen more and is remarkable in spite of his own humble comment that he is a “layman” who lacks “both competence and space”12 to draw upon art history properly. The dominant new artistic voices in “Eye and Mind” are Auguste Rodin, especially Rodin’s conversations in Art: Conversations with Paul Gsell,13 and, above all, Klee. The multiple references in “Eye and Mind” to Klee’s notebooks, journals, and nature studies indicate that Klee had become the most influential artist for Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of vision and Being. Part IV ends with Merleau-Ponty’s own transliteration of Klee’s words written at age thirty-seven and inscribed on his tomb: “I cannot be grasped in immanence” (Je suis insaisissable dans l’immanence).14

13. The Rodin text was originally published in 1911.
14. The German inscription found on Klee’s tomb is: “Diesseitig bin ich gar nicht fassbar, denn ich wohne grad so gut bei den Toten wie bei den Ungeborenen.” Merleau-Ponty was working
Structurally, “Eye and Mind” has five parts. Part III, the hinge between the philosophy of vision of Parts I and II and the ontology of Parts IV and V, contains the philosopher’s critique of the philosophy of vision and metaphysics in Descartes’s *Optics*. Cartesian rationalism, Merleau-Ponty argues, was unable to grasp the central artistic dimension of depth, either bringing the world too close to the eye by reducing vision to thought or shifting to the divine perspective of God in which the world is surveyed from above (*survol*). When one is too close or too far, Being is flattened and Merleau-Ponty argues that this is why Descartes favored drawings and etchings over painting and sculpture. This argument pertaining to vision and depth is supplemented by a metaphysical-epistemological argument against Cartesianism: as flattened, the visible world is reduced to mere representations or icons for the mind to know as ideas or thoughts, rendering problematical the relation of mental representations and things. For Descartes, perception is a form of thinking in which mental ideas represent things, separating the mind from body and the world. “It is the mind that sees, not the eye,” Descartes had famously written in the *Optics*. Finally, Merleau-Ponty argues that Cartesianism mistakenly takes for granted the perspectival techniques of the Renaissance as yielding an “exact and infallible art of painting” (MPAR 135), while Leonardo da Vinci’s own studies of linear perspective themselves involve competing and sometimes contradictory claims. This tripartite critique and rejection of rationalism enabled Merleau-Ponty to overcome Cartesianism and move toward a new ontology with depth as the central problem, and Flesh (*la chair*), Merleau-Ponty’s innovative ontological notion, is introduced in Parts II and IV. This envelopment, generality, and anonymity named Flesh (*la chair*) is comparable to the Greek idea of element, which is not substance, nor mind, nor matter. The world and the painter are the inverse and obverse of one sole Power that breaks open in an unending generosity of creation and expression. This ontology of Flesh and reversibility both preserves the gaps (*écarts*), strife, and differences among colors and things and between self and world, and prioritizes genesis and process over substance. Verbs and adverbs replace nominatives. The incarnate principle of Flesh imbues life and the world with a longing (*désir*) for unity that is deferred, but a deferral that keeps open the genesis and metamorphosis of expression.

The gains for aesthetic theory offered by Merleau-Ponty’s “Eye and Mind” are multiple, for the work includes discussions of color, iconography, etchings,
sculpture, mirrors, self-portraits, motion, depth, voluminosity, line, and abstraction. His discussion of line emphasizes the flexuous line and cites Klee’s ability to “let a line dream” (laissé rêver une ligne), as well as Henri Michaux’s phrase “to go line” (aller ligne). The reflections on line and abstraction, as well as on color as a dimension, indicate that Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetic ontology is not limited to artists and works at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the mid century he himself knew so well, but extend to the more abstract and experimental artistic works of contemporary times, amenable particularly to abstract expressionism such as we find in Newman, Rothko, and Pollack.15

III. SARTRE VS. MERLEAU-PONTY (WITH INGARDEN, DUFRENNE, AND BARTHES): “ENGAGED” LITERATURE AND ITS CRITIQUE

Articulating his theory of engaged literature, Sartre’s 1947 *What is Literature?* brought him into eventual direct dispute with Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetic and ontology. Originally published in the journal *Les Temps modernes*, which the philosophers coedited together with Simone de Beauvoir from its founding in 1945 until Merleau-Ponty’s resignation in 1952, the essay subsequently appeared in a slightly revised version in *Situations II*. Sartre’s aesthetic thinking was very much broader than this particular work. It included his own literary art in the novel *Nausea* (1938) and the trilogy of novels together titled *Roads to Freedom* (*Les Chemins de la liberté*) about the Second World War and the Nazi occupation beginning from *The Age of Reason* (1945), a series of plays including the best-known *No Exit* (1943–44), short stories such as *The Wall* (*La Mur*: 1939), and his autobiography, *Words* (*Les Mots*: 1964). He also published substantial essays of criticism on topics and figures ranging from the paintings of the Renaissance Venetian Jacopo, to Lapoujade and Giacometti of modern times, the mobiles of Calder and sculpture of Giacometti, as well as the literature of Baudelaire and Flaubert. Amid this massive breadth of creativity, production, and interest, we will take Sartre’s theory of engaged literature as our focus here.

In Merleau-Ponty’s *Sense and Non-Sense* (1948), which opens with “Cézanne’s Doubt,” we find the essay “A Scandalous Author,” in which Merleau-Ponty defended Sartre as a person – “What makes the man winning makes the author

scandalous … it is good that from time to time there is a free man”\(^{16}\) – and also defended Sartre’s literary philosophizing of the bestial, ugly, and horrible in human life. He attributes to Sartre the “violence of the sublime” rather than obedience to a “religion of the beautiful” (SNS 43). At the time, Merleau-Ponty believed that he had found in Sartre and Beauvoir (particularly her novel, *L’Invitée [She Came to Stay]*) that marriage of philosophical and literary expression he himself advocated: “From now on the tasks of literature and philosophy can no longer be separated” (SNS 28). The seeds of the break between Sartre’s existentialist aesthetic and Merleau-Ponty had already been planted in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), particularly in its critique of Sartre’s philosophies of time and freedom. However, Merleau-Ponty’s reply to Sartre’s theory of engaged literature, “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” (1951), would be his last essay published in *Les Temps modernes* prior to his resignation from the editorial board.

It is important to realize that prior to this dispute and rupture, Sartre had long been at work on the topic of the imagination and Merleau-Ponty had been deeply influenced by his work. Sartre had written two works on imagination, *Imagination* (1936) and *L’Imaginaire* (1940), the latter translated as *The Psychology of Imagination*. Sartre’s theory of the imagination was intent on defeating the portrayal of the image as an immanent mental content, rather explicating imagination as an intentional act that refers to a transcendent object. It differs from perception, nevertheless, for imagination is an awareness of something as not being, as absent, elsewhere, or as pure possibility. Thus, imagination’s distinguishing characteristic is freedom and spontaneity, which Sartre calls the “magical” quality of imagination, and renders it the only type of conscious act that is wholly spontaneous and unmotivated, not bound to body, place, time, or circumstance. Merleau-Ponty’s response to this theory is found in a 1936 review of Sartre’s *Imagination*, as well as in *Phenomenology of Perception*. In the review, Merleau-Ponty takes Sartre’s account as evidence for assigning an impoverished and reduced significance to imagination in comparison with perception and, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, he wrote that “the imaginary has no depth.”\(^{17}\) With the appearance of Sartre’s *What is Literature?* in 1947, Merleau-Ponty could see explicitly the latent implications in Sartre’s dualisms of perception and imagination, real and unreal, and he realized that his own philosophy of perception and depth would need a much greater and revised role for imagination right within perception itself. Painting “scrambles all our categories” (MPAR 130), he would

\(^{16}\) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 47; hereafter cited as SNS followed by the page number.

write in “Eye and Mind,” essence and existence, real and imaginary, activity and passivity. These can no longer be thought as binaries or dualities but as intertwinings or interlacings (entrelacs).

In *What is Literature?*, Sartre contests that committed writing does not also imply committed painting, sculpture, or music because there is no parallelism among all art forms. The plastic or musical artist makes a thing such as notes, colors, and forms that are not signs and that express the emotions and motives of the artist or composer. The “painter is mute,” in Sartre’s judgment, for one does not paint meanings and Picasso’s *Guernica* “won no one over to the Spanish cause.”  

Further, within the arts of writing there is a clear distinction between prose and poetry. Prose is the “empire of signs,” while poetry is on the side of painting, sculpture, and music in producing words as things similar to colors and notes. Poets refuse to utilize language whereas prose is explicitly utilitarian, seeking to use words as actions taking up the responsibility of commitment. “The function of the writer is to act in such a way that nobody can be ignorant of the world and that nobody may say that he is innocent of what it’s all about” (WL 38). Silence is subordinate to words because it is the refusal to speak, “therefore to keep on speaking” (WL 38). The engaged writer is thus projected out of Sartre’s existentialism, the person of action who regards writing as an enterprise, who may be right or may be wrong but nevertheless refuses to be an abject passivity and commits to an authentic course of action.

It is worthwhile to compare Sartre’s theory of engaged literature with the most prolonged phenomenological consideration of the literary work of art, that of Roman Ingarden’s *The Literary Work of Art* (1931). For one thing, the distance of this work from Sartre is seen immediately, for Ingarden was not interested in questions of engagement, action, or politics but of the ontology of the artwork. Ingarden rejected Husserl’s late transcendental idealism and argued that the literary work of art is neither exclusively an ideal nor a real object, but partakes of both real and ideal features. On the one hand, a character such as Hamlet came into existence at a particular moment in history like a real object, but on the other, the character is constructed by purely ideal elements, namely word meanings. Thus, Ingarden concluded that the identity of the literary work of art, *Hamlet*, is an intentional being in Husserl’s sense, constituted in the cognitive relation between the author and work and between the reader and the work.

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19. Roman Witold Ingarden (February 5, 1893–June 14, 1970; born and died in Krakow, Poland) was educated at the University of Göttingen (1912–16) and University of Freiburg (1916–21). His influences included Heidegger and Husserl, and he held appointments at Jan Kazimierz University, Lwów (1933–41) and Jagiellonian University, Kraków (1946–49; 1957–63).
work of art is “heteronomous,” depending on consciousness for its animation and concretion. Thus, for a second point in comparison with Sartre’s theory of literature, we find a concordance, for Sartre also argues that the literary object is a mixture of immanence and transcendence. On the one hand, the substance of a character is formed by the reader’s subjectivity: “Raskolnikov’s waiting is my waiting which I lend him. Without this impatience of the reader he would remain only a collection of signs” (WL 45). On the other hand, the words are there “like traps to arouse our feelings and to reflect them toward us. Each word is a path of transcendence” (WL 45).

Mikel Dufrenne, in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (1953), has criticized both Ingarden’s and Sartre’s conceptions of the literary work of art. In reading a poem or a novel, one is not dealing with an unreal world known through the image and imaginary knowing, as Sartre characterizes the situation, nor does one go straight to the significations through the words, as Ingarden would have it, for the words have the quality of the perceptible and, Dufrenne argues, “to read is to perceive.” Words have a peculiar physiognomy of gravity or of brightness, not the clarity and precision of an algorithm, and their meaning receives stability only through their sensuousness. The signification obtains from the word a type of insistence and density that is far from imaginary but is a presence, and this presence expands into a world. The fruits and flowers of Verlaine are concrete because they introduce us to a certain atmosphere, which is the world of the text (PAE 211). For Dufrenne, there is a difference between the artwork and the aesthetic object. The artwork is the object the artist makes and that hangs on the wall in the museum, while the aesthetic object is the artwork so far as it is perceived. The aesthetic object derives its structure and content from the artwork and the artwork derives its truth from the aesthetic object. “The work itself calls for a type of perception which discovers in it (or realizes through it) the aesthetic object, so that the very analysis of the work continually refers, at least implicitly, to this perception” (PAE 223). In the notion of “world,” Dufrenne extends the Heideggerian understanding of the essence of the artwork, but in the notion of the aesthetic object, he joins with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception that insists on the presence of meaning in the world as primordially given in embodied sensuousness.

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20. Mikel Dufrenne (1910–95; born in Clermont, France; died in Paris) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1929–32). His influences included Jaspers and phenomenology, and he held appointments at the University of Poitiers (1953–63) and University of Nanterre (later Paris X) (1963–74).

Merleau-Ponty also undertook his critique of Sartre’s philosophy of the word and writing from the perspective of the phenomenology of language. Under the influence of Saussure’s linguistics, Merleau-Ponty had undertaken a systematic study of the differences and relations among speech, writing, and the language system. Fundamentally, he wanted to think more systematically about the relationships between writing and the visual arts, especially painting, that Sartre had bifurcated so sharply. Regarding artworks, Merleau-Ponty contended that the work is not an opaque thing, and although the relation of a painting to the world is not one of univocal resemblance or representation, yet the relation is one of revealing or disclosing a world with its latent, hidden hollows, “rendering the invisible visible,” to cite the famous words of Klee’s *Creative Credo*. Merleau-Ponty often wrote about how “painting speaks” and said that Cézanne “writes in paint” and “thinks in paint.” Regarding linguistic signs, he argued that these are filled with multiple meanings that lend them their fullness and richness. Within both speaking and writing, silence is not a negative phenomenon but is the “voice of the spirit” that dwells in the pauses and spaces between signs, in what the author omits to say, and silence is also the style of an artist’s work. In short, in Merleau-Ponty’s famous conclusion, “the voices of painting are the voices of silence,”22 very far removed from Sartre’s analysis that treats artworks as mute or “silenced” forms without expression.

Although Roland Barthes does not explicitly mention Sartre’s *What is Literature?* in his 1953 *Writing Degree Zero*, it is commonly understood that Barthes had that work in mind. His argument is an attempt at assessing and partly refuting what he thought to be Sartre’s very strong and somewhat over-simplified view of the nature of language, writing, and the ethical and political responsibilities of the writer.23 Sartre had supported his thesis that the responsible writer’s end or function is to communicate an ethical and political stance by differentiating between language and style, the latter of which means individual expression and may be prominent in the arts and poetry, but is least significant in prose writing. In prose, the language or content is what matters. Barthes drew up a different analysis of writing. The subtle shift in his French title compared with Sartre’s first chapter title is telling. Sartre had used the straightforward French verb “écrire” (to write) whereas Barthes used the much more complex French noun “écriture,” which he made into a technical term. To Sartre’s dyad of language and style, Barthes added this third term, “écriture,” which stands between them as a middle ground and means something like “form” that is


neither purely objective nor purely personal. The writer makes choices with respect to form that are directed toward society but are also directed toward what literature itself has been and what it will become through the work at hand. Thus, there is indeed an ethical responsibility of the writer, but this is never wholly free and spontaneous but somewhat hemmed in by the history and tradition within which the writer stands. As Barthes himself put it in his “Introduction”:

What we hope to do here is to sketch this connection; to affirm the existence of a formal reality independent of language and style; to try to show that this third dimension of Form equally, and not without an additional tragic implication, binds the writer to his society; finally to convey that fact that there is no Literature without an Ethic of language. (WDZ 5–6)

The “zero degree of writing” of which Barthes speaks represents what he thinks of as the last episode of a “passion of writing” that has dismantled bourgeois consciousness and includes “colorless writing” such as that of Camus, Blanchot, or Queneau. Barthes’s notion of écriture in Writing Degree Zero laid the groundwork for a structuralist theory of literature that he went on to develop in his later work such as his truly original and now classic essay, “The Death of the Author,” published in Image – Music – Text (1977).  

IV. LEVINAS’S ANTAGAESTHETIC, GADAMER’S HERMENEUTICS, AND THE “RELIGION OF THE BEAUTIFUL”

When Merleau-Ponty made reference to a certain “religion of the beautiful” in relation to Sartre’s critics, he was speaking specifically of classical art and art theory that emphasized harmony, proportion, and rationality “wherein lies the beauty of the Greek god” (SNS 42). Although Merleau-Ponty thus criticized a certain religion of the beautiful that characterized the classical age, Emmanuel Levinas detected in his own age a kind of philosophical worship or adoration of the artwork and aesthetic experience that he believed impedes or even blocks altogether our contact with reality. This countervailing antiaesthetic demurral was also first published in Les Temps modernes in the year following Sartre’s What is Literature? under the title, “Reality and Its Shadow” (1948), and it also took

*24. For further discussion of Barthes, see the essay by Claire Colebrook in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
its bearings from within what the author calls a “phenomenological analysis.”

The commonly held belief is that an artwork goes beyond common perception, and a poem or a painting speaks with metaphysical intuition, “thus an artwork is more real than reality” (RS 117). To put it in theological terms, Levinas says, art belongs neither to the order of revelation nor that of creation (RS 118). Agreeing more with Sartre than Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty, Levinas argues that art is not on the side of cognition and knowledge but rather on that of the image; art consists in substituting for the object its image, not its concept, thus in substituting an image for being. Therefore, art is “the very event of obscuring, a descent of the night, an invasion of shadow” (ibid.). Levinas reinvokes the shadows of Plato’s cave and builds his argument through a phenomenology of the image, rhythm, and “the meanwhile.” Although rhythm certainly has its privileged locus in music, there is a certain musicality of every image inasmuch as each one has its temporal pulse or beat that creates a certain hold on us, the subject is caught up and carried away by it. This is a function of rhythm quite like the automatic character of a walk or a dance in which the image imposes itself on us without our consent and holds us in its present. There is no longer a self but a passage from oneself to anonymity, which is the captivation or magical incantation of poetry and music. In this sense, every image and every artwork is an idol, for what it produces is time’s delay. Art brings about this “duration in the interval” in which the future as a promise of a new future is refused. This eternal duration of the interval “differs radically from the eternity of a concept; it is the meanwhile, never finished, still enduring – something inhuman and monstrous” (RS 125). Aesthetic enjoyment is thus a form of irresponsibility. It replaces the world to be built by its shadow, which is art, and replaces it with moments of charm, lightness, and grace, which is aesthetic experience, sheer sensation. “There is something wicked and egoist and cowardly in artistic enjoyment. There are times when one can be ashamed of it, as of feasting during a plague” (RS 126). Art is a “dimension of evasion” in which we become preoccupied with it rather than our responsibilities to the world and, above all, to the Other (RS 127). Levinas argues that only a new kind of art criticism, the “philosophical exegesis of art,” would be able to separate shadow from reality by speaking of art “frankly, through concepts, which are like the muscles of the mind” (ibid.).

The critique of the “religion of the beautiful” is approached from an entirely different angle by Gadamer because Gadamer, following Heidegger, seeks to know the essence of art, but seeks to know it in such a way that would show the commonality between the older, classical “fine arts” of the beautiful with their

“quasi-religious” function and modern art with its irreligious impulse toward provocation and to “destroy beauty,” as Rimbaud, Barnett Newman, and others have put it. Gadamer’s best-known work, *Truth and Method* (1960) opens with its entire First Part on “The Question of Truth as it Emerges in the Experience of Art.” Nevertheless, Gadamer subordinated his examination of art and the aesthetic in that work to the questions of truth, understanding, and interpretation and did not produce a comprehensive aesthetic theory. In its place, we have the collection of aesthetic essays titled *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (1967, 1977). There, in a number of ways, Gadamer draws the language of aesthetic experience and religious experience into close relationship. A late essay in the book takes up explicitly the theme of “Aesthetic and Religious Experience” and considers the integration of poetic and scriptural texts. Unlike Levinas, Gadamer argues that the work of art “signifies an increase in being”26 because we find in the artwork the same sort of self-movement that Aristotle found to be the most fundamental characteristic of living beings, organic aliveness that has the “basic character of excess striving to express itself” (RB 23). Gadamer’s word here for “excess” is *Überfluss*, which also means “superabundance.” In contrast with the everyday passage of time within which appears the possibility of boredom, Gadamer contends that “the essence of the temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry. … And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity” (RB 45). The experience of the beautiful “is the invocation of a potentially whole and holy order of things” (RB 32).

Three main concepts organize Gadamer’s interpretation of aesthetic experience: play, symbol, and festival. He creates his account drawing from the aesthetic thinking of Plato, Kant, and Hegel, above all a reading of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, and in these three concepts, Gadamer believes he has found a way to link the older arts of the beautiful with modern art. Play is the fundamental excess of being alive and is meant to express the repetition of “to and fro” movement as in the “play of light” and the “play of the waves.” Gadamer introduces the expression “aesthetic nondifferentiation” to bring out the deep structure of the kind of perception that is at work in being addressed by an artwork and constitutes the cooperative play between imagination and understanding. In the work of aesthetic nondifferentiation, the artwork becomes a symbol, not in the sense of representing and standing in for something other than itself, but in Heidegger’s sense of resting on an intricate interplay between showing and concealing. The symbol is that “fragment that has always been sought in order

to complete and make whole our own fragmentary life” (RB 32). Thus, the work
of art becomes something unique, precious, and irreplaceable, which Gadamer
likens to what Walter Benjamin called the “aura” of the work of art. This is why
destruction of a work of art “always has something of the feeling of religious
sacrilege about it” (RB 34). Gadamer introduces the unusual concept of the
festival, drawn explicitly from the theological context of holidays and the full-
ness of time, to designate the communicative and participatory dimension of
the artwork. Festive time is “autonomous time” in which there is no tedium but
a tarrying that allows us to enhance our feeling for life. This tarrying with the
work provides an opportunity through which finite beings may gain a feeling
for eternity.

V. ANTIPHENOMENOLOGIES: THEODOR ADORNO
AND WALTER BENJAMIN

Although originally working within the phenomenological tradition in what is
known as his “transcendental phase,” Adorno’s turn away from phenomenology
and toward critical theory in the 1930s occurred as a criticism of what Adorno
interpreted as Husserl’s idealism, essentialism, and above all, a-historicity.
These criticisms are detailed in Adorno’s “Husserl and the Problem of Idealism”
(1940). In Husserl’s effort to go “back to the things themselves” as immediate
data of consciousness, Adorno argued that he inevitably remained too faithful
to the idealism he was seeking to overcome. Phenomenological claims of direct
access to immediate data fail to recognize the extent to which perception is
overlap with its social and historical epoch, which means, for Adorno, with the
values and ideology of bourgeois capitalist economy. Art and aesthetic experi-
ence have become a mass culture under the control and influence of the culture
industry, thus the whole effort toward a phenomenology of aesthetic experience
and of the art object is compromised and mediated by culture and history from
the outset. It was in the context of Adorno’s negative dialectics and the work of
the Frankfurt Institute that Walter Benjamin wrote his influential essay “The
Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), in which he made
a start toward what he thought of as revolutionary “politics of art.”27 In the long
run, Adorno would find many points with which to disagree with Benjamin’s
essay, perhaps above all Benjamin’s treatment of the artwork as an element of

27. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Illuminations:
Essays and Reflections, Harry Zohn (trans.) (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 218; hereafter
cited in the text as WAMR. [*] Benjamin and this essay are discussed in the essay by James
the superstructure in its own right, with its own history and its own processes of technological development necessitating separate analysis. Adorno could never agree with Benjamin’s idea that the mechanical reproduction of art, especially in the recently emergent medium of film, is progressive, even revolutionary. How could film become anything other than entertainment under conditions of mass culture? Nevertheless, what Adorno shared with Benjamin and found lacking in phenomenology was the thoroughgoing commitment to historical thinking about aesthetics and the arts. Benjamin even distinguished such historical thinking from Heidegger’s meditations on origins and “historicality,” finding them too sweeping and abstract with little specific and concrete nuance.

After the preface, Benjamin’s essay is divided into fifteen sections followed by its famous epilogue on the “aestheticization of the political.” Benjamin argues that especially photography and film have introduced a profound change in the reproduction of artworks that previously was possible in only limited ways through older techniques such as the woodcut, printing, lithography, and forgery. The camera creates the possibility of such rapid and multiple reproductions that the whole concept of the “original” or “authentic” work loses its meaning. Benjamin here introduces the pivotal concept in the essay, that of the “aura,” which refers to the unique existence of the authentic original, and argues that our age is experiencing the withering or “decay of the aura.” This decay brings with it an alteration in human perception itself, and one of the points Benjamin wants to stress is that “human sense perception is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well” (WAMR 222). Photography and film have altered the way we “see.” This alteration is illustrated by comparing the perception of a natural object such as a mountain with perception of pictures created by the camera. In the former, there is an aura defined as “the unique phenomenon of distance” (ibid.), that is, the mountain remains at a distance on the horizon displaying its uniqueness and commanding its proper respect. The camera, on the other hand, has the capacity to bring everything closer. Whereas uniqueness and permanence characterize perception previously, transitoriness and reproducibility mark the photograph and film. One can see this collapse of distance and aura very clearly with respect to the screen actor whose presentation on-screen is subject not only to a director but to the cameraman, camera angles, close-ups, and the film editor. In film, “the audience’s identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera” (WAMR 228). The decay of the aura as the collapse of distance replaces the “cult value” of the artwork with its “exhibition value,” and the total function of art experiences a

reversal. Instead of being based on the cult of beauty, the museum, and ritual, the function of art begins to be based on politics. No longer being a preserve of a religious or, more recently, moneyed elite, art, through its mechanical reproduction, becomes something available to and subject to “the masses.” There are a number of effects. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin film; in general, the conventional is uncritically enjoyed and the truly new is criticized with aversion. With close-ups of hidden details of familiar objects, an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored; thus “the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses” (WAMR 237). The movie frame also replaces the contemplation of the spectator before a painting with the bullet speed of an optical ballistics; thoughts are replaced by moving images; perception becomes “reception in a constant state of distraction” (WAMR 240) and it becomes “absent-minded” (WAMR 241).

Benjamin’s famous epilogue focuses on the consequences of the role of art and aesthetics in the increasing formation of humanity into masses. He argues that fascism seeks to give masses of humanity not their rights but their expression and enjoyment: “the logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into politics,” and indeed, “all efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war” (ibid.). Benjamin cites Italian poet Filippo Marinetti’s “Futurist Manifesto” (1909), in which Marinetti contended that “war is beautiful” with its gas masks, metalization of the human body, fiery orchids of machine guns and cannonades, geometric formation flights, and smoke spirals from burning villages. Benjamin bitterly concludes that in fascism and Marinetti’s futurism, mankind’s “self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order” (WAMR 242). Whereas in the body of the essay Benjamin found in photography and film a progressive development that erodes the power of the elites, in the epilogue he makes it clear that the concomitant formation of mankind into masses endangers our humanity with the aestheticization of the political.

Although focusing on Benjamin’s influential contribution to the debate surrounding technology, art, and politics, we need to note the much broader scope of his aesthetic thinking, which ranged over critical essays on Kafka, Baudelaire, Proust, and theater. Among these rich contributions, we single out two writings, the first being Benjamin’s Origin of German Tragic Drama (1925), which focuses on German seventeenth-century baroque theater. Although the work is complex and demands serious engagement, it has become recognized as one of the most original books of literary and philosophical criticism of the twentieth century. Benjamin orient his thinking in relation to two great preceding landmarks in the theory of tragedy, Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit – with its interpretation of the meaning of tragedy, especially the art of
Sophocles in *Antigone* – and Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*. There are also Jewish facets of the work pertaining to the Jewish past and messianic future, as well as Kabbalistic overtones of the hidden word and a mystery in the word. This latter brings forward affinities with Kafka reflected in Benjamin’s two later essays on Kafka, translated in *Illuminations*. A second writing of aesthetic significance is Benjamin’s commentary on Klee found in section IX of “Theses on Philosophy of History.” From among Klee’s angel drawings, in 1921 Benjamin had purchased *Angelus Novus* (1920) and included comments about it in this text. Klee had made numerous angel pictures for twenty-five years since 1915 and these multiplied near the end of his life from 1938 to 1940. Klee invented angels of a mixed type that dwelt between this world and the next, such as an angel applicant that seems it might be a dog, a poor angel, a forgetful one, and many others, including the final *Angel Still Ugly* which appears as part of the composition in the final canvas Klee left on his easel at the time of his death, *Last Still Life* (1940). *Angelus Novus* presents us with a young, novice angel, wings upraised in what might be taken as a stop sign amid a storm of dust. Benjamin saw in it the angel of history, but a history that “piles wreckage upon wreckage” that the angel is unable to prevent because “a storm is blowing from Paradise” (WAMR 257).

VI. FOUCAL: BEYOND PHENOMENOLOGY TO THE POSTMODERN

Like Adorno and Benjamin, Foucault’s writings on art are antiphenomenological, but perhaps he is also the beginning of what has come to be called the “postmodern.” We see this antiphenomenological approach to aesthetics in two sources. *This is Not a Pipe* (1973) took its premise from the series of paintings created by the Belgian surrealist, Rene Magritte, and undertook reconsideration of the relation of words to images in the history of painting. Foucault sought to undermine the two most fundamental assumptions supporting the representational theory of art. The first asserts the separation between the plastic representation and the linguistic reference of the title always placed outside the frame; the second affirms a representative bond with the object through the fact of resemblance. The paintings of Magritte (as well as Kandinsky and Klee) challenge both assumptions by placing words into the paintings themselves inside

the frame and with the pointed assertion that the image is not the object (that
is, the image of the pipe is, indeed, not a pipe). Magritte further played with the
word–image boundary by frequently mismatching words and objects, such as
painting the image of a horse and labeling it “the door” or labeling the image
of a pitcher “the bird,” and so forth. Foucault’s rather playful and paradoxical
challenge to the representational theory of art by way of Magritte had been
preceded by the more rigorous and systematic dismantling of that theory in
the opening chapter of The Order of Things (Les Mots et les choses; 1966), titled
for the painting by Velásquez, Las Meninas. Foucault’s foreword to the English
dition of that work makes his antiphenomenological stance and its reasons
crystal clear. He states that the one philosophical approach that he rejects is
the phenomenological approach “which gives absolute priority to the subject,
which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of
view at the origin of all historicity – which, in short, leads to a transcendental
consciousness.”

Although the relationship between Foucault and critical theo-
rists such as Adorno and Benjamin is complex and involves the tenuous rela-
tions of each to Marx, they both distance themselves from what they perceive as
phenomenology’s a-historicity. Foucault offers us an extremely close reading
of Spanish painter Diego Velásquez’s 1656 Las Meninas, which pictures the artist
at work on a large canvas, only the back of which is visible to us as viewers.
Princess Margarita and her maids occupy the center and to the right of them
appears a dwarf with a dog in the foreground. The faces of the king and queen,
King Philip IV and Queen Mariana, appear in a mirror in the background. We
see only their reflected images and they themselves are not visible to us. They
thus seem to occupy a place outside the canvas and in front of it, precisely where
we as viewers are now placed. In the right background appears a shadowy figure
about to enter or exit from the room.

A number of things occupy Foucault’s attention about this work. One is the
reciprocity of looking, the way in which we are looking at the painting and yet
the painting looks back at us. Another is the uncertainties in visual represen-
tation that the painting creates, and creates these uncertainties precisely at the
moment in history at the opening of the “classical age” in which that very repre-
sentational theory of the mind–world relation had been created by Descartes.
Las Meninas was a very early critique of the power of representation to express
an objective order of reality visually. Foucault argues that the center of the
painting is what is symbolically sovereign, the reflected images of the king and
the queen, but this center fulfills a “triple function.” “In it there occurs an exact
superimposition of the model’s gaze as it is being painted, of the spectator’s as

32. Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York:
Vintage, 1970), xiv; hereafter cited as OT followed by the page number.
he contemplates the painting, and of the painter’s as he is composing his picture” (OT 14–15). In the space of the mirror in which the reflections of the king and his wife appear, “there could also appear – there ought to appear – the anonymous face of the passer-by and that of Velázquez” (OT 15). Thus, rather than being the complete or perfect representation that renders everything visible, the painting is incomplete, afflicted with invisibles and gaps. Foucault concludes: “in this picture, as in all the representations of which it is, as it were, the manifest essence, the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing – despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits” (OT 16). Thus, *Las Meninas* is the opening to everything that interests Foucault about the varying ways of ordering reality throughout history, the varying *epistēmēs* through which reality is constructed. As the ground of the classical age crumbled at the end of the eighteenth century and gave way to the modern age with its recent invention of “man” – and by this Foucault means transcendental ego or transcendental consciousness from Kant through Husserl – “then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (OT 387).

This last line of *The Order of Things* brings into view a postmodern aesthetics that would be inaugurated by Jean-François Lyotard’s *Discours, Figure* (1971). Postmodern aesthetics would stress the blending of the discursive and the figural, desire and the optical unconscious, and above all the *differend*, which means, according to Lyotard, the unstable state wherein something, some suffering or some wrong, “must be able to be put into phrases but cannot yet be.” Lyotard contends that “what is at stake in a literature, in a philosophy, in a politics perhaps, is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them.” The *differend* and Heidegger’s *Ereignis* are also at stake in Lyotard’s work on the abstract expressionism of Newman and a postmodern sublime. In “Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity,” Lyotard has written succinctly: “What do we want from art today? Well, for it to experiment, to stop being only modern” (MPAR 335). But this is another story, equally long but equally fascinating, that has been foreshadowed along the way by much that we have seen in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Foucault, to name just these three.

Throughout the epoch in continental aesthetics that we have examined, we have seen the centrality our philosophers have afforded art and the aesthetic as the fecund nucleus from which other domains of their philosophical thought

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*33. For a discussion of *Discours, Figure*, and Lyotard more generally, see the essay by James Williams in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
grow. The work of art is not only exemplary for the limited domain of philosophical aesthetics but is exemplary of meaning and truth and, indeed, give us the outline and architecture of various approaches to the ontology of Being. In recent continental philosophy, aesthetics has become central in philosophy in an unprecedented way as an opening, an analogy, for understanding broader domains of human experience including language, history, politics, and religion. While analytic philosophies have tended to isolate and marginalize aesthetics and philosophy of art as a discrete discipline with its technical problems and vocabulary, the continental philosophers of the twentieth century have integrated aesthetics into the center of philosophical thinking.

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Roman Ingarden**


**Mikel Dufrenne**


There is a Rembrandt painting that can perhaps help us to understand not only how philosophical reflection but, more widely, how Western culture has traditionally conceived our most common experience of the sensible world, that is, our experience of vision. The painting is *The Philosopher in Meditation* (1631), which depicts a philosopher in his room, sitting before a window at which, however, he does not direct his gaze, his eyes being cast downward while his forehead seems burdened with thoughts. Through the window only an oblique and faded light filters into the room, while the world is shut out. The original model for such a philosophical attitude was given by Réné Descartes. In fact, in the lecture “The Film and New Psychology,” presented in 1945 at the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques in Paris, Maurice Merleau-Ponty\(^1\) recalls for us that:

> in a famous passage from the *Méditations* [i.e. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, originally published in 1641, only ten years after Rembrandt’s painting], Descartes wrote, “I say that I see men going by in the street, but what exactly do I really see? All I see are hats and coats which might equally well be covering dolls that only move by

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\(^1\) Maurice Merleau-Ponty (March 14, 1908–May 3, 1961; born in Rochefort-sur-Mer, France; died in Paris) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1926–30). His influences included Bergson, Descartes, Heidegger, and Husserl, and he held appointments at the Lycée de Beauvais (1931–33), Lycée de Chartes (1934–35), École Normale Supérieure (1935–39), Lycée Carnot, Paris (1940–44), Lycée Condorcet, Paris (1944–45), Université de Lyon (1945–48), Sorbonne (1949–51), and the Collège de France (1952–61).
springs, and if I say that I see men, it is because I apprehend through an inspection of the mind what I thought I beheld with my eyes.”

Thus, Descartes would have certainly gazed upon the world with an attitude like that of Rembrandt’s philosopher. For, by distrusting anything his eyes threw before him, he remained generally suspicious of vision. He would have thus shut the window, gone back to his desk, and closed his eyes. The ideal mental position for Descartes was in fact to withdraw from experience and have recourse strictly to his own consciousness, since consciousness seems to be the only thing that could guarantee the truth of what actual vision could merely make us believe. This is the attitude that ultimately supports the philosophical approach where the philosopher, having first contemplated the world from a window, gathers it up within the seclusion of his room. In this way, he safely keeps his distance from the mistakes of his visual experience, which ultimately is sensuous vision grounded in the body. Descartes seems to trust in the ability to reach, through an inspection of the mind, an intellectual and therefore disincarnated vision, which, as such, has to be conceived as a “pan-oramic” (literally, an “all-seeing” vision), developing therefore in reflection (which etymologically means “bending backward”) all that was prereflectively implied in sense experience. Thus, the philosopher presupposes that he is not involved in what he sees, suggesting, therefore, that his vision is pure.

On closer scrutiny, this Cartesian attitude is not relevant only to the philosopher depicted in the painting. The portrait itself seems to be Cartesian insofar as it is a representation in which a portion of the world appears in front of us, so that we become mere disembodied spectators of the external scene. This kind of representation would be directly related to the conceptions of the so-called “planimetric perspective,” which has prevailed over any other kind of perspective since the beginning of the Italian Renaissance. At stake, then, is not merely the attitude of a certain type of philosophy, Cartesianism. More generally, at stake here is a whole cultural disposition embedded in our concept of space – space as uniform and positive extension – and in our concept of vision – vision as an aerial view of Being. In other words, at stake is precisely the metaphysics of a disincarnated vision, which describes the way we relate to the world in terms of a frontal relation between subject and object. This is why at the end of his career, in “Eye and Mind,” Merleau-Ponty stresses that every theory of painting

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actually implies a metaphysics. This widely embedded metaphysics is why his reflections on painting are so important. They indicate the obstacles to the ideas he is trying to develop and thus they drive his thinking forward.

Apart from numerous passing reflections on painting across his corpus, Merleau-Ponty produced three essays completely devoted to this topic. Each essay moreover chronologically represents one of the three periods in which his thought can be subdivided. More importantly, each summarizes the essential characteristics of the period in which it appears. Listed chronologically, the essays are: “Cézanne’s Doubt,” published in 1945, the same year of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, his most important complete work; “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence,” published in 1952, where, typical of his early 1950s work, he paid particular attention to language; and finally the last essay, mentioned above already, “Eye and Mind,” written in 1960 but published in 1961, just before his sudden death. Merleau-Ponty composed “Eye and Mind” at the same time that he was writing *The Visible and the Invisible* (posthumously published in 1964), in which he aimed to present a “new ontology.” We do not really know what this final ontology would have looked like. But if we follow his three main texts on painting, we can get a sense of it. So, contextualizing each essay within the period of Merleau-Ponty’s thought in which it falls, we will first focus our attention on “Cézanne’s Doubt”; then on “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence”; and finally on “Eye and Mind.” As the title of this essay suggests, my aim here will be to show how painting, for Merleau-Ponty, at once brings forward great phenomenological truths but also leads his philosophy of the visible to the limits of phenomenology taken in the strict sense as a philosophy of consciousness.

I. CÉZANNE AND PHENOMENOLOGY

In 1942, when Merleau-Ponty writes the essay “Cézanne’s Doubt,” his understanding of Cézanne is certainly not limited to Joachim Gasquet’s 1921 book, even though Merleau-Ponty carefully quotes passages from Gasquet’s account of his meetings and conversations with Cézanne. Nor did Merleau-Ponty know just the reports of Cézanne’s dialogues with Émile Bernard, about which he openly counsels caution. Actually, it is hard to believe that Merleau-Ponty was not familiar with two crucial texts about Cézanne with which – it is important


4. See, for instance, Merleau-Ponty, “Cezanne’s Doubt,” in MPAR, 63; hereafter cited as CD followed by the page number in MPAR.
to note – his interpretations naturally converge: Ranier Maria Rilke’s letters, and the 1929 “Introduction” that D. H. Lawrence wrote for an exhibition of his own paintings. In 1907, Rilke, who at that time lived in Paris, described his encounter with the way Cézanne’s paintings revealed “objectivity.” These descriptions seem to find an echo in Merleau-Ponty’s essay not only in the passage in which he states that “Cézanne wished to return to the object” (CD 62), but, even more, in the passage in which Merleau-Ponty points out that “it was the objects and the faces themselves as he saw them that demanded to be painted in that way, and Cézanne simply expressed what they wanted to say” (CD 71, translation modified). Moreover, the reasons why Lawrence regarded Cézanne as “the only really interesting character” of modern art also seem to find an echo in Merleau-Ponty’s essay. Just like Lawrence, Merleau-Ponty himself describes Cézanne’s obstinate attempt to give back to things the physicality that Western humanity had denied them. This Western humanity would be the humanity of Descartes’s rationality, which removed corporeality from rationality and which thereby imprisoned itself along with things within the immaterial clichés that its mentalistic consciousness had made.

But it is not his knowledge of what others had said about Cézanne that is decisive here. I would like to show the traces of more crucial influences: those of Edmund Husserl, Erwin Panofsky, and Marcel Proust.

As for the first, when Merleau-Ponty writes his essay about Cézanne, he had already visited the Husserl Archives in Leuven. Merleau-Ponty was the first scholar outside the Leuven circle to consult some of Husserl’s unpublished texts housed there. We know that the texts he read concerned primarily the “primordial constitution” (Urkonstitution) of the sensible world, which Husserl calls the Lebenswelt (lifeworld). For Husserl, the lifeworld is the world of our primordial experience, which, even though it always underlies the constructions of Galilean–Cartesian science, still remains an obvious and yet forgotten “presupposition” to such science. This forgetfulness produces the crisis that Husserl had identified, a crisis felt both in that model of science and in the European–Western culture that had given birth to it. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty seems to unify Cézanne’s enter-

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6. As is well known, the Husserl Archives were founded in 1939 shortly after Edmund Husserl’s death. Because Husserl and his wife were of Jewish descent, his manuscripts were in great danger in Nazi-ruled Germany. The Franciscan father H. L. Van Breda succeeded in bringing Mrs. Husserl, the manuscripts, the extensive philosophical library, and the correspondence of Husserl to Leuven.

prise with that of Husserl when he writes, in “Cézanne's Doubt,” that “we see things; we agree about them; we are anchored in them; and it is with ‘nature’ as our base that we construct our sciences. Cézanne wanted to paint this primordial world” (CD 64). Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty, the most disturbing novelty of Cézanne’s painting lies in his effort to express the bewilderment our bodies feel when we find ourselves in a world that is not yet organized according to the Copernican scientific order. Having read at Leuven a fragmentary text Husserl wrote on our primordial experience of space (usually referred to as “The Earth does not Move”), Merleau-Ponty saw in Cézanne’s painting an attempt to express precisely that kind of experience, according to which the earth does not move.8

In this primordial experience, the earth maintains a sort of otherness, suggesting that in fact it does not belong to humanity. In relation to this otherness, Merleau-Ponty’s comments on Cézanne’s Le Lac d’Annecy (1896) are exemplary:

| There is no wind in the landscape, no movement on the Lac d’Annecy; the frozen objects hesitate as at the beginning of the world. It is an unfamiliar world in which one is uncomfortable and which forbids all human effusiveness. If one looks at the work of other painters after seeing Cézanne’s paintings, one feels somehow relaxed, just as conversations resumed after a period of mourning mask the absolute change and restore to the survivors their solidity. (CD 66–7) |

Thus, leaving aside Rilke’s letters, we see that what Merleau-Ponty is really thinking about when he emphasizes that “Cézanne wished to return to the object” (CD 62) is the famous Husserlian task of returning to “the things themselves.” We hear in the background a sentence from Husserl’s Cartesian Meditations – one of Merleau-Ponty’s favorites – when he writes that Cézanne “has returned to the source of silent and solitary experience on which culture and the exchange of ideas have been built” (CD 69, emphasis added).9


9. Here is Husserl’s sentence: “It is the experience ... still mute which we are concerned with leading to the pure expression of its own meaning” (Cartesian Meditations, Dorion Cairns [trans.] [New York: Springer, 1977], 38–9). As for the recurrence of this sentence in...
As for Panofsky’s influence on “Cézanne’s Doubt,” we have no explicit reference as we have with the other sources. Nevertheless, it seems plausible to speculate that a reading of Panofsky’s *Perspective as Symbolic Form* may have been behind the writing of Merleau-Ponty’s text. In *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Panofsky highlights how the birth of Renaissance “perspective construction” is connected to a rationalization of our visual perception. Both the psychophysiological characteristics of our vision (the binocularity of vision, the constant movement of the eyes, and the spherical configuration of the retina) as well as the “psychological” interpretation of vision come to be rationalized. The rationalization ends up asserting a mathematically inspired model of perceptual vision itself. In fact, the perspective construction of the Renaissance “reproduces the vision of one sole immobile eye that is supposed to be placed at a constant distance from the plane of representation.”

One hears echoes of Panofsky’s remarks when Merleau-Ponty writes about a portrait depicted by Cézanne in 1895: “The work table in his portrait of Gustave Geffroy stretches, contrary to the laws of perspective, into the lower part of the picture” (CD 63). Therefore, Merleau-Ponty argues that “by remaining faithful to the phenomena in his investigations of perspective, Cézanne discovered what recent psychologists have come to formulate: the lived perspective, that which we actually perceive, is not a geometric or photographic one” (CD 64).

As for Proust’s influence on “Cézanne’s Doubt,” it is certain that, when Merleau-Ponty writes it, he is profoundly acquainted with the Proustian novel *Remembrance of Things Past*, which he had already quoted in his first work, *The Structure of Behavior* (which dates from 1938, although it was published in 1942). We can then suppose that the knowledge of Proust’s novel influences also some aspects of Merleau-Ponty’s idea of painting that we see emerging in “Cézanne’s Doubt.” When Merleau-Ponty writes that “The painter recaptures...


11. Speaking of “recent psychologists,” this quotation alludes to *Gestalt* theorists. The German word *Gestalt* has no direct translation in English, but refers to the way in which we experience the world, that is to say, the way in which we know the world through our perception. *Gestalt* theorists state that perception of the “whole” in comparison with that of the parts of it is original, primordial, and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, the whole carries a different and altogether greater meaning than its individual components.
and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness” (CD 68), this echoes perfectly with what Proust writes in *Time Regained* (the last volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*):

> Through art alone we are able to emerge from ourselves, to know what another person sees of a universe which is not the same as our own and of which, without art, the landscapes would remain as unknown to us as those that may exist in the moon. Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we make that world multiply itself.13

Indeed, the nonfictional painter to whom Merleau-Ponty devotes this essay, Cézanne, seems, in certain respects, to have been modeled on Proust’s imaginary painter named Elstir. When Proust describes, in *Within a Budding Grove* (the second volume of *Remembrance*), “the effort [Elstir] made … to strip himself, when face to face with reality, of every intellectual concept,”14 with the aim of “reproduc[ing] things not as he knew them to be, but according to the optical illusions of which our first sight of them is composed,”15 Elstir’s aim converges with our primordial encounter with the world studied by Husserl and with the lived perspective evoked by Panofsky.

Now, I have chosen to point out these three influences in particular because in my opinion they intersect in one of the two poles between which this phase of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy seems to be oscillating: that is, the pole according to which Merleau-Ponty tends to consider Cézanne’s painting as the exemplary attempt to paint our primordial perceptual experience. Moving toward this first pole, in the contemporaneous *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty assigns to phenomenological philosophy, and therefore to his own thinking, “the ambition to make reflection equal to the unreflective life of consciousness.”16 In other words, according to the first pole, in the oscillation we find, in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy immediately after the Second World War, that both pictorial reflection and philosophical reflection are supposed to be able to “translate,” without any residue, “the text”17 written by the experience that Husserl defined as “silent and solitary experience.” Nevertheless, in this phase of Merleau-Ponty’s thought, this pole lives together with another one that, later, will prevail and will lead his thought to its ontological developments. According to this second pole, Merleau-Ponty writes in “Cézanne’s Doubt” that “the meaning of what

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17. As for the terms between quotes, see *ibid.*, xviii.
the artist is going to say does not exist anywhere – not in things, which as yet have no meaning, nor in the artist himself, in his unformulated life” (CD 69). Thus, the second pole suggests a relationship between the unreflective life and its expression that, in the Phenomenology of Perception, is shaped precisely by the example of art; Merleau-Ponty says, “Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the realization of a truth.”

As I said, the second pole will prevail in the further development of Merleau-Ponty’s thought, along with a more profound reflection on the “status” of the sensible that will push Merleau-Ponty toward its “ontological rehabilitation.”

II. SPEAKING LANGUAGE AND TACIT LANGUAGE

In the early 1950s, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy was influenced in a decisive way by Saussure’s linguistics. Indeed, while Saussure’s Course in General Linguistics would become decisive for the so-called “structuralist movement” of the 1960s, Merleau-Ponty was in fact the first person to study Saussure from a philosophical perspective. Like the structuralists, Merleau-Ponty takes up Saussure’s definition of the “sign” as “diacritical, oppositional, and negative”:

What we have learned from Saussure is that, taken singly, signs do not signify anything, and that each one of them does not so much express a meaning as mark a divergence [écart] of meaning between itself and other signs. Since the same can be said for all other signs, we may conclude that language is made of differences without terms; or more exactly, that the terms of language are engendered only by the differences which appear among them.

The “écart” (divergence) mentioned here, which could also be rendered in English as “hiatus” or “gap,” refers both to space and differentiation, to the

18. Ibid., xx, translation modified.
19. For an extended discussion of Saussure and structural linguistics, see the essay by Thomas F. Broden in History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
21. The écart is “the gap, the separation, the differentiation between the touching and the touched, the seeing and the seen, mind and world, self and others; it is the fissure that language tries to bridge and that the philosophical methods of reflection, dialectic and intuition have
space in between the signs and to the process that differentiates one sign from another. From this point on, the word “écart” will play a major role in Merleau-Ponty’s thought (as it will as well in that of Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault). On the basis of this écart among the signs, Merleau-Ponty argues that language “in the making” – which he calls “speaking language” (langage parlant) – signifies in an oblique, indirect way, that is, through the inextinguishable vibration crossing differences between signs. It is in this way that “speaking language” reorganizes “spoken language” (langage parlé), that is, reorganizes sedimented signs and meanings, and thereby establishes new meanings, as every creative use of language does.

Saussure’s notion of “sign” is precisely Merleau-Ponty’s starting-point in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence.” Here, Merleau-Ponty’s purpose consists in a “reduction” of the speaking language of literature and philosophy to the tacit language of painting, in order to bring to light the similarities and differences of these two kinds of languages. “Reduction” is, of course, one of the key points of Husserl’s phenomenological method. This method requires that one avoid all abstraction, all theorizing, all generalization, in short, all knowledge that is usually assumed to be obvious, bracketing it and reducing the world to a phenomenon, that is, to the way it appears to us in our primordial experience. On the basis of this kind of reduction, Merleau-Ponty writes in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” that:

If we want to understand language as an originating operation, we must pretend never to have spoken, submit language to a reduction without which it would once more escape us by referring us to what it signifies for us, look at it as deaf people look at those who are speaking, compare the art of language to other arts of expression, and try to see it as one of these mute arts. It is possible that the meaning of language has a decisive privilege, but it is in trying out the parallel that we will perceive what may in the end make that parallel impossible.

(ILVS 84)

This passage highlights that Merleau-Ponty’s interest in linguistics, which characterizes this phase of his thought, is not separable from his reflection on art and literature. In fact, if linguistics can illuminate the phenomenon of expression, art and literature practice expression in a privileged way. Modern art and

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historically attempted to close through their respective theories of meaning, only to ignore thereby how this ‘un-tamable,’ at once secretly nourishes and undermines the habits of thought and experience that they sought to establish” (Patrick Burke, “Listening at the Abyss,” in Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty, Galen A. Johnson and Michael B. Smith [eds] [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990], 84).
literature, in particular, according to Merleau-Ponty in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence,” put the phenomenon of expression into question insofar as it has been understood through the “objectivist’ prejudice.” Through this prejudice art and literature had been conceived mimetically as representations of nature (see ILVS 84). On this point Merleau-Ponty explicitly refers to André Malraux’s trilogy entitled The Psychology of Art (written between 1947 and 1949), and Merleau-Ponty’s title explicitly evokes Malraux’s subsequent 1951 book on art and art history called The Voices of Silence.\(^{22}\) Merleau-Ponty, however, does not agree with Malraux’s thesis in The Psychology of Art, which states that the peculiarity of modern painting consists in the transition from objectivity to (individual) subjectivity, that is, from painting understood as a mimetic representation of nature based on the law of “planimetric perspective” to painting as the expression of an individual point of view about the world that breaks with any law of reproduction. Criticizing this thesis, Merleau-Ponty states that:

Modern painting presents a problem completely different from that of the return to the individual: the problem of knowing how one can communicate without the help of a pre-established Nature which all men's senses open upon, the problem of knowing how we are grafted to the universal by that which is most our own. (ILVS 89)

In fact, according to Merleau-Ponty’s opinion, in the first half of the twentieth century, painting, as well as literature and more generally culture – as he specifies in the contemporaneous essay “Man and Adversity” – focus on the experience of incarnate existence:

Our century has wiped out the dividing line between “body” and “mind” and sees human life as through and through mental and corporeal, always based upon the body and always (even in its most carnal modes) interested in relationships between persons. … The twentieth century has restored and deepened the notion of flesh, that is, of animate body.\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) André Malraux (1901–76) was a French author and dominant figure in French culture and politics from the 1930s to the 1970s, serving as Minister of Information (1945–46, 1958) and Minister of State for Cultural Affairs (1959–69). His major works include La Condition humaine (Man’s Fate) and Les Voix du silence (The Voices of Silence).

\(^{23}\) Merleau-Ponty, Signs, 226–7. This essay is the text of a lecture that Merleau-Ponty gave in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1951. It was published for the first time in 1952, and later collected in Signs.
Merleau-Ponty thinks that the investigation of incarnate existence characterizes all twentieth-century thought. But in particular such an investigation must grant to painting (especially owing to its singular proximity to the perceptual experience) the ability to reveal and even emphasize the primordial ability to express that is at work in our bodily relationship with the world: “it is the expressive operation of the body, begun by the least perception, that develops into painting and art” (ILVS 106–7). In this sense, despite the modifications that emerge in this phase of Merleau-Ponty’s thought, the fundamental reasons supporting his interest in painting have not changed from those supporting this same interest during the earlier period of his philosophy, as exemplified in “Cézanne’s Doubt.”

Nevertheless – even though Merleau-Ponty continues to investigate painting as a singular way to develop the expressive operation begun by perception – now, when he engages in a description of perception itself, he grants a central role to the notion of style. “Perception already stylizes,” Merleau-Ponty asserts; style defines “our original relation to the world.”24 Already appearing in the Phenomenology of Perception, the Merleau-Pontean notion of style comes from Husserl, but here in “Indirect Language,” it is filtered through Malraux’s characterization of style as “the coherent deformation [of] the data of the world” (ILVS 91). For Merleau-Ponty, style is meant as a “system of equivalences” furnishing “the emblems of a certain relationship with being” (ibid.). In other words, style is entirely unified with the meaning things have for a person, but that meaning must, recalling Merleau-Ponty’s comments on Saussure’s notion of “sign,” in turn be understood diacritically as écart, that is, as differentiation. In perception, for Merleau-Ponty, there are differences between things, not just laterally in the perceptual field but also temporally or historically. These differences usually reside in the background of perception allowing the usual forms of things to appear. But one’s style deforms the usual form by drawing certain differences out and leaving others hidden – so that, when I for instance see a red hat, it signifies not only as not blue (it signifies its usual color form) but also as not fashionable (a deformation that is specific to me). Or when I look at a landscape, I see, according to my perceptual style, the shifting movements of birds, while others see the outline of the mountains. All of these meanings are hidden in what I see, but potentially visible. Thanks to the diacritical differences functioning in perception, our encounter with sensible being is therefore able to “sketch” a latent meaning. And it is the latent perceptual meaning that both the painter and the writer will later stylize once more in their works. In other words, that latent meaning will be retaken and recreated according to a movement, that is,

at the same time, archaeological and teleological, in order to become expressed and accessible in their work, whether pictorial or literary. Therefore, not in a way different from that of a painter, the style of a writer looks like a “coherent deformation imposed upon the visible” (ILVS 115), and the painting, no less than the work of writing, can be characterized as a “system of equivalences” that run across the traced signs. In fact, in both these cases, the expressive operation can be characterized in diacritical terms, because first of all their perceptual source can be characterized by difference.

The concept of diacriticity gained through the investigation on language actually shines its light on the description of perception, illuminating this domain as well through the notion of a differentiation that excludes any positive term. This notion allows Merleau-Ponty to abandon the tendency toward conceiving the unreflective and silent life of consciousness as a positive foundation of meaning as it seemed to be in the earlier phase of his thought. Thus, in the summary for his 1952–53 course devoted to “The Sensible World and the World of Expression,” Merleau-Ponty states that “[T]he meaning of a perceived object when picked out from all others still does not stand isolated from the constellation in which it appears; it is articulated only as a certain gap [écart] in relation to the order of space, time, motion, and signification in general in which we are established.”25 This comment is in stark contrast to what we see in “Cézanne’s Doubt,” where the artist is described as someone who has “returned to the source of silent and solitary experience on which culture and the exchange of ideas have been built” (CD 69). Here unreflective life seems to be something like a positive foundation of meaning (as if the meanings were there already made); it does not seem to be a system of gaps or differences that in themselves are meaningless. In contrast to that pole of the oscillation we traced in the period of “Cézanne’s Doubt,” in the period of “The Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence,” Merleau-Ponty states that style – meant in a diacritical way – “is thus not shut up in the depths of the mute individual but diffused throughout all he sees” (ILVS 90). Moreover, if the Phenomenology of Perception definition of operative intentionality as a “text” suggests the same tendency toward conceiving the unreflective life as the presence of a positive layer of sense, in “Indirect Language and the Voice of Silence” Merleau-Ponty insists on excluding the idea of an “original text” that is supposed to precede and guide the effort of expressing (ILVS 80). Therefore, when he discusses the time-lapse film of Matisse’s act of painting that allows us to see Matisse’s hesitations, choices, and reconsiderations, Merleau-Ponty points out that that act was motivated only by “the intention of executing

that particular painting which did not yet exist” (ILVS 83). On the same page, he specifies that speaking-language works in a similar way: “It gropes around a significative intention which is not guided by any text, and which is precisely in the process of writing the text” (ibid.). In fact, in the contemporaneous “On the Phenomenology of Language”26 (despite the title, what Merleau-Ponty says here about the problem of language may be made to refer to every other expressive form), he explains that the intention of meaning “is at the moment no more than a determinate gap to be filled by words.”27 In other words, the intention of meaning is a “mute aspiration” that precedes and provokes the expressive operation but as well an aspiration that comes to know itself only through the expressive operation.

Therefore, the expressive operation cannot measure itself against any preliminary text, for the unreflective and silent life of conscience appears as a “determinate gap” and not as a positive foundation that the expression would need only to translate. For this reason, it is in the mutual diacritical configuration of silent experience and linguistic expression that the transition from the former to the latter can now be understood. In this way, we seem to have very nearly overcome the difficulties associated with the conception of the unreflective and silent life of consciousness as a positive foundation of meaning. Surely, here we do not yet find the reversibility between silence and speech that Merleau-Ponty will thematize when he subsequently attains the ontological perspective. However, the basis of the idea of reversibility seems to be present already since both perception and language share the same power of differentiation, which means that both express meaning in an indirect way. In this perspective, subjectivity gradually loses the characterization of being “full and positive,” which the Phenomenology of Perception seemed to give it. Subjectivity gradually finds a more precise status through the characteristics designated with the French terms “fissures” and “lacunes,” terms rendered in English as “fissures and gaps.”28

III. THE ONTOLOGY OF VISION AND FLESH

Now we are going to focus our attention on the finished but posthumously published essay entitled “Eye and Mind.” Appearing in the first issue of the journal Art de France, “Eye and Mind” included images of some artworks that Merleau-Ponty had selected; he apparently selected them because these

26. Text of Merleau-Ponty’s contribution to the First International Conference on Phenomenology (Brussels, Belgium, 1951). It was published for the first time in 1952, then collected in Signs.
27. Merleau-Ponty, Signs, 89.
images highlighted the ideas he was developing. By itself, this small “imaginary museum” indicates that in “Eye and Mind” Cézanne is no longer, as he was in “Cézanne's Doubt,” the exclusive reference point; now, more generally, Merleau-Ponty refers to what he calls “modern painting.” However it is important to point out that in “Eye and Mind,” Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that “from Lascaux to our time, pure or impure, figurative or not, painting celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility” (EM 127). In fact, here for Merleau-Ponty, each kind of painting manifests what he calls “a polymorphous Being, which justifies all of them without being fully expressed by any” (EM 134).

In “Eye and Mind,” we find again Merleau-Ponty’s previous rejection of the concept of art as mimesis. Also, we find again the idea of artistic creation as a visible disclosure of what otherwise would remain trapped in one’s own individual universe. But in “Eye and Mind,” Merleau-Ponty focuses on painting primarily because, as he explains in the second section of this essay, painting interrogates the enigma of vision. For him, the enigma of vision forms one sole thing with that of the body as the seen and seer together. The phenomenon of vision is ignited in relation to this enigmatic peculiarity of the body. Therefore here, the body is defined as “an intertwining of vision and movement,” between which, Merleau-Ponty explains, there is an “extraordinary overlapping” (EM 124). “Intertwining” (a term appearing in the title of the most innovative chapter of The Visible and the Invisible29) and “overlapping” (a term translating the French word “empiétement”) are recurring terms in the last phase of Merleau-Ponty’s thinking. Elements that are mutually intertwining and overlapping imply reversibility. And it is reversibility, for Merleau-Ponty, that animates sensible being. The idea that the primary characteristic of sensible being is reversibility has its roots in the human body being an “intertwining of vision and movement”: movement implies vision, vision implies movement. Because of this mutual overlapping, it is a mistake to conceive vision and movement, respectively, as an “operation of thought” and a “decision made by the mind” taking place in front of a world understood as “in itself, or matter” (ibid.). It is thus a mistake to view the world as utterly heterogeneous with respect to vision and movement, which is really what the philosophical tradition and common sense springing from Cartesian thought would hold. In fact, as we saw at the beginning in relation to Rembrandt’s painting, the philosophical tradition and common sense are habituated to consider the world as a thing extended in space (res extensa) in front of the subject. Merleau-Ponty objects that, thanks to the mutual

overlapping, vision is not “a representation of the world,” but a real and actual opening to it, while our movement is not a displacement in geometrical space as it would be in the case of a thing. Instead, movement is a tending toward, a self-transcending, and hence it is an aspect that decisively contributes to the definition of our body. Unlike a thing about which we say “it is moved,” in the case of our body, we say that it “moves itself.”

Thus, vision and movement – which open us to the world – are decisive factors in establishing the reversible structure of the human body, which is its very enigma. In fact, in “Eye and Mind,” Merleau-Ponty explains that “the enigma derives from the fact that my body simultaneously sees and is seen” (ibid.). Therefore, one cannot say that the seer stands before the world. But, as well, one cannot say that the seer is placed in the world while remaining distinguished from the world itself. The seer is part of the world in so far as, being a body, the seer is visible just as the world is. Here Merleau-Ponty is thinking of the experience of the mirror. In order to have this experience, one must be not only a thing that sees but also a thing that is seen. Thus the seer’s body must be made of the same stuff as the world: the visible. At the same time, it is the visible that can see – the visible. Therefore it is that particular visible in which all of the visible can see itself. It is as if the visible were a single organism that, in order to see itself, gathers itself around that visible which is also the seeing, and therefore, in this respect, “it is its consciousness,” as Cézanne said (see CD 67).

In “Eye and Mind,” the paradoxical consequence of the fact that my body is at same time seer and seen is found in the following statement: “Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself …; the world is made of the very stuff of the body” (EM 124–5). The reversible structure of the human body, being at the same time sentient and sensible, shows how this body is fleshly akin to the sensible world that therefore shares the same ontological status. In this sense, in his 1959 “The Philosopher and his Shadow,” an essay dedicated to Husserl’s “unthought,” Merleau-Ponty recognized the need for “an ontological rehabilitation of the sensible. For from now on we may literally say that space itself is known through my body.” On such a basis, rather than the mere relationship between the percipient subject and the perceived world indicated in the Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty asserts that the sentient and the sensible belong together to the same “flesh.” This flesh interweaves our own body, the other’s body, and the things of the world, wrapping them all up within

30. This essay was published for the first time in 1959, then collected in Signs. As for the expression “unthought-of element,” see Merleau-Ponty, Signs, 60.
a horizon of “brute” or “wild being.” In this wild being, the subject and object are yet not constituted as such, and therefore perception accomplishes itself in the indistinguishability of perceiving and being perceived, in the indision of activity or passivity, and finally in the reversibility between seeing and being seen, of which Merleau-Ponty finds painting to be a telling example.

Thus, Merleau-Ponty is the first in the twentieth century to explicitly claim a philosophical value for the notion of “flesh,” saying that he uses it to illustrate a type of being, which “has no name in any philosophy” (VI 147). “Flesh” names neither matter nor mind nor substance (VI 139, 145, 147); it names a unitary texture where each body and each thing manifests itself only as difference (as écart) from other bodies and other things. In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, the notion of “flesh” designates the common horizon where all beings belong. In that sense, such a notion may even sound “older” than the specific Christian use of it. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty defines it by resorting to the Presocratic term “element” (VI 139, 147) or to a Presocratic expression, attributed by Aristotle to Anaxagoras, “omou hn panta” (all was together) (VI 217). On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty tries to make us see that the flesh is not an origin, but something “originating.” Older than anything that has counted as an origin, older than all things that have originated, the originating, Merleau-Ponty warns, “is not all behind us” (VI 124); it is still present and in perennial explosion. It is indeed enough to repeat, Merleau-Ponty suggests, the experience of the hand that goes from touched to touching, as described by Husserl in Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy – Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution (§36), in order to encounter the phenomenon of reversibility. It must be noticed however that this is “a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact” (VI 147).

Thus, Merleau-Ponty comes to the notion of “flesh” by thinking of our relationship with the world in the direction showed by what he called the “shadow” of Husserl’s thought. At the same time, though, he is inclined to think that the danger of just overturning the metaphysical relationship between sensible and spiritual lurks in the idea, advocated by Husserl, of a stratification of experience – the truth of which would be directly proportional to its deepness. Merleau-Ponty comes therefore to criticize the goal, in stratification, of “unraveling” of ‘disentangling’ what is entangled” (VI 268), that is, the disentangling of the flesh itself.

In this light, the definition of painting as the interrogation of the enigma of vision demands now to be recognized in all its importance. During the last

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32. About this expression, see Aristotle, Physics, I, 4, 187a30.
33. See Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, 124, and even more clearly the following passage taken from a working note in the same text: “for me it is no longer a question of origins, nor limits, nor of a series of events going to a first cause, but one sole explosion of Being which is forever” (VI 265).
phase of his thought, in which the dimension of subjectivity is inscribed as a fissure or a hollow in the dimension of Being, Merleau-Ponty tends to see in the operation of painting – rather than in the creative prolongation of the painter’s perceptual experience, as described in “Cézanne’s Doubt” and in “Indirect Language and the Voice of Silence” – the expression of a “Visibility” (a word that Merleau-Ponty uses as a synonym of “flesh”) understood with all its ontological implications. This does not mean that Merleau-Ponty gives painting a privilege with respect to other arts or cultural expressions. In reality, in the preparatory notes to the 1958–59 “Philosophy Today” course, Merleau-Ponty lists painting as just one of the “cultural symptoms” “that attest to [one] same crisis situation, i.e., at once peril and possibility for the rebirth of philosophy: example, in our Western ideology: poetry, music, painting, and psychoanalysis.”

Nevertheless, painting understood in its ontological significance is, according to Merleau-Ponty, “a central operation contributing to the definition of our access to Being” (EM 132), since it is precisely this carnal Being “that itself comes to show forth its own meaning” in vision (EM 147).

On the one hand, by virtue of one’s own body as seeing-visible, the one who looks in fact participates in the world he sees, and on this basis Merleau-Ponty conceives vision as the expression of a “fundamental narcissism” – the narcissism of the Ego – since “the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees” (VI 139). On the other hand, in the involvement of the seer in what he sees, Merleau-Ponty also identifies “the second and more profound sense of the narcissism,” because such an involvement suggests the imminent reversibility between seeing things and being seen by them. This “second and more profound sense of the narcissism” is the ontological sense, which Merleau-Ponty traces both in the aesthetical dimension (the reciprocity of vision is witnessed by many painters who felt their glance was reciprocated by the things they were looking at) as well as in the sphere of desire: “to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom” of one’s own image (ibid.).

Thus, the ontological sense of narcissism could be defined as the desire of the carnal Being for its own vision, which elicits its dehiscence in the seer and in the visible, both of which – as they spring forth from the same flesh – hold a mutual reciprocity and can therefore reverse their roles. But painting does not show only the reversibility between the seer and the seen, according to Merleau-Ponty. He writes, “Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible – painting scrambles all our categories, spreading out before us its oneric universe of carnal essences, actualized resemblances, mute meanings” (EM 130). In other words, painting also shows that, in the horizon of the flesh, perception takes

place in the steadfast intertwining with the imaginary, which “renders present to us what is absent” (EM 132). Thus, painting contributes to reveal vision as the capability to see the invisible in the visible. An example of this invisible in the visible can be found in the “carnal essences” mentioned a moment ago, essences that in the final pages of The Visible and the Invisible he calls “sensible ideas” (VI 151). These essences are nonconceptual generalities that, according to the peculiar logic of the aesthetical world, are inseparable from their particular, sensible presentation.

Thus, it is in this logic of the aesthetical world that Merleau-Ponty saw a new, nondualistic ontology at work. He was hoping to give this nondualistic ontology a full philosophical formulation by refounding the very idea of philosophy in what he began to call “a-philosophy.” A-philosophy: this means a thinking that is finally able to establish and to maintain a close connection with the aesthetical world that the philosophical tradition, in contrast, devalued. “This philosophy, which is yet to be elaborated, is what animates the painter” (EM 138). At the time of his sudden death, it was this ontological perspective that Merleau-Ponty was stressing, going as far as the very limits of phenomenology.

### MAJOR WORKS


35. This is the reason why, in the quoted passage, Merleau-Ponty characterizes vision through the French term “voyance,” which literally indicates “clairvoyance,” the “gift of double sight.” For more about this notion in Merleau-Ponty’s last reflection, see my *The Thinking of the Sensible: Merleau-Ponty’s A-Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 31ff.


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Volume 4


The intersection of phenomenology and hermeneutics in the twentieth century creates a new trajectory within contemporary continental philosophy. But although we speak of the departure of hermeneutics from phenomenology, we must recognize the phenomenological impulse of hermeneutics as well. During the 1920s, Martin Heidegger redirects Husserl’s phenomenology toward a “hermeneutics of facticity” that examines the concrete, historical life of human being rather than the eidetic structures of transcendental consciousness. This hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology comes to fruition in the existential-ontological analysis of Dasein in Division I of Being and Time. The radicality of this hermeneutic thrust is most pronounced where Heidegger articulates his ontological conception of understanding in relation to the “hermeneutic circle.” Moreover, the hermeneutic implications of this analysis carry deep into Division II of that work, where Heidegger uncovers the temporality of Being—there as “Care” and the “historicity” of authentic existence. Hans-Georg Gadamer takes up the banner of hermeneutics later abandoned by his mentor. By drawing out the implications of Heidegger’s ontology of understanding for the human sciences, Gadamer lays out the basic traits of philosophical hermeneutics in Truth and Method. Pursuing further Heidegger’s emphasis on the historicity of human being, Gadamer places a new emphasis on the belonging of understanding to tradition. This insight challenges the concept of historical
understanding as the acquisition of objective knowledge. Conceived instead as a mode of historical being, understanding is more deeply characterized by its participation in tradition as an event of transmission. Influenced by Heidegger’s later linguistic turn, Gadamer stresses the import of language as the medium of tradition and its transmission and thereby completes the “ontological shift” of hermeneutics expressed in his formula “Being that can be understood is language.”3 This survey of the hermeneutic development of phenomenology concludes with a brief review of Gadamer’s exchanges with his contemporaries (Betti, Habermas, Ricoeur, and Derrida) highlighting the key points of contention in these debates.

I. HERMENEUTIC RADICALIZATION OF PHENOMENOLOGY: HEIDEGGER

Heidegger’s transformation of phenomenology

Heidegger frequently acknowledges his debt to Husserl’s phenomenology for providing an essential insight into the “genuine method” of philosophical thinking conceived not as a new technique, but as “a path toward the disclosure of objects.”4 For Heidegger, phenomenology is a way of “seeing” that refuses the self-evidence of accepted theory or prevailing opinion in order to attend solely to beings and the manner in which they disclose themselves. In this respect, he joins Husserl’s recourse to “the things themselves” (die Sachen selbst) as the abiding concern of phenomenology. But Heidegger is careful to take his distance from the “transcendental” conception debuted in Husserl’s lectures on The Idea of Phenomenology (1907) and the “idealist” tenor of its full statement in Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy – First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology (1913), preferring to develop his own appropriation of phenomenology from Husserl’s Logical Investigations (1900).5 From the outset, Heidegger is unreceptive to Husserl’s claim that transcendental phenomenology fulfills the ideal of philosophy as a rigorous science. While Husserl holds that the transcendental reduction allows the intentional life of consciousness to be described without metaphysical presupposition, Heidegger maintains that Husserl’s project is bound by onto-

5. For a detailed discussion of Husserl’s phenomenology, see the essay by Thomas Nenon in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
logical commitments inherited uncritically from the metaphysical tradition. He also rejects Husserl’s discovery of a domain of “transcendental subjectivity” as a “sphere of immanence” secured by the reduction. Where Husserl claims that the intentional object is constituted within its intentional relation to consciousness, Heidegger insists that the “directedness toward” characteristic of intentionality marks a fundamental openness to the world that transcends any enclosure within consciousness. Heidegger also refuses the priority that Husserl’s emphasis on evidence grants to theoretical knowledge over practical engagement. When Husserl asserts that phenomenology offers no constructions or speculations but grounds its claims solely on the object as given in intuition, Heidegger sees the persistence of the paradigm of knowledge as the pure beholding of a present object.

Heidegger instead appeals to ancient Greek thought for a more originary understanding of phenomenology than he finds in Husserl. In his recollection “My Way to Phenomenology,” Heidegger remarks: “What occurs for the phenomenology of the acts of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena is thought more originally by Aristotle and all Greek thinking and existence as alētheia, as the unconcealedness of what is present, its being revealed, its showing itself.”6 Indeed, when he defines phenomenology in Being and Time (1927), it is not to Husserl that he turns, but to Aristotle. Above all, it is Aristotle’s stress on the unconcealment achieved in speech that guides Heidegger’s conception in section 7. There his definition of phenomenology proceeds from the Greek words phainomenon and logos. Phainomenon, derived from the Greek verb phainesthai (to show itself), means “that which shows itself in itself; the manifest [das Offenbare].”7 Although typically translated as “word,” “concept,” or “reason,” Heidegger renders logos as “discourse” (Rede) in order to stress its etymological connection to legein (“to bind together,” “to gather up,” and “to let something be seen”). This serves to underscore that the self-manifestation of phenomena is realized in discourse. The logos of the phainomenon is such that it brings the matter out into the open, lets it be seen, or makes it manifest. “Thus ‘phenomenology’ means apophainesthai ta phainomena – to let that which shows itself be seen from itself as it shows itself by itself.”8 In this definition lies Heidegger’s radicalization of phenomenology that displaces the center of gravity from the intentional life of transcendental subjectivity to the ontological event of an entity’s self-presentation. Despite Husserl’s influence, it is the emphasis in Greek thought on the emergence of the being from

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8. Ibid., 30.
absence into presence that becomes decisive for Heidegger’s appropriation of phenomenology.

Heidegger conceives an entity’s self-presentation as the unfolding of presence from absence. Hence an element of absence, of hiddenness, belongs to the ontological structure of such self-presentation; self-manifestation is inseparable from self-concealment. Heidegger’s recourse to Aristotle and Greek thought thus signals a renewal of “the question of Being” (die Seinsfrage) that profoundly affects his appropriation of phenomenology. This is apparent in Heidegger’s appeal to the Greek concept of truth as alētheia as the movement of an entity into the unconcealedness of its presence. Stressing the alpha-privative in the word’s grammatical structure, he maintains that phenomenological dis-closure or un-concealing requires making something manifest that otherwise tends to hide itself.9 Phenomenology is now wedded to an ontological problematic that demands a hermeneutic reorientation of phenomenology. In fact, he is quite explicit about it:

Our investigation will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation. The logos of the phenomenology of Dasein lies in the character of hermeneuein, through which the authentic meaning of Being, and also the basic structures of Being which Dasein itself possesses are made known to Dasein’s understanding of Being.10

Because the Being of Dasein tends to conceal itself, phenomenological description must be supplanted by interpretation. Heidegger therefore broaches the question of Being through a hermeneutic investigation that brings Dasein to present itself by means of a self-interpretation that wrests Being-there from its own tendency to cover itself up. Yet Heidegger’s interpretation remains genuinely phenomenological because it approaches the phenomenon as it initially presents itself. Accordingly, the “Existential Analytic” begins with an interpretation of Dasein’s “average everydayness” as a manner of Being-there that is immersed in the world, preoccupied with the things of pressing concern, and pervaded by the prevailing outlook sanctioned by the “They.” The “average everydayness” of Dasein only comes to appear inauthentic by comparison to the authentic manner of Being-there that pulls itself out of its absorption in the world by seizing on those possibilities that are genuinely its own. The self-presentation of Dasein therefore requires the hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology.

9. Ibid., 29.
10. Ibid., 33.
For only a hermeneutical approach can fulfill the phenomenological demand to let beings show themselves from themselves.

*Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity*

Heidegger’s transformation of phenomenology is also inspired by his renewed interest in the hermeneutic tradition—especially the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, which marks a crucial, if problematic, advance. By situating the issue of understanding within the sphere of historical life, Dilthey succeeds in opening the scope of hermeneutics; but he also confines it within an epistemological project that seeks the conditions for the possibility of historical knowledge. Hermeneutics provides him with a method for the human sciences that supports a claim to objectivity for understanding comparable to the method of explanation in the natural sciences. Although psychology maintains its foundational function for Dilthey, hermeneutics assumes a more significant role later where he finds that what is understood is not really psychological but rather “forms of spirit” in which historical life achieves expression. For Heidegger, however, the appeal to psychology and the insistence on method misconstrues both hermeneutics and historicity. Yet Heidegger is still drawn toward Dilthey’s late work where the goal that emerges is, he says, “to understand life philosophically and to secure for this understanding a hermeneutical foundation in terms of ‘life itself.’” But where understanding belongs to the hermeneutical structure of historical life, it is necessary to transcend the methodological contrast of the natural and human sciences in order to retrieve the unique reality of history. It is necessary, that is, to remove understanding from the limits of its epistemological and psychological conception in order to appropriate it anew as an ontological structure of historical being.

This radical reevaluation of hermeneutics emerges from Heidegger’s reflections on the historical experience of “factual life” that he finds exemplified in primordial Christian faith. His early lectures on the phenomenology of religion focus on the letters of Paul expressing the hope of Christ’s return on which the life of Christian faith is based. Attending to the “time of decision” (kairos) with its indefinite expectation of the coming event, Heidegger confirms the futural orientation of genuinely historical life that finds fulfillment in concrete performance. He calls this “factual life,” by which he means to emphasize the concrete, contingent, and individual character of historical existence. Although Paul and other Christian writers (Augustine, Luther) achieve an “ontic” comprehension

*11. For a discussion of the hermeneutic tradition, with a focus on Dilthey and Schleiermacher, see the essay by Eric Sean Nelson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.*

*12. Ibid., 363.*
of the temporality that belongs to such performance, none of them develops an adequate understanding of the ontological structure of factical life.\(^{13}\) Heidegger first provides this in the lectures on *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1923), where he conceives hermeneutics as the self-interpretation of factical life. “Hermeneutics” now means making Dasein understandable to itself as a being to which a state of having-been-interpreted belongs; “facticity” designates the “temporal particularity” of “this” Dasein in its Being-there “for a while” which is always situated in the “today.”\(^{14}\) This means that factical life is historical and that Dasein always understands itself historically. The specific task of hermeneutics is thus to interpret the Being of Dasein with respect to its facticity. For Heidegger, then, hermeneutics is not restricted to the domain of the human sciences, but incorporates the whole of human existence as a historical phenomenon.

**Heidegger’s ontology of understanding**

Heidegger’s ontological conception of understanding (*Verstehen*) is decisive for his hermeneutic phenomenology. According to this conception, understanding is a mode of Dasein’s Being: existentially, understanding belongs to Dasein as potentiality-for-Being (*Seinskönnen*, literally, to-be-able-to-be); ontologically, it is a primordial mode disclosure. Rather than a theoretical cognition, Heidegger views understanding as a practical capacity, a “being-able to” that assumes familiarity with the world where Dasein’s involvements are oriented by its “concern” (*Besorge*). He emphasizes that the initial encounter with things is determined by our practical interests in accordance with which they become available to us for this or that purpose. Consequently, the disclosure of things in their initial availability as being “ready-to-hand” (*Zuhandensein*) occurs through the “circum-spective concern” by which we engage the surrounding world.Understanding is then essentially anticipatory; it casts forth the horizon within which beings

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14. In the lecture course cited above, Heidegger exposes the inadequacy of the current self-understanding of Dasein by showing the “fore-having” operative in historical consciousness (and in contemporary philosophy) as one that understands itself and human being in an objective manner. But such an approach cannot do justice to the temporality of factical existence and the historicality of its performance. As long as Dasein interprets itself in objective terms, its self-understanding falls short and remains in the orbit of a metaphysical conceptionality that conceives Being as a constant presence. See Martin Heidegger, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, John van Buren (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana State University, 1999), 40–52.
disclose themselves to Dasein’s circumspective concern. Understanding therefore exhibits the ontological structure of “projection” (Entwurf). As a potential-to-be, Dasein understands by projecting upon possibility whereby it discloses both the world and itself. More specifically, understanding discloses beings by projecting upon the world and thereby understands itself as Being-in-the-world; at the same time, Dasein discloses itself and understands its own Being as a potentiality-for-Being. Dasein does not project upon free-floating possibilities, but rather upon those possibilities available in the factical situation to which it has been delivered over. This means that facticity modifies Dasein’s understanding. This modification refers back to “disposition” (Befindlichkeit, literally, the situation in which Dasein finds itself) as a mode of disclosedness by virtue of which Dasein finds itself in the midst of the world without whence or whither, a condition that he calls “thrownness” (Geworfenheit).

Dasein’s understanding therefore has the character of “thrown projection,” which consists in a threefold “fore-structure” (Vor- struktur) that guides any interpretation by delineating in advance the Being of what is understood. “Fore-having” (Vorhabe) lays hold of the being as a whole; “fore-sight” (Vorsicht) projects an initial view of the kind of Being that belongs to that being; and “fore-grasping” (Vorgriff) sets forth the basic concepts by which to grasp it. A hammer, for instance, presents itself to our circumspective concern in regard to the work to be done within a context – in this case, a “work-world” – that provides a set of references or assignments that determine its meaning. To “understand” the hammer is to “have” the hammer as a whole “in advance” by locating it within the referential totality of the work-world from which it first appears. It is also to have “seen” how the hammer appears from out of this context in its Being as “ready-to-hand.” Finally, we “grasp” the hammer “in advance” by means of a set of concepts (such as those deployed above) that enables one to conceptually articulate the Being of the hammer precisely as it appears. To understand the meaning of the hammer (or anything else) is thus to project its Being upon the horizon to which it belongs – that is, the horizon set forth by this complex of fore-structures.

The “fore-structure” of understanding thus comprises the “hermeneutic situation” within which the interpretation works out what is “presupposed” in this way. By presupposing what we seek, however, we seem to be moving in a circle. Yet Heidegger holds that this movement, which describes the “hermeneutic circle,” is not “vicious”; it is not a logical flaw to be avoided, but rather a constitutive feature of understanding. Understanding requires a “fore-structure” in

17. Ibid., 140–41.
order to provide a direction for the work of interpretation. Far from invalidating the inquiry, he argues, we must affirm the hermeneutic circle as determined by the ontological structure of understanding. The task of understanding is not to acquire a “presuppositionless” starting-point, but to ensure that the fore-having, fore-seeing, and fore-grasping are appropriate to the entity in question. As he says, “What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way.”18 Only then can one be confident that the interpretation will not be waylaid by inappropriate constructions but instead will be secured “by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.”19 Heidegger thereby remains true to his phenomenological inspiration inasmuch as he seeks those conditions under which the die Sachen can show themselves from themselves as they are in themselves. However, those conditions are now thoroughly historical and hermeneutical.

For Heidegger, interpretation (Auslegung) is integral to understanding; understanding grounds interpretation and interpretation elaborates understanding. By working out what understanding projects, interpretation completes understanding. “In interpretation,” Heidegger says, “understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself.”20 Interpretation thus consists in the articulation of what is pre-understood, so to speak, in the initial projection. It enriches understanding by making the disclosed possibilities more definite. In particular, interpretation reveals the “as-structure” by which something is understood. With the notion of “Auffassung,” Husserl already identified an interpretive element of intentionality whereby the given is apprehended “as” something.21 But Heidegger returns interpretation to the context of circumspective concern from out of which things first become accessible to us. For example, preoccupied by the work to be done, my grasping the hammer implies that I have prereflectively taken it “as” a tool for pounding nails. Such “taking-as” is not an act of predication (by which I assign a property to the “hammer-thing”), but a more primordial articulation of intelligibility that Heidegger calls the “hermeneutic ‘as.’” Assertion modifies the as-structure of understanding from the “hermeneutic-as” of our prethematic engagement with something ready-to-hand in circumspective concern into the “apophantic-as” of a predicative beholding of something present-at-hand in pure intuition. For Heidegger, assertion is thus a derivative mode of interpretation.22 The hermeneutic-as is therefore closely related to “discourse” (Rede), another primordial mode of disclosure.

18. Ibid., 143.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 139.
22. Heidegger, Being and Time, 147.
that Heidegger claims underlies both interpretation and assertion. In language the intelligibility of the world disclosed in discourse is put into words. Dasein therefore finds itself in an already interpreted world of meanings.

The “hermeneutic circle” that characterizes the relation of understanding and interpretation also governs the hermeneutic inquiry of *Being and Time*. Such thematic questioning requires that understanding project the being interrogated upon the horizon that enables this being to disclose itself in its Being. So the decisive matter is to ensure that the projected horizon has sufficient depth and breadth to let the phenomenon show itself from itself. The interpretive task pursued in the “Existential Analytic” itself proceeds by an anticipatory projection that understands the Being of Dasein as “existence” (*Existenz*). Much is at stake in this projection since the interpretation of Dasein not only proceeds from the horizon of existence but constantly returns to it. That is why Heidegger speaks of a “relatedness backward and forward” between understanding and interpretation as the inquiry works out the meaning of Dasein’s Being as existence. Thus the point is not to step out of the circle but to enter into it more deeply so that the possibility projected by the understanding can be worked out more fully in the interpretation. Just as projection and retrieval are connected in the Being of Dasein, they are likewise connected in the thematic interpretation of Dasein’s Being. The hermeneutic structure of Heidegger’s inquiry in *Being and Time* therefore reflects the hermeneutic structure of Dasein’s Being.

### Heidegger’s interpretation of historicity

Heidegger addresses Dasein’s historicity on the basis of a temporal interpretation of Being-there. Such a temporal interpretation, in turn, presupposes that the Being of Dasein exhibits a unified structure that consists in “Care” (*Sorge*). According to Heidegger’s analysis, the Care-structure of Being-there is disclosed in the existentially privileged disposition of anxiety. Unlike fear, Dasein is never anxious about something in the world; rather, Dasein is anxious about its Being-in-the-world. Dasein is both anxious about its facticity – that is, about its being-thrown into the world – and anxious for its existence – that is, for its own potentiality-for-Being in the world. What anxiety discloses is Dasein’s absorption in the world where it adopts prevailing viewpoints and popular concerns.

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23. The circularity is what requires the repetition of the “Existential Analytic” in Division II, where the temporal meaning of the Being of Dasein must be worked out. The integral relation of repetition and circularity in the being of Dasein and in Heidegger’s interpretive strategy in *Being and Time* is deftly discussed by John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 60–92.

Having thus “fallen” into the world, Dasein conforms its own potential-to-be to the expectations “They” have, thereby shirking responsibility for its own existence. Because anxiety exposes Dasein as “being-fallen” (Gefallensein), it reveals that the elements of Dasein as Being-in-the-world – that is, existence, facticity, and falleness – constitute a unified phenomenon that justifies the interpretation of Being-there as Care. On this basis Heidegger reveals the “authentic” manner of Being-there by reference to which he elicits the temporal meaning of Dasein’s Being. In this way the analysis of Dasein in Division II of \textit{Being and Time} exhibits the very relation of understanding and interpretation described by the hermeneutic circle. Guided by the fore-structure of understanding that demands we have the whole of Dasein’s Being in view, Heidegger’s interpretation circles back on itself in order to retrieve Dasein’s authentic manner of existence from its “average everydayness.” Only then can the thematic interpretation fully work out the understanding’s initial projection of Dasein’s Being as existence.

The retrieval of authentic existence opens with “the call” (das Beruf) of conscience that addresses anxious Dasein, summoning Being-there from out of its fallleness into the world to take over its thrownness by taking up its own potentiality-for-Being. Dasein responds to this call by projecting upon death as its most extreme, unique, and certain possibility. By resolutely projecting upon this possibility (of its own impossibility), Dasein anticipates death. Such “being-toward-death” (Sein-zum-Tod) constitutes Dasein’s authentic comportment toward its own potential-for-Being. By resolutely confronting the possibility of its own absence, Dasein is able to retract its preoccupation with worldly concerns, break the dominance of the “They,” and shatter the hold of the present. Yet being-toward-death requires no renunciation of the world; it rather enables Dasein to authentically engage its situation. In “anticipatory resoluteness,” Dasein thus seizes certain possibilities that are uniquely its own. This provides the existential basis for authentic selfhood. Dasein constitutes its “self” as a “whole” by steadfastly drawing itself out of its dispersal in the “They” and its absorption in the world. Existentially, the “self-constancy” achieved in anticipatory resoluteness must be understood in terms of Care – and not misconstrued metaphysically as the selfsameness of an enduring substance that is always present-at-hand. Heidegger is now able to confirm the temporal meaning of Care as the ontological structure of Dasein. The Care-structure exhibits the dimensions of an existential (“ecstatic”) temporality: “Being-ahead-of-itself” Dasein comes toward itself by projecting possibility (future); “Being-already-in-(the-world)” Dasein

\footnote{25. The threefold structure of care expresses the manner of being of intentionality. Hence “Heidegger notes that Husserl’s description of intentionality is simply the phenomenon of care – ‘only seen from the outside’” (Daniel Dahlstrom, \textit{Heidegger’s Concept of Truth} [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 289).}
comes back to what it already was (having-been); “Being-alongside (entities encountered within the world)” Dasein makes entities manifest in their possibility (present). Existential temporality is thus the “meaning” of Dasein’s existence; it is that “upon which” understanding projects the Being of Dasein as Care. This structural feature of Dasein sets the stage for Heidegger’s temporal interpretation of Being-there and its authentic historicity.

Heidegger conceives the authentic temporal Being of Dasein as a forward movement that is at the same time a movement back that illumines the present. Drawing on Kierkegaard, Heidegger describes this circular movement of Dasein as one of repetition or retrieval. Here we begin to see the full depth of Heidegger’s hermeneutical conception of Dasein’s Being. As “existence,” Dasein projects its own potential-to-be such that it is always coming toward itself as possibility. As “facticity,” Dasein is disclosed as “thrown” Being-in-the-world, which brings Dasein back before the sheer fact of its Being-there. As “thrown projection,” Dasein returns to its present situation, disclosing some possibility into which it has already been inserted. By projecting upon this possibility Dasein recovers its own potential-to-be. Repetition thus delineates the basic dynamic of Dasein’s Being as it moves forth and back from its futurity to its having-been in a movement of self-retrieval in the present. The enactment of this movement in anticipatory resoluteness Heidegger calls “authentic existence.” As such it is the counter-movement to Dasein’s fallenness whereby Being-there retrieves its authentic existence from its fallen and inauthentic way of Being. Anticipatory resoluteness thus discloses the temporality proper to Dasein: projecting upon its ownmost possibility, Dasein comes toward itself; freed to take over its thrownness, Dasein comes back to what it has been all along; drawn out of its fallenness, Dasein illuminates its situation in a “moment of vision” enabling it to seize possibilities hitherto hidden.

The historical dimension of existence that Heidegger now adds is of greater significance to his hermeneutic phenomenology than the space devoted to it would indicate. In §74, he interprets the sense of having-been in terms of the Dasein’s historicity. As a factual being that is always already thrown into the world, Dasein carries its past along with it. This aspect of Dasein’s temporal being is now specified as its “heritage” (Erbe). Authentically projecting upon its ownmost possibilities, resolute Dasein is brought back to its present situation in order to disclose those possibilities that have been handed down to it. Dasein’s inheritance may be individual or collective, it may be a matter of “fate” (Schicksal) or “destiny” (Geschick), but in either case it points to the authentic historicity of Being-there. According to Heidegger, only the Dasein that resolutely anticipates death breaks free of its immersion in the actuality of the present

in order to disclose those possibilities transmitted by tradition and seize them in the present moment. The authentic historicizing of Dasein is thus a matter of repetition – which is now understood as explicitly taking over those possibilities inherited from the tradition. “Repetition” (Wiederholung), however, is not a “bringing back again” (Wiedererbringen) of what once was; it does not mean reinstating some past actuality, but rather bringing forth a new possibility. Such possibility is always historically situated and determinate since it is a matter of disclosing a possibility delivered by the past that opens another future within the present. Thus the published portion of Being and Time effectively culminates with an account of the historicity of Dasein that outlines a theory of historical repetition. Indeed, repetition marks the structure of the “happening of tradition” (Überlieferungsgeschehen) that provides the point of departure for the further development of philosophical hermeneutics.

II. CLAIMS OF PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS: GADAMER

Gadamer’s recovery of tradition

The human sciences return to the foreground of hermeneutic inquiry in Gadamer’s Truth and Method, where, in the second part, he sets about recovering the hermeneutic dimension of historical understanding and legitimating an experience of truth proper to the finitude of our historical being.27 His critical engagement with hermeneutics and historicism in the nineteenth century has two principal thrusts. First, he challenges the psychological orientation of hermeneutics – central to Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic approach – that claims understanding requires the “reconstruction” of the author’s experience, arguing that understanding involves the “integration” of past and present. Second, he confronts the epistemological orientation of hermeneutics that seeks to ground the human sciences methodologically, arguing that historicity is the condition of understanding and not a restriction on it. Dilthey plays a crucial role in Gadamer’s critical engagement with the tradition of hermeneutics, which culminates in his diagnosis of the ambiguity that persists in Dilthey’s dual commitment to the objectivity of historical knowledge and to the significance of life philosophy. On the one hand, Dilthey asserts that historical consciousness must rise above its immersion in history by assuming a “standpoint of reflection and doubt” that surmounts tradition. On the other hand, Dilthey holds that reflection arises within life such that the objectifications of mind in tradition (qua

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27. Gadamer’s philosophy, as well as Ricoeur’s, is also the focus of an essay by Wayne J. Froman in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
morals, law, and religion) and historical consciousness remain immanent to life. Gadamer concludes that Dilthey’s concern for the epistemological foundation of the human sciences precludes him from fully integrating the historicity of human experience. By rejecting the primacy of reflection and absorbing historical consciousness into the historical process, Gadamer moves beyond this impasse in Dilthey’s thought toward a philosophical hermeneutics that recognizes the speculative structure of “living being” (Lebewesen) that constantly separates and unites with itself.

Gadamer’s own inquiry into the ontological conditions of understanding takes up Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity and the primacy it grants life over self-consciousness. Accordingly, he affirms Heidegger’s insight into understanding as a mode of human being-in-the-world. But while Heidegger’s temporal interpretation of existence highlights the futural dimension of Zukunft, Gadamer emphasizes the hermeneutic import of Gewesenheit – the past, literally, “having-been” – that marks our facticity. To be thrown into the world is to find ourselves cast into history. As he says, “history does not belong to us; we belong to it.”

The accent of Gadamerian hermeneutics thus lies on the manner in which understanding belongs to tradition. The ontological priority of our belonging to tradition constitutes the finitude of historical understanding and the limit of self-reflection. He argues that the methodical distance cultivated in the human sciences presupposes the primordial belonging to tradition without which there would be no access to the historical. For Gadamer, tradition is a dynamic reality that consists in the movement between “belonging” (Zugehörigkeit) and “distanciation” (Verfremdung) through which tradition is constantly appropriated anew in an event of transmission. He conceives this process of appropriation in Hegelian fashion as involving both integration – that is, the mediation of past

31. For Ricoeur, the relation of belonging and distanciation in Gadamer’s thought yields an “antinomy” between the “alienating distanciation” that makes possible the objectivity in the human sciences and the “primordial relation” of belonging by which we participate in historical reality. His hermeneutic theory seeks to overcome this impasse by developing a concept of the text that reintroduces a positive, productive notion of distanciation into the historicity of human experience, thereby developing a new concept of interpretation that incorporates explanation and understanding. See Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, John B. Thompson (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 131–44, 145–64.
and present, which produces new meanings – and preservation – that is, the historical continuity whereby the past holds in reserve possibilities for recasting the present. The occurrence of such an event Gadamer calls the “happening of tradition” (Überlieferungsgeschehen) in which understanding participates.

The prior belonging of understanding implies that the fore-meanings involved in interpretation are drawn from those traditions that situate the interpreter. Confirming the projective character of understanding in Heidegger’s analysis, Gadamer holds that fore-meanings function literally as “pre-judgments” (Vorurteilen) by which the interpreter is able to engage the text.32 Hence it is impossible to disengage our prejudices without annulling the very condition under which understanding is possible. Consequently, he inveighs against the attempt to secure objectivity in the human sciences by the methodical suspension of prejudices. In Gadamer’s estimation, this misguided program is a legacy of the Enlightenment and its “prejudice against prejudice,” which is responsible for the negative connotation of the term as unfounded judgment. By contrast, he stresses the primary and positive role of pre-judgment as a legitimate precedent. Gadamer therefore argues for the “rehabilitation of prejudice,” which would recognize that prejudices form the common bond that links understanding with tradition, a bond that is constantly being developed. Hence he claims that “the prejudices [Vorurteile] of the individual, far more than his judgments [Urteilen], constitute the historical reality of his being.”33 Ultimately, the attempt to remove prejudices in order to neutralize the distortions of tradition succeeds only in denying the historicity of historical being. To this extent Gadamer is prepared to defend the provisional authority of tradition as the accumulation and distillation of what has been found reasonable. Consequently, he rejects the Enlightenment equation of authority and domination. There is, he maintains, an inherent rationality preserved in custom and tradition that remains operative in historical life.

32. Following Heidegger, Gadamer sees interpretation as a matter of working out what is anticipated in the “fore-meanings” projected by understanding, but in view of die Sache. Interpretation therefore executes a movement between the matter at issue that appears in the text and our projected fore-meanings. This back and forth movement is readily recognized as an enactment of the hermeneutic circle. The solution is not to break out of this circle but to follow it through to its pertinent “completion.” Such completion occurs when the anticipations of meaning, revised in the encounter with the text, allow the matter at issue to present itself. Here there is a coming to an agreement in which a common meaning emerges that belongs to neither text nor interpreter alone. As Gadamer puts it: “The meaning of a text goes beyond its author, not only occasionally, but always” (Truth and Method, 296).

33. Ibid., 278.
Gadamer’s principle of effective-history

Gadamer uses the term “effective-history” (Wirkungsgeschichte) to convey this operative principle of philosophical hermeneutics, which marks “the power of history over finite human consciousness.”\(^3^4\) It means that historical being is effective and that its being consists in the history of its effects. Historical understanding, in turn, takes part in the effective-history of the historical being it understands. This comprises the commonality that binds us to tradition even while that commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition. Taking part in the effective-history of what it understands, understanding participates in an event of transmission by which tradition forms itself anew. So Gadamer’s formulation of the hermeneutic circle acquires its genuine ontological dimension when rendered as the interplay between tradition and understanding. Understanding that comprehends its belonging to tradition and is therefore conscious of its historicity Gadamer calls “effective-historical consciousness” (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein). Effective-historical consciousness is aware that the conditions that make it possible also render impossible the complete illumination of those conditions. This marks the finitude of historical understanding that is bound to a concrete situation and circumscribed by a historical horizon. But this horizon appears as such only when the alterity of the text that addresses us from tradition resists the anticipated meaning with which we engage it. The horizon of the text then differentiates itself from our own, creating a “temporal distance” (Zeitenabstand) between the horizons of past and present. But temporal distance is less a gap than a tension between the two that is productive of new meaning. So viewed, historical understanding accomplishes a “fusion of horizons” (Horizontverschmelzung) which enables the text that reaches us from the past to speak to the present. Gadamer nevertheless rejects a Hegelian teleology that anticipates the “end” of history in the overcoming of difference that incorporates all otherness into absolute selfrelation.

The tension between the horizons of past and present highlights the issue of historical understanding as a problem of application. This is evident in biblical or legal interpretation, where it is a matter of applying the claims of scripture or the prescriptions of law to the demands of the present. But Gadamer believes that this holds universally; because understanding is always bound to a historical situation, interpretation is always a matter of application. Gadamer therefore revisits the traditional division of hermeneutics into understanding, interpretation, and application as separate spheres governed by independent subdisciplines. Instead he considers them to be interrelated moments in a unified process of understanding where interpretation mediates between past and

\(^3^4\) Ibid., 300.
present precisely by applying the text to the given situation.\textsuperscript{35} In this respect, the hermeneutic problem of application can be conceived on the model of mediating the universal and the particular. Interpretation involves applying the same text (the universal) to a different situation (the particular) so that we always “understand differently” if we understand at all.\textsuperscript{36} Gadamer also argues that Aristotle’s concept of \textit{phronēsis} pertains to the problem of application. As moral knowledge, \textit{phronēsis} cannot be detached from the person who exercises it or from the situation in which it is deployed. Because it requires a decision that commits one to action, moral knowing is inseparable from one’s own being; as a mode of self-knowledge \textit{phronēsis} is thus distinct from \textit{tecnē}. Because it must address concrete circumstances, moral knowing seeks what is right in this case; since it contains a moment of application \textit{phronēsis} is also distinct from \textit{epistēmē} (as abstract knowledge of the Good). Similarly, Verstehen is a mode of self-understanding that alters the way we see both ourselves and our situation.

Gadamer thus views understanding as experience (\textit{Erfahrung}), which, in its most genuine sense, involves self-transformation. He draws on the significance of this concept for Hegel in the \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit}, where it means undergoing an experience through which one changes. Like Hegel, Gadamer emphasizes that experience involves negation. In more phenomenological terms, genuine experience occurs not when our expectations are confirmed, but when they are disappointed. In this regard, Gadamer endorses Hegel’s conception of the dialectical character of experience where negation alters both our knowledge and its object such that the new object contains the truth of the old one.

In hermeneutic experience as well, not only our understanding of the matter changes, but so too does our self-understanding. In this experience we come up against something “other” that challenges our preconceptions and compels us to reconsider what we have taken (for granted) as true. Hence Gadamer affirms that hermeneutic experience is always related to the other as a “Thou” and never merely as an object.\textsuperscript{37} This requires an openness to the other that exhibits the priority of the question in all understanding. The model of dialogue prevails where each partner in the conversation is open to the other and to the truth of the matter at issue. However, Gadamer parts ways with Hegel, who anticipates a final dissolution of negativity and difference in complete self-knowledge. By contrast, Gadamer holds fast to the finitude of hermeneutic experience. Against Hegel he asserts that the end (\textit{telos}) of experience does not lie in the overcoming of experience; rather, he insists that experience finds its proper completion in the openness to new experience. Being experienced does not mean knowing this or

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 307.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 296.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 310ff.
that; it means knowing one's limits. In other words, it means knowing that one's being exceeds one's knowing.

**Gadamer's concept of language**

Gadamer devotes the third part of *Truth and Method* to the hermeneutical relation of understanding and language. Following Heidegger, Gadamer eschews any approach that would objectify language. For, “language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs.”38 It is never simply an object because language comprehends everything that can ever be an object. Indeed, language only “is” in speaking where it allows what is said to be understood. Language is not simply one among other things in the world, because it is the condition for our having a world. “Not only is the world world only insofar as it comes into language, but language too has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it.”39 Language thus constitutes our belonging to the world; as the very element in which we live, language provides the primordial familiarity that Gadamer calls our “being at home” in the world. Potentially infinite, language constitutes an open horizon of intelligibility within which the meaning of things becomes understandable. Language therefore encompasses everything that can be understood or, in Gadamer’s words, “Being that can be understood is language.”40 The scope of hermeneutic understanding is therefore coextensive with the universality of language. Indeed, their integral relation is such that understanding only achieves its proper completion in language. When this occurs Gadamer speaks of coming to an “agreement” (Verständigung) that is linguistically mediated. The dialogical structure of understanding prepares us for this linguistic turn. As in conversation, interpretation seeks the right word, that is, the word that belongs to the thing meant, allowing it to be understood. Where this word is found, a common language is created that enables the sharing of a common meaning. This relation of the word to what it says reveals a deeper, speculative dimension to the being of language.

The belonging-together of “word” (Wort) and “thing” (Sache) exhibits a “speculative unity.” Gadamer appeals to the mirror image to clarify this unity because the mirror image is an appearance that has no being of its own and yet lets the thing appear by its means, “like a duplication that is still only the one thing.”41 As an appearance of the original, the image and the imaged seem distinct although they cannot ultimately be distinguished; image and original belong essentially

38. Ibid., 390.
39. Ibid., 440.
40. Ibid., 470.
41. Ibid., 461.
together. The same unity is found in the word and its relation to the thing meant. The two appear distinct and yet belong together as presentation and presented. As with image and original, word and thing meant are not differentiated. In this respect, the word is something like an image and must be contrasted to the sign. The concept of the sign is defined by its reference to something else. But Gadamer’s point is that the word is not externally related to the thing meant in the manner of a sign. In order to get at this Gadamer draws on the Christian idea of the verbum, the “Word” that becomes flesh in the mysterious unity of the Father and the Son. The event of the Incarnation provides insight into the intimate unity of word and thought in the experience of language. Because the intellectual emanation of the inner word exists in the full perfection of thought it also includes the “the subject matter thought through to the end (forma excogitata).” By making the intended object present, the verbum affirms the unity of word and thing. Hence “the word is a process in which the unity of what is meant is fully expressed.” The “processual character” of the word is integral to the self-presentation of the thing; it is an ontological event. “Thus everything that is language has a speculative unity: it contains a distinction, … between its being and its presentations of itself, … that is really no distinction at all.”

Gadamer explores a further implication to the speculative dimension of the word, namely, its relation to the whole. Indeed, words do not so much reflect beings as they express a relation to the whole of being. Therefore, “all human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out.” Hence there is a “living virtuality” of human speech that brings a totality of meaning into play without being able to totally express it. The said implicates the unsaid thereby opening on to an inner multiplication of the word. Here the relation between the unity of the word and its multiplicity – the identity and difference of meaning in language – exhibits the dynamic that constitutes living language itself as an event. In this event there is a “realization” (Vollzug) of meaning that always remains open to other, different realizations. This openness marks at once the finitude of language and its speculative structure. To say what one means is thus “to hold what is said together with an infinity of what is not said in one unified meaning.” When what is meant is expressed in this way one speaks in a speculative manner inasmuch as “the possibilities of the word are directed toward the sense intended as

42. “A word is not just a sign. In a sense that is hard to grasp, it is also something like a copy or an image [Abbild]” (ibid., 416).
43. Ibid., 432.
44. Ibid., 470.
45. Ibid., 454.
46. Ibid., 464.
the hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology toward the infinite.\textsuperscript{47} This view reflects Gadamer’s conception of language as the “center” (\textit{Mitte}) through which we are related to the totality of beings and are mediated to ourselves and to the world. “[E]very word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the whole of language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world-view that underlies it to appear.”\textsuperscript{48}

III. PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS IN CONVERSATION: ENCOUNTERS

Various aspects of philosophical hermeneutics are set in relief through the series of debates into which Gadamer enters with contemporary theorists and philosophers.\textsuperscript{49} The exchange with Italian legal theorist and historian Emilio Betti\textsuperscript{50} bears on the question of hermeneutics as methodology. Betti’s hermeneutical theory was fully elaborated prior to the publication of \textit{Truth and Method}, in his \textit{Teoria generale della interpretazione} (1955), but his basic theory and critique of Gadamer is outlined in “Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the \textit{Geisteswissenschaften}” (1962). There he is primarily concerned to counter the “subjectivism” and “relativism” he discerns in the “existential hermeneutics” of Heidegger and Bultmann and its legacy in Gadamer by deploying a hermeneutical methodology that would secure the objectivity of interpretation in the human sciences. For Betti, the creative mind expresses itself through ideal, “meaning-bearing forms” (\textit{sinnhaltige Formen}) that the interpreter seeks to understand. Following Schleiermacher, he conceives this task as an inversion of the creative process in which the interpreter reconstructs the author’s intention by recreating the meaning of their expression within oneself. Betti’s methodology develops canons of interpretation that specify the conditions under which it is possible to understand the author’s meaning objectively. Specifically, he identifies four “hermeneutical canons,” which are paired off according to whether they relate more to the “object” or “subject” of interpretation. While

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 454.
\textsuperscript{50} Emilio Betti (August 20, 1890–August 11, 1968; born in Camerino, Italy; died in Camorciano di Camerino) received degrees in law from the University of Parma (1911) and classical literature from the University of Bologna (1913), and also studied at the Universities of Marburg and Freiburg. His influences included Dilthey and Schleiermacher, and he held appointments as Professor of Law at the Universities of Parma (1915–17, 1925–26), Camerino (1917–18), Macerata (1918–22), Messina (1922–25), Florence (1925–27), Milan (1928–47), and Rome (1947–60).
the canons of “autonomy” and “coherence” specify the independence of the object (the meaning-bearing forms) as an internally coherent and integrated whole of meaning, the canons of “actuality” and “correspondence” ensure that the subject (the interpreter) engages the object by corresponding to the spirit expressed in these forms and by integrating them within the interpreter’s own intellectual horizon. Against Gadamer, he charges that the concept of historical understanding as the mediation of past and present threatens the objectivity of interpretation. By requiring that the meaning of the past be transposed into the present, Gadamer fails to safeguard historical understanding from the subjective interests (i.e. prejudices) of the interpreter. For Betti, this simply confuses the original meaning of a text with its present significance. For the same reason, he criticizes Gadamer’s integration of application with understanding and interpretation. Gadamer replies in “Hermeneutics and Historicism” (1962)51 that he is not proposing a method, but describing what always happens with understanding regardless of method. For Gadamer, Betti’s return to a psychological conception of hermeneutics narrows the hermeneutic phenomenon. As a result, he argues, Betti is entangled in the very subjectivism that philosophical hermeneutics seeks to overcome. “Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as a participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated.”52 In Gadamer’s view, Betti fails to sufficiently acknowledge the integration of understanding into the historical process itself.

Gadamer’s debate with Jürgen Habermas concerns the relation of hermeneutics to social praxis.53 Habermas initiates this debate with a review of Gadamer’s Truth and Method, which first appeared in On the Logic of the Social Sciences (1967), where he takes issue with the universality that Gadamer claims for hermeneutic reflection. Concerned to ground the social sciences in a theory of language, he concedes that Gadamer clarifies how understanding occurs as the mediation between languages. However, Habermas also asserts that Gadamer “hypostasizes language” as “the subject of forms of life and tradition,” thereby falling prey to “the idealist presupposition that linguistically articulated consciousness determines the material practice of life.”54 In his view, Gadamer’s exclusive emphasis on language and tradition as the medium of

53. Habermas’s critique of Gadamer is also discussed in the essay on Habermas by Christopher F. Zurn in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
social interaction neglects the material conditions of social action in labor and domination. It also fails to appreciate the possibility that the social consensus attained in language could be the result of coercion. Where ideology prevails as “systematically distorted communication,” the emancipatory interest of critical reflection is necessary to expose it; hermeneutics must pass into the critique of ideology. For Habermas, psychoanalysis provides an explanatory model for the critical unmasking of such “false consciousness.” Gadamer responds, in “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection” (1967), by denying the limits within which Habermas would circumscribe hermeneutic reflection. He argues that the distinction that sets language apart from labor and domination (as extralinguistic conditions of social action) is artificial, claiming it absurd to regard them as lying outside our linguistically mediated understanding of the world. He further argues that the claim to critically unmask systematically distorted forms of communication seriously overestimates the power of reflection. Moreover, he finds the appeal to psychoanalysis problematic in that the unique relation between patient and analyst cannot simply be extrapolated to society. Gadamer holds that hermeneutic reflection not only suffices for critically confronting prejudice, but that it alone is capable of doing so while remaining mindful of its bond to tradition. He further asserts that critical reflection becomes dogmatic when it pretends to rise above its historical conditions to systematically examine all prejudices. He again affirms that prejudices are not ipso facto illegitimate and that tradition is not something whose authority can or even need be dissolved by reflection. For the transmission of tradition constantly happens behind the back of critical reflection.

The debate with Paul Ricoeur addresses the question of methodology and the aims of interpretation. This least publicized of Gadamer’s debates occurred at a meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in 1976. At that time Ricoeur characterizes the hermeneutic situation as a “conflict of


56. Habermas later modifies his position in a theory of communicative action that seems closer to Gadamer. But this theory develops a “formal pragmatics” that posits an ideal speech situation in which participants are able to examine disputed “validity” claims under conditions free of all constraints due to force or coercion. For Gadamer, the notion of a “rational consensus” that expresses “unconstrained communication” distorts hermeneutic reflection and remains “shockingly unreal.” See Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Replik zu Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik,” in *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, Karl-Otto Apel (ed.) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 314.

57. The record of this exchange is found in a volume in the series publishing the principal papers from these meetings. See Paul Ricoeur, “The Conflict of Interpretations,” in *Phenomenology: Dialogues and Bridges*, Ronald Bruzina and Bruce Wilshire (eds) (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1982).
interpretations” between what he calls “the hermeneutics of suspicion” and “the hermeneutics of reenactment.” Standing before the “dramatic condition” of this intractable divide within modern culture, Ricoeur believes there is an important place for a hermeneutic approach that would begin by patiently working through the epistemological issues presented by the human sciences.58 So while he acknowledges that dialogue offers a significant gesture of mediation, Ricoeur resists the presumptive integration he detects in Gadamer’s hermeneutic ontology of understanding. Instead, Ricoeur turns his attention to the mediation of those conflicts within interpretation that arise between the respective roles of explanation and understanding in the human sciences. Hence he asks: “what can we do with a philosophy of dialogue that is not able to be reconnected with the discipline of the human sciences?”59 Against Gadamer, Ricoeur claims that hermeneutics must not take the ontology of understanding as its point of departure. He describes this as the “short route” because it breaks with any discussion of method and proceeds directly to the ontological problematic in order to recover the phenomenon of understanding. The longer route that Ricoeur takes aims to move to the level of ontology but only by first going through successive investigations into the science of linguistics and other specific human sciences. In taking this longer route, Ricoeur hopes to reconnect interpretation to a moment of explanation. In emphasizing the positive accomplishment of explanation as the methodic moment in interpretation, Ricoeur seeks to rescue method from its neglect by Gadamer and thereby resist the temptation to separate it from truth. In the actual exchange with Ricoeur, Gadamer began his remarks by noting that the version of Heideggerian hermeneutics that he follows differs from Nietzsche’s hermeneutics of suspicion. His intent was not only to open up the issue of the conflict of interpretations as he saw this being developed by Ricoeur, but also to set off his position from that of Ricoeur, who had appealed in his book on Freud to the necessity of a hermeneutics of suspicion. Like Ricoeur, Gadamer too wants to escape the illusions of objective self-consciousness, but in his view this escape can be accomplished only in the hermeneutic of communication as the exchange of words in speech (Vollzug des Sprechens) and not by the hermeneutics of suspicion. Gadamer’s intent in raising anew the question of hermeneutics is precisely “to go behind the conflict of interpretations that may preoccupy our scientific and methodological

58. In response to a question from the audience, Ricoeur said: “What I tried to do was to focus on certain epistemological situations in which we may proceed accurately in this task of mediation, instead of starting from, let us say, the cultural situation of our time, this desperate situation in which there is no bridge to build between the ongoing process of what Nietzsche called the devaluation of the highest values, and our desperate attempt to make sense of our whole heritage” (“The Conflict of Interpretations,” 314).

59. Ibid., 317.
interests.” In the end, he holds, the conflict of interpretations can be resolved by philosophical hermeneutics inasmuch as “every radical form of critique should be and needs to be reintegrated into the basic process of social life” for which dialogue constitutes the model.

In their 1981 encounter at the Goethe Institute in Paris, Gadamer and Jacques Derrida address the question of text interpretation and the supposed radicality of philosophical hermeneutics. The title of the conference, “Text and Interpretation,” identified the matrix wherein hermeneutics and deconstruction could be thought together. But the papers presented, along with the subsequent exchange of questions and responses, made it clear that joining hermeneutics and deconstruction would be problematic. The importance of Nietzsche and the “destruction” (Destruktion) of the history of metaphysics in these essays clearly indicates that the legacy of Heidegger’s thought is at stake. On the one hand, by characterizing his strategy of reading philosophical texts as “deconstruction,” Derrida intends his sustained interrogation of metaphysical concepts to mark a critical engagement with Heideggerian “destruction.” Gadamer, on the other hand, claims to resume the task of “destruction” by returning the fixed conceptuality of metaphysics to the living language from which it arises. From Derrida’s perspective, the hermeneutic commitment to dialogue and its model of understanding as coming to agreement threatens to suppress difference. Behind the “good will” required of the partners in dialogue, Derrida detects an avatar of the “(good) will to power” that remains complicit with the metaphysical drive to domination. At issue is whether the agreement at which hermeneutic understanding aims does not ultimately appropriate the other. Of course, Gadamer had already been at pains to distinguish hermeneutics from any such Hegelian gesture, insisting on the alterity of the text that disrupts our preconceptions. In Gadamer’s view, the task of understanding is not so much a

60. Ibid., 302.
61. Ibid., 304.
matter of deciphering meaning as it is an accomplishing of meaning in which “the voice of the other” is allowed to address us. Moreover, the “happening of truth” that takes place in understanding is not something that we possess; it is rather something that possesses us. Yet the very mention of “truth” invokes a relation of meaning and presence that deconstruction aims to put into question. Where hermeneutic interpretation seeks the meaning shared in common with the text, deconstructive reading works to displace the meaning that initially organizes the text. Looming behind Derrida’s remarks about hermeneutics is the charge of “logocentrism,” a charge that Gadamer confronts implicitly in “Text and Interpretation” and explicitly in “Hermeneutics and Logocentrism.” For Gadamer, there is no “language of metaphysics.” His “step back” into dialogue undermines the priority of assertion, enabling a retrieval of dialectic from the metaphysics of German idealism. Ultimately this retrieval sends Gadamer back behind Hegel to the Socratic-dialogical element of Platonic dialectic in order to reclaim its presupposition – namely, the anamnēsis awakened in logoi. What is recollected in dialogue, though, is not the eidē but rather “the spirit that would like to unite us” – we who are a conversation.

IV. CONCLUSION

The hermeneutic transformation of phenomenology has been profound. Heidegger’s acknowledgement of Husserl’s insight into philosophy as a way of “seeing” is indicative of the phenomenological impulse behind hermeneutics. But even as he heeds Husserl’s recourse to “the things themselves,” Heidegger construes it as the demand that we attend to beings and the manner of their self-disclosure. This emphasis on the event of a being’s self-presentation signals the ontological turn that characterizes Heidegger’s critical appropriation of phenomenology. But the element of absence that belongs to the ontological structure of such self-presentation requires a hermeneutic turn as well. Especially where the self-showing of Dasein as existence is at issue, Heidegger finds that the self-concealing tendency of Being-there requires a hermeneutic strategy of interpretation rather than a phenomenological strategy of reduction. Further, with the introduction of Dasein, Heidegger deliberately disrupts Husserl’s transcendental program by returning the immanent subjectivity of consciousness and its intentional acts to the original openness of Dasein as Being-in-the-world. On this basis, Heidegger articulates his ontological conception of understanding

64. Risser develops this aspect of Gadamer’s thought into an entire re-reading of his philosophical hermeneutics. See Risser, The Voice of the Other.
65. Michelfelder and Palmer (eds), Dialogue and Deconstruction, 110.
as a mode of disclosure that constitutes Dasein’s distinctive manner of Being. He develops the hermeneutic aspect of this conception through his insight into the circular relation of understanding and interpretation. Anticipatory in character, understanding projects the horizon, which delineates in advance the Being of what is to be understood. Rooted in understanding, interpretation elaborates what is therefore “pre-”understood. Thus the “hermeneutic circle” both defines hermeneutic understanding and describes the hermeneutic situation. It is because existence is thoroughly historical and hermeneutical that Dasein always finds itself to be historically situated within an already interpreted world.

Gadamer resumes this ontological and hermeneutical reorientation of phenomenology by drawing out further implications of the hermeneutic circle. Following Heidegger, he underscores the historicity of understanding, construing its anticipatory fore-structure as a prejudgment drawn from tradition. By so doing he emphasizes that the condition for understanding consists in its prior relation to history. Gadamer’s insight into the ontological priority of our belonging to tradition lies at the heart of his philosophical hermeneutics. In fact, “effective-historical consciousness” is just the recognition of being historically situated by our belonging to tradition. He therefore refuses to conceive understanding and interpretation in epistemological terms as providing a methodologically secured objectivity for historical knowledge. Instead, he conceives them in ontological terms as constituting our participation in the happening of tradition as an event of transmission. Moreover, Gadamer conceives language as the very medium of this transmission. He thus pursues further Heidegger’s hermeneutic insight into the historicity of understanding and its essential relation to language. As the condition for having a world, it is through language that Being can be understood. Elucidating its speculative dimension, Gadamer conceives the word as it breaks forth from the center of language to be uniquely capable of saying the whole in an appropriately finite way.

Perhaps more than other strands of continental philosophy, hermeneutics has sought resolutely to situate thought within the historical conditions of possibility that both enable and surpass it. In this respect, it has pursued “the hermeneutics of facticity” that originally motivated Heidegger’s departure from phenomenology. Indeed, the rigor with which it adheres to this original motivation may well serve as the most appropriate standard by which to measure its success. To the extent that it succeeds according to this measure, hermeneutics can still contribute to the development of a genuinely finite thinking in continental philosophy.
Heidegger’s long career – his significant works range from 1919 to 1973 – coupled with the rapid pace and revolutions of history during his lifetime, meant that his work underwent some very real transformations.¹ Heidegger was an uncommonly productive writer; his collected works is planned for over a hundred volumes. He was also unusually self-critical in his work so that there never emerges something like a “system” or even clear “fundamentals” that might characterize his work. His work needs to be read as very much a work in progress, guided by rather steady goals and concerns, but always evolving. The motto that Heidegger chose for his collected works – “Wege, nicht Werke” (paths, not works) – is one of the ways that Heidegger himself would call attention to this evolutionary quality of his work. One important consequence of this constantly evolving quality of Heidegger’s work is that even real transformations in his thought need to be understood in relation to earlier stages of his thinking. That is why this evolution of his thought is crucial and needs to be addressed in any effort to understand his philosophic contributions.

The chronology of these developments in his thought is in dispute among scholars. While there is clear agreement that we find an important “turn” in Heidegger’s thought during the 1930s (Heidegger himself will use the word “turn” when speaking of this period), there remains much dispute about whether

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¹ Martin Heidegger (September 26, 1889–May 26, 1976; born in Messkirch, Germany; died in Freiburg) was educated at the Gymnasium, Konstanz (1903–1906), Gymnasium and archiepiscopal convent, Freiburg im Breisgau (1906–1909), and Freiburg University (1909–15). His influences included Aristotle, Augustine, Dilthey, Hegel, Husserl, Kant, Kierkegaard, Lask, Luther, Nietzsche, and Rickert, and he held appointments at the University of Freiburg (1915–23, 1928–45) and the University of Marburg (1923–28).
later transformations in his thought should be regarded as indicating perhaps a “third” stage of his thought.\(^2\) In the end, however one parses the various stages of Heidegger’s thought, what needs to be stressed is the unity of Heidegger’s thought. Dynamic and self-critical, full of turns and at times even repudiating his own earlier vocabulary, Heidegger’s works ultimately need to be read as stages on a path that does not always move in a straight line. What we commonly refer to as the “late Heidegger” needs to be understood as the culmination of Heidegger’s lifelong project of thinking and so has a special importance.

Dating the beginning of the “late” Heidegger is difficult. There does seem to be agreement that we find an important “turn” in Heidegger’s thought during the 1930s. This “turn” seem to begin with the essay on the artwork (“Origin of the Work of Art”; 1935) and reaches its summit in Heidegger’s exceedingly difficult but decisive work, *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–38), which ushers in themes and approaches that will stay with Heidegger until the end of his life.\(^3\) However, there is good reason to date the beginning of his later work from the years after the Second World War. That was a time of great crisis for Heidegger – albeit more personal, indeed almost private, than political – and it too needs to be seen as providing the impulse for a significant change in Heidegger’s thought. One sees this “new” phase in his thought beginning with “Letter on Humanism” (1946) and with “The Saying of Anaximander” (1949). There will be no single major work anchoring Heidegger’s thought after the Second World War; rather, one finds shorter essays and addresses. At the end

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2. One of the first and most important early commentators on Heidegger’s work, William Richardson, makes a distinction between Heidegger I and Heidegger II. In response to this distinction, Heidegger writes to Richardson the following: “The distinction you make between Heidegger I and II is justified only on the condition that this is kept constantly in mind: only by way of what Heidegger I has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by Heidegger II. But [the thought of] Heidegger I becomes possible only if it is contained in Heidegger II” (William Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963], xxii). [*] Heidegger’s earlier work, up to and including *Being and Time*, is the subject of Miguel de Beistegui’s essay in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.

3. One should not underestimate the impact of Heidegger’s disastrous foray into political life on his thought and the questions that guide him. Heidegger’s Rectorship was what he called “the greatest stupidity of my life” (private comment reported to me by Gadamer), and while it can be interpreted with reference to Heidegger’s personal character, it can also – indeed should – be interpreted as a philosophical problem and as a powerful impulse driving the turns in his thought during these years. Among the most interesting of the many approaches to the questions posed by Heidegger’s infamous Rectoral Address is Derrida’s *On Spirit*.

4. The years after the war involved the use of his house by the French occupying forces, the denazification process, and his removal from his university teaching post, and then, in 1949, Heidegger had what was described as a “nervous breakdown.” On the events of Heidegger’s life, see Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, Ewald Osers (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
of his life Heidegger helped prepare the plan for the release of his collected works. As those works are released, further texts, notebooks, and letters give new insights into the character of his thought throughout his life. One suspects that questions about the evolution of Heidegger’s thought will not be answered until those works are finally fully available.

Nevertheless, three themes tend to define the “late Heidegger”: the increasing technologization of the world, the achievements of the work of art, and the enigmatic character of language. In order to treat these themes Heidegger seldom, if ever, turns to contemporary authors. When he does refer to other texts or authors he does so by almost exclusively returning to ancient Greek texts – especially Presocratic – and to select German poetic texts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – especially Hölderlin, Trakl, and George. Whatever theme is addressed, these later texts beginning just after the war and continuing until Heidegger’s death in 1976 can seem to be rather hermetic and are invariably deceptively dense as well as intensely focused. The intention of the remarks that follow is to trace these three central themes as a way of presenting some of Heidegger’s most innovative and important later work.

I. TECHNOLOGY: MACHENSCHAFT AND GESTELL

In 1949, Heidegger presented a series of four lectures collectively entitled “Einblick in das was ist” (“Insight into That Which Is”). In 1954, the first two of those lectures, “The Question Concerning Technology” and “The Thing”, would be expanded and then published in the volume Vorträge und Aufsätze (Lectures and addresses). Those essays mark the beginning of Heidegger’s later investigations into the character of a world dominated and framed by technological and scientific reasoning. To be sure, these works are not the beginning of Heidegger’s concern with technology. The recent release of his works from the 1930s – above all Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning) and On Ernst Jünger – provides evidence that his involvement with the question of technology stems from this earlier period.5 Already in those early texts one sees some of the later traits of Heidegger’s analysis and critique of technological reason; above all one sees the link between technology and the history of metaphysics. Technology, in all of the different determinations Heidegger gives it, is inevitably understood

5. Beiträge zur Philosophie: Vom Ereignis (Contributions to Philosophy [From Enowning]) was composed during the years 1936–38, but was not published until 1989. Zu Ernst Jünger was composed during three periods – 1934, 1940, and 1954 – but was not published until 2004. One even sees the question of technology emerging in the 1935 lecture course Introduction to Metaphysics (first published in 1953), which concludes with remarks about National Socialism and the encounter of globally defined technology.
as the culmination of the history of metaphysics and of the assumptions that underpin that history. Technology is, in the final analysis, the concretization of metaphysics. Consequently, even in the earlier essays, technology is regarded in terms that also characterize metaphysics; namely, the increasing subjectivization, rationalization, calculability, explicability, consolidation, and uniformity of the world. The present historical juncture marks the summit of this increase, the point of its most extreme development, and that means that the present moment is a time of crisis and that this crisis needs to be thought with reference to the technologization of the world.

The first word that Heidegger uses to get at the essential character of the technological world is Machenschaft (machination). He introduces this notion in Contributions to Philosophy, saying:

What does machination [Machenschaft] mean? That which is set free into its own chains. Which chains? The schema of thoroughly calculable explainability through which everything draws closer to everything else and becomes thoroughly alien to itself, indeed becomes completely other than what is simply alien. The relationship of unrelationality.6

Later he will describe the epoch of Machenschaft as “the most extreme intensification of the power of calculability. What is at work here is the most indifferent and blind denial of the incalculable.”7 In Geschichte des Seyns (The history of beyng), a text composed in 1938–40, Heidegger will link Machenschaft and Macht (power) saying that “the essencing of power is the most extreme form of metaphysics”8 and then that “in power, spirit unfolds itself in the most extreme and unconditional manner, and it comes to the point of unrestricted ‘Unwesen’ [non-sense, de-essence].”9 Power is thus the culmination and consummation of the illusions that hold the operations of Machenschaft in place. One quickly realizes that Heidegger’s characterization of the technologically defined world is all-embracing and crushing. It is a relation to being that disturbs the very possibility of any such relation at all.

6. Martin Heidegger, Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning), Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 92, translation modified.
7. Ibid., 314.
8. Martin Heidegger, Geschichte des Seyns, in collected works, Gesamtausgabe 69 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1998), 69, my translation. During this period, Heidegger writes the word “Sein” (“Being”) with a “y” in order to distinguish it from the term as it appears in the history of metaphysics.
9. Ibid., 78, my translation.
 Shortly after *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger will drop the word “Machenschaft.” However, the essential features that this word designates will remain much the same when Heidegger comes to the question of technology in later years. Above all, Heidegger will continue to argue that the question of technology is not defined by machines or tools or inventions. It is rather a relation of being itself. In “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger will open by reinforcing this claim:

The essence of technology is *by no means anything technological*. Thus we shall never experience our relationship to the essence of technology so long as we merely *represent* and push forward the technological, put up with it, or evade it. Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology.10

Two points should be noted about this remark: first, that Heidegger insists that the essence of technology is nothing technological, that is, its essence is not something that can be thought from out of technology; and second, that representational thinking, conceptual thought – in other words, philosophy as it has long been defined – will not be able to grasp the essence of technology. In other words, to confront and think technology as the dominant form of the appearance of being in our times, a new way of thinking is needed, one not submitted to the “logic” of technological reason.

Heidegger elaborates on this claim by outlining the rather standard and widely accepted view that technology is a means to an end and that it is something defined and controlled by human beings. In short, he discusses the viewpoint that holds technology to be a tool at our disposal.11 In order to deepen our understanding of what really is said in such a viewpoint, Heidegger unpacks the conception of causality at the basis of such a view, ultimately shifting the central point from how technology is a tool to how it needs to be understood as a form of production, of bringing into being (*Hervorbringen*). After having made the case for thinking technology as a form of “*Her-vor-bringen*,” a “bringing-into-being,”

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11. Although Heidegger does not point to his earlier work, *Being and Time*, here one would do well to return to the discussion of the tool in that book. See for instance section 15 and following.
Heidegger then cites Plato’s *Symposium* (205b): “hē gar toi ek tou mē onton eis to on ioni hotioun aitia pasa esti poiēsis.” Heidegger interprets this sentence by saying that “Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is poiēsis, is bringing-forth [Hervor-bringen]” (QT 317). Then he comments:

It is of utmost importance that we think bringing-forth in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the Greeks thought it. Not only handicraft manufacture, not only artistic and poetical bringing into appearance, and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, poiēsis. *Physis* is indeed poiēsis in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the irruption belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautōi*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the irruption belonging to bringing-forth, not in itself, but in another (*en allōi*), in the craftsman or artist. (Ibid.)

The question of technology thus becomes a question of the becoming of being itself. Here Heidegger makes the distinction between beings that we summon into being, that is things that we produce, and those that come into being without our doing, namely, what is unbidden. Both, however, are modes of the disclosure of what is; both, in other words, are forms of alētheia, of revealing, of truth. It is from this point of view, not from the view that technology is a matter of the tool, that Heidegger will undertake his further inquiry into the essence of technology.

This is the point at which Heidegger will set apart the real hallmarks of modern technology. He begins by asking:

What is modern technology? It too is a revealing. Only when we allow our attention to rest on this fundamental characteristic does that which is new in modern technology show itself to us. And yet, the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of poiēsis. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [Herausfordern].

(QT 320)

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12. It is helpful to read Heidegger’s discussion in these pages against the background provided by Aristotle’s *Physics*, Book II. One might also turn to Heidegger’s 1939 analysis of Aristotle on this point in “On the Essence and Concept of *physis* in Aristotle’s *Physics B*,” in *Pathmarks*, William McNeill (ed.) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
Such a challenging, such a demand, that “orders” and “stockpiles” what is revealed would seem to be something at the disposal of human beings, of the will. Heidegger argues that such is not the case and furthermore that this challenging “captures” human beings and claims the possibilities open to human being: “The challenging gathers man into ordering” (QT 324). In other words, human beings are necessarily caught up in the framework of such disclosure and become another element in the realm of what is calculable. The human being comes to be regarded as a statistic and even as “producible” or “reproducible.”

In order to name the essential character of this situation, Heidegger does not return to his earlier notion of *Machenschaft*, but introduces a new word, “*Gestell*” (usually rendered in English with the neologism “enframing”). Even though the word Heidegger now enlists to characterize the essence of technology is different from *Machenschaft*, which was the word he used in the 1930s, the meaning of those words remains very much the same: calculability, speed, reproducibility, manipulability, reliability, and utility are some of the key features of how Heidegger unfolds the notions of both *Machenschaft* and *Gestell*. But with the word *Gestell* Heidegger does want to emphasize something new, namely, the way in which something is posited and assembled (the prefix “*Ge-*” refers to a linking action, while the verb “*stellen*” that is the other part of the word “*Ge-stell*” means “to posit”). The *Gestell* is a composed realm, a region in which nothing remains open for what does not conform to what is already composed and set up as real.

It is this foreclosure of the region of appearances that constitutes the aspect of the *Gestell* that Heidegger identifies as the great danger of the technological age. While he does not deny that the risk to the environment is especially great in the age of technology, his claim is that the deeper and more devastating danger is to the realm of appearance as such: that the only appearances possible will be those determined in advance as compatible with the demands of the world composed by the *Gestell*, the world that can be calculated, measured, controlled, ordered, and regulated. To close this realm would be to immobilize the conditions of appearance, it would, in some sense, be to freeze history:

> [T]he essence of modern technology starts human being upon the way of that revealing through which the real everywhere more or less distinctly, becomes a stockpile. “To start upon a way” means “to send” in our ordinary language. We shall call that sending-that-gathers which first starts human being upon a way of revealing

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13. One thinks here of new developments that lead some to speak of a time in which human beings could be cloned or genetic manipulation could enable parents to select, among other attributes, the gender of their child.

14. One thinks here of Max Planck’s celebrated remark that “the sole facts are what can be measured.” From such a point of view, what is not able to be measured does not qualify as real.
destining [Geschick]. It is from out of this destining that the essence of all history is determined. (QT 329)

What is at stake in the age of technology, thought as the Gestell, is the possibility of a future. That is why Heidegger says “the destining of revealing is in itself not just any danger, but danger as such” (QT 331). The danger is that the Gestell will “conceal that revealing which, in the sense of poiēsis, lets what presences come forth into appearance” (QT 333). More precisely, “what is dangerous is not technology. There is demonry of technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence. The essence of technology, as a destining of revealing, is the danger” (ibid.).

Heidegger’s sense is that the risk of our times, the risk that emerges out of the essence of technology, is a profound one. But he also argues that confronting this risk, entering into what it exposes, is the path that “saves” us from that risk. Citing Hölderlin, Heidegger remarks that “But where danger is, grows / The saving power too” (ibid.). What Heidegger means in this case is that it is precisely by rethinking the natures of disclosure and of production, and by opening the space of appearance such that possibilities become possible again, that there can be a hope for a future: “it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of human being within granting may come to light” (QT 337). That is why he suggests that the essence of technology is “ambiguous”: properly thought, it can refer us to (even if only as a danger) the riddle of all disclosure and coming into appearance, that is, of truth.

Heidegger amplifies this possibility by noting that technology emerges out of what the Greeks analyzed under the notion of technē, namely, that mode of bringing into being that has to do with human handiwork. He notes as well that technē was also the name for the production of the work of art in which our productions were a bringing into “radiance.” Art, which Heidegger at this time defines as the poetical, opens the possibilities of bringing into appearance, of production, a manner that does not challenge and demand, does not frame the possibilities of appearance, but rather lets things be: “the poetical brings the true into the splendor of what Plato in the Phaedrus calls to ekphanestaton, that which shines forth most purely. The poetical thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of coming to presence into the beautiful.”

Heidegger concludes this analysis of technology with a gesture toward the importance of the work of art and of reflection on such works. In one of the

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15. Also, “Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. Such a realm is art” (QT 340).
companion pieces to “The Question Concerning Technology,” namely, “The Thing,” Heidegger will pursue yet another path to a more open future. There he will ask, as he had done in earlier years, what makes a thing what it is. This time, he will do so as part of an effort to recover the sense of a thing from its character in the Gestell as a reproducible object designed for consumption and as identical with other such objects. In pursuing this question of the thing, Heidegger will propose a notion that seems to be something of a counterpart to the notion of Gestell, namely, the notion of the Geviert (fourfold). While the notion of the Gestell is Heidegger’s way of characterizing the present age as a time of the constriction of the possibilities of life, the notion of the Geviert names the more original and free relation to the possibilities of our being in the world. The Geviert is among Heidegger’s most enigmatic notions. While it never receives any clear or determinate formulation, he does describe it always as a play; more precisely, as an interplay, of the relations among the four basic dimensions of existence: the earth, the world, the mortals, and the divine. These four dimensions are difficult to understand, especially because Heidegger insists that, in the end, they cannot be understood in isolation, but that each can only be understood out of the interplay of their mutual relation. The Geviert therefore does not designate any rigid measure indicating how we should regard or order life. Quite the contrary, it names what comes into play when the possibilities of life are set free, it names an “event.” Early in his career, Heidegger spoke of the relation of Dasein and world; some years later he spoke of the need for human beings to find our place in the relation of earth and world, that is, in a place we cannot define or control. This same concern for understanding what Heidegger once characterized as the relation of Dasein to being comes to guide the notion of the fourfold relation of earth, world, mortals, and divine: it is a concern with finding the place of life of mortal beings in the world. But here, in the notion of the fourfold, we see how the human being, located in the dimension of the mortal, does not occupy the center and so does not define or control the world in which it finds itself. Therefore, in the age of the Gestell (with the framing and ordering of life that defines this age), the Geviert needs to be understood as a critical idea, as the reminder of what comes into play when the range of possibilities open to us are freed up. Although the fourfold is a complex and difficult notion, it remains, along with reflection upon art, among the ways in which Heidegger attempts to think through the dominant and most pressing question of our age, namely, the question concerning technology. It stands as well as a reminder of just what is lost in the age of technological reason.

16. See Martin Heidegger, What is a Thing?, B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (trans.) (Chicago, IL: Regnery, 1967), which, although first published only in 1962, is the text of a lecture course given in 1935/36.
II. “THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART”

The critique of metaphysics as a form of ossified thinking, and the project of overcoming it had been well established by Heidegger in his earlier works;\(^ {17}\) however, the notion that art opens an alternative to metaphysical forms of thinking, in other words, that art bears an original relation to truth, emerges as first fully developed in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1935). Part of the intention of that essay is to destroy the traditional philosophical categories for speaking of artworks. One sees this intention operating in the first sections of the text, where Heidegger quickly dispenses with longstanding notions such as substance and accident, sensation and formed matter. One also notices that the idea of beauty is mentioned only once and even then only as “one way in which truth essentially occurs as unconcealment.”\(^ {18}\) There is also an attempt to forge a new vocabulary for speaking of artworks: notions such as work, world and earth, struggle, clearing, rift, and endowing all emerge here as efforts to resituate and rethink the language that speaks of art. Heidegger also makes clear that the goal of this essay has nothing to do with what is called “aesthetics” or “art theory,” which he regards only as a way in which the metaphysical tradition has marginalized the accomplishments of the work of art. Rather, the goal of the essay is to rethink the artwork from its incipient moment, its “origin,” and to do so with an eye to asking how such a new starting-point for thinking opens thinking to possibilities closed off in metaphysics.\(^ {19}\) In short, the ambition of “The Origin of the Work of Art” is enormous and that, in part, accounts for the enduring importance of this essay in Heidegger’s work. The range of themes that emerge as a result of the reflections on art is wide – truth, the nature of the thing, history, the idea of a people, the character of the polis are only some of the themes addressed – so wide that this text sometimes seems to almost be a manifesto for the task of thinking. But at the center of all of these themes is the

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17. One sees this, for example, in *Being and Time*, *What is Metaphysics?* (in *Basic Writings*), and *On the Essence of Ground* (in *Pathmarks*), as well as in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.


19. In other texts, Heidegger will even draw a tight link between the history of metaphysics and the history of art. So, for instance, one reads the following: “To this transformation of the essence of metaphysics there also corresponds a transformation of art in terms of its essence as symbolic image. That is why, for example, a Greek vase painting, wall paintings from Pompeii, Reichenauer frescoes from the Ottonian era, the paintings by Giotto, a painting by Dürer, and a picture by C. D. Friedrich, are not only different according to their style, for the style is itself of a different metaphysical essence” (*Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister,*” William McNeill and Julia Davis [trans.] [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996], 24–5). In “The Origin of the Work of Art” one finds a similar remark: “the transformations in the essence of truth correspond to the essential history of Western art” (OWA 206).
Heidegger develops as illuminating the character of art are the pair “earth and world.” As was noted above, this pair anticipates the fourfold. Just as the fourfold departed from the technological view of the world as completely calculable, these notions must be understood as radical departures from the orthodox categories concerning artworks. Generated out of a discussion of a painting of shoes by van Gogh and the ruins of a Greek temple found in Paestum, Italy, these notions need to be understood as radical departures from orthodox categories for considering works of art. Most of all, they need to be understood as in a struggle with one another, as oppositional movements even, and this struggle needs to be seen as resulting in the opening of a space of appearance, ultimately, the space of truth. Heidegger puts the point this way:

The world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world … In this essential struggle the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures.

(OWA 174)

What happens in art, the “work” it instigates and sets forth, is precisely this struggle. Heidegger further describes what “happens” in art as the showing, the unconcealment, of world and earth insofar as each is brought forward in the work. Out of the earthly character of the work, a world emerges into view; likewise, the earth element of the work shows itself as earthly insofar as the world displayed recedes. For one element to emerge, the other needs to recede. Or, in Heidegger’s words:

The essence of truth, that is, of unconcealment, is dominated throughout by a denial. Yet this denial is not a defect or a fault, as though truth were an unalloyed unconcealment that has rid itself of everything concealed. If truth could accomplish this, it would no longer be itself. This denial, in the form of a double concealment, belongs to the essence of truth as unconcealment. Truth, in its essence, is un-truth.

(OWA 179)

This remark, “Truth, in its essence, is un-truth,” appears frequently throughout Heidegger’s work. It refers to the fact that when something appears, it never
appears completely, that there is still some hiddenness to it or in it. The “un-” of “un-truth” refers to this remaining hiddenness. The artwork, insofar as it has an earthly character – the sheer bulkiness of the marble in the temple or the sheer plasticity of the paint in the painting – seems especially to draw our attention to something not present. The basic impulse of the work of art is this disclosure of finite truth: “Art then is a becoming and happening of truth” (OWA 196).

Heidegger develops this relation of art and truth in several ways in “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Most importantly, perhaps, it is on the basis of this relation that he will find an essential link between the workings of art and history. The instigation of this struggle is the origination of something new. Each work, as uniquely itself, opens up the space of appearance in its own manner. In this way, the work clears a new space for appearance by transfiguring the given. Heidegger puts this as follows:

At each time a new and essential world irrupted … Whenever art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a jolt enters history; history either begins or starts over again. History here means not a sequence of events in time, of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entry into that people’s endowment. (OWA 201–2)

From such a remark one can perhaps understand why it is that Heidegger contends that art is essentially an origin. It is a way in which truth comes into being, which means that it is a way in which truth becomes historical.

When Heidegger writes the epilogue to “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1956) – after the war, after his deepened concern with the question concerning technology – the conviction that art did indeed offer a way in which thinking could move outside the empire of metaphysical assumptions is no longer self-evident. Referring to Hegel’s claim that “art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past,”20 Heidegger will write “Is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character? … The truth of Hegel’s judgment has not yet been decided” (OWA 205). One might rephrase this and ask whether a painter such as van Gogh (who Heidegger admired in “The Origin of the Work of Art”) still possesses the power to set into motion history. Do works that hang in a museum preserve the founding power to gather a people together? Can art still open the relations that found the life of a people? This hesitation about the promise of art had appeared just a few years after

“The Origin of the Work of Art” in the small text composed in 1938 entitled “Die Überwindung der Metaphysik” (The overcoming of metaphysics). There Heidegger would write a sentence that can only be heard as a criticism of his own earlier essay on art: “the attempt to rescue art by means of a more original interpretation of the work of art is misguided.”

A deep ambivalence about the prospects of art for the task of thinking characterizes Heidegger’s work after “The Origin of the Work of Art.” He will continually return to investigations of art and he will not cease to speak of the potential “saving power” of art, but, in notes and other works that would not be published until after the war, it becomes clear that the question of the promise of the work of art is no longer settled for him. Nonetheless, after the war, Heidegger will continue to point to art as a promise of the sort of transformation that he argues is necessary in our times. The celebrated essay on technology is just one of the better known of such gestures. References to art will continue during this last stage of Heidegger’s career, but, strangely, there will be no further major work on the nature of art as such even while art seems to take on a growing importance for Heidegger.

Even if he has doubts about the prospects of art in the age of the Gestell, it is clear that whatever new future we might find will, in some sense, be beholden to the achievements of art.

Only in recent years have we begun to learn just how important the question of art was for Heidegger in the 1950s – and just how impossible it had become for him. Although there was long a rumor of a major work that Heidegger had composed on Paul Klee, it now seems that such a text does not exist. However, we do now have access to many of Heidegger’s notes on Klee and on the basis of those notes, as well as letters and other evidence, one can see that a new problem regarding art had emerged for Heidegger during these postwar years. The notes on Klee are, like all notes, fragmentary, obscure, and not intended for a reader other than their author. Nonetheless, one can see in them a strong self-critique regarding the approach to art in “The Origin of the Work of Art” and a sense that art has undergone a very real transformation, one in which the promises of art are greater than ever. In those notes, Heidegger recognizes that his early treatment of art was too restricted to the art of the past, to an art that was intimately bound up with the very metaphysics that he was seeking to overcome:

22. Most of the texts on art are smaller essays (for instance, “Die Kunst und der Raum” of 1969 or “Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens” of 1967) and they are never as extensive or ambitious as “The Origin of the Work of Art.”
“The Origin of the Work of Art” thinks out of the past of art … no longer [should one think with reference to] the production of world and the setting forth of earth as thematized [in that essay] … the art of the future should be given over to [thinking from out of] the bringing forth of relations from out of the event of the fuge.24

While this note is rather hermetic, it is clear that Heidegger is suggesting that a new approach to the work of art is needed, since his earlier effort to take up the challenge of art was insufficient insofar as it remained wedded to the art of the past, in other words, to an art still bearing an essential relation to metaphysics.

Heidegger remarks, both in his notes as well as in letters to friends, that “[in Klee’s paintings] something becomes visible that we have barely even glimpsed before.”25 He is so overwhelmed by his “discovery” of Klee that Heidegger tells his friends that he plans on writing a pendant or sequel to “The Origin of the Work of Art.”26 He concedes that art has undergone a real transformation, even a revolution, that he had not previously recognized, and that this new shape of the work of art did indeed offer the possibilities for thinking that he had come to doubt since composing “The Origin of the Work of Art.” What he comes to recognize is that abstract art, art that sheds entirely any semblance of being a “copy” of objects in the world, can make visible the process of production, of coming into being, that Heidegger had sought in his earlier essay on the artwork: “the less [the painting is] interpreted according to objects, all the more evident the world brings itself forward.”27 By dispensing with the object as an object, abstract art can let something else appear, namely, the act of production, of coming into appearance, in which Heidegger had always located the real “workings” of art.

When he takes up the Greek temple as an exemplary artwork in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger remarks that he is “deliberately choosing a non-representational work of art … that does not copy anything” (OWA 167), but in choosing an ancient work of architecture, one that expresses the spirit of a different time, Heidegger misses the revolution of art in his own times that he would later recognize as providing a genuine opening to something new, to an art not determined by metaphysical assumptions. Klee’s paintings, but also Klee’s

26. He has his first serious encounter with Klee’s works at the Beyeler Foundation in Basel in 1956. The pendant to the artwork essay was never written.
own theoretical writings and diaries, would open Heidegger’s eyes to this new possibility. It would even lead him to an interest in Zen artworks and the Zen conception of art, but this great excitement of 1956–59 that Heidegger finds in Klee’s paintings and writings would essentially disappear around 1960. He would republish “The Origin of the Work of Art” in 1960, but make no reference to any of the insights of his rather passionate involvement with Klee during the preceding five years. This second life of the question of art in Heidegger’s thought never bears fruit in any publications, nor does it seem to leave a mark on his efforts in related matters. The reason that such an important and promising path never leaves significant traces is not at all clear. Further discussions of the work of art in Heidegger’s later work tend to express a concern about the possibility of art in the age of technology and the Gestell. His worry is that the place for the appearance of art might well be foreclosed in our times, but when he does explore the vital possibilities of art those discussions center almost exclusively on art that happens in language, most of all in language as it appears in poetry.

### III. LANGUAGE: POESIS AND ETHOS

The question put to us by language is perhaps the most enduring question of Heidegger’s career and occupied his attention in some of his earliest works as well as in his final works. Language already had a prominent place in the project of fundamental ontology as it is articulated in Being and Time (1927), and the texts and lectures of the 1930s that are so often devoted to reflections on Hölderlin’s poetry only serve to refine and intensify Heidegger’s early focus on the nature and experience of the word. Immediately after Heidegger’s disastrous political engagement as Rector (1933–34), he would turn to Hölderlin’s texts to find a way to think through some of the issues pressing on the times: the character of Germany, the nature of a people, the role of language in history, the experience of nature in the modern age, are among the topics that find their locus in Heidegger’s readings of Hölderlin. Hölderlin would also mediate

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28. Heidegger was especially interested in a lecture that Klee gave in Jena (1924) entitled “On Modern Art.”

29. See the protocol of the seminar that he held in Freiburg with Hisamatsu (1958), “Das Kunst und das Denken” [Art and thinking], in Martin Heidegger, Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges 1910–1976, in Gesamtausgabe 16 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2000), 551–8.

30. See, for instance, the discussion of the equiprimordiality of language in the disclosure of a world as it is laid out in Being and Time, section 34.

31. It is important to bear in mind that Heidegger was seriously interested in Hölderlin’s work for many years prior to this (one can date this interest to the early 1920s), but that his philosophical interest began to show up in his lecture courses and published texts only in the mid-1930s. It
Heidegger’s return to the Greeks, especially to Greek tragedy as one finds it developed in Sophocles, which was another large and abiding interest of the 1930s and 1940s. Heidegger’s work on language will always bear the imprint of this deep affection for Hölderlin’s poetry and theoretical texts. Hölderlin will always seem to mark the summit of the possibilities of language for Heidegger; even when he is not mentioned explicitly, one should always keep Hölderlin in mind when speaking of Heidegger and the question of language.

In addition to that deep involvement with Hölderlin’s work, perhaps the most significant development in Heidegger’s considerations of language comes when he links his concern with language to his concern with the work of art, so that language in the poem emerges as the essential character of language as such. Heidegger argues that no matter what else it might be “about” – plums, flowers, love, despair, an April day – language in the poem is always language “about” language. In the poem, language calls attention to itself (much as an abstract painting will call attention to the image, not to any object it might “represent”), so that one must say that language in the poem is language at its most self-reflexive moment. Language in the poem is the essential form of all language. Heidegger had argued for a long time – at least since *Being and Time* – that we live “in” language and that “language is the supreme event of human existence.”

Later, this view would come to be expressed by the oft-cited phrase “language is the house of being.” When he joins these two fundamental convictions – that language is the definitive event of human life and that poetry marks the culmination of the possibilities of language as such – he will arrive at the view, already expressed by Hölderlin, that we “dwell poetically upon the earth.” Our relation to language is at the basis of the very character of our being and the most pristine form of this basis, its intensified expression, comes in the form of poetic language. But while poetic language is language that calls attention to itself, it needs also to be said that for the most part language is poorest at doing just that. To think the nature of language, one needs to begin by recognizing that language is poorest at articulating itself and tends to hide its own nature.

would continue to be an active interest through much of the war, but would fade somewhat in the years after the war.


34. This phrase comes from Hölderlin’s late prose poem, “In lieblicher Bläue ...” (In lovely blueness ...), and is quite frequently cited by Heidegger. It even serves as the title of an essay that he originally presented as a lecture in 1951.
For Heidegger, it is important not to regard language as a tool or means of thinking, as if language was something we could pick up and put down.\(^{35}\) The intimacy of language and thinking is too great ever to think them separately. Language is not something that we “use.” Heidegger is so insistent on this point that he will say that “One speaks only insofar as one responds to language. Language speaks.”\(^{36}\) Language speaks us, giving shape and form to our world, our relations, our self-understanding. Even more: for Heidegger, the intimacy of language, world, and human being is so inextricable that to think one member of that relation is to think the other two. Language, one might say, is the relation of all relations. However, precisely because it does not, for the most part, call attention to itself, it is difficult to hear language as language. So it is not surprising that Heidegger’s discussions of language also inevitably speak of a requisite listening that is required for genuine speaking. In some sense one needs to say that this listening is “prior” to any genuine speech since all such speech is a response to the way that language discloses being.

Such a comment does not mean that poems surpass works of philosophy or that we should all simply write poetry. Heidegger makes a distinction between the “poetic” and “poems,” and the nature of the “poetic” is a key concern for him. It belongs to the question of the work of art, to the question about technology, to the question of how we are to live and inhabit our world. It is important, then, to recognize that Heidegger’s concern with such literary works does not lead him to questions about various literary genre or into literary critical questions. Rather, his turn to these poetic texts is undertaken in order to broach – in a new and revolutionary manner – questions about the most basic character or way we belong to and experience the world. In Homer’s language, the word “ethōs” referred to the way and the place an animal lived. That word forms the ancient roots of our modern word “ethics.” I believe that this more archaic sense of ethōs is what one finds at stake in Heidegger’s reflections on language. Heidegger has often been criticized for never having addressed questions of political and ethical life, questions of our living together on the earth and in the time that we share.\(^{37}\) Heidegger could indeed be seemingly oblivious to the realities of suffering produced in our times. He could equate homelessness and the forgetfulness of being, the gas chambers of the Shoah with the mechanization

\(^{35}\) It is, however, important to note that Heidegger expresses serious concerns about language in the age of the Gestell. He is deeply critical of the view that holds language to be foremost a matter of “information.”


\(^{37}\) The “Letter on Humanism” (1946) (in *Basic Writings*) is the text in which Heidegger most directly responds to such a criticism. One might also refer to the interview published in *Der Spiegel* (1976) entitled “Nur ein Gott kann uns retten” (Only a god can save us).
of agriculture, and he never spoke directly of the political realities and immense sufferings brought into the world by the Nazis. Above all, and almost incomprehensibly, Heidegger never apologized or honestly discussed his own involvement in the politics of Nazi Germany. There is undeniably truth in such criticisms. To be sure, Heidegger’s thought tends to remain rather remote from the exigencies of life and history. He seems removed from his own times and unconcerned with what one easily sees as problematic about those times. Indeed, one sometimes has the feeling as well that all of those he regards as dialogue partners are dead. But such remarks miss the real point to which reading Heidegger’s work can lead us: Heidegger’s work has driven to the hidden foundations and impulses, the deepest imperatives, that have given shape to the present form of our world. He has shown, with exemplary insight, just how concealed the real sources of our contemporary problems are and how far-reaching any effort to truly address those problems must be.

IV. CONCLUSION: READING HEIDEGGER

Reading Heidegger one is quietly drawn into the heart of the riddles that define us. Heidegger’s work presses mightily to drive toward the questions that have been forgotten. He already demonstrated this trait in Being and Time, which opens by retrieving a question that has long been forgotten and covered over: the question of what it means to be.38 It is a trait that will define his entire career and all of his work from whatever period of his life. One does not find clear “positions” in Heidegger’s work; one finds, as he said, “ways” or “paths.” One finds as well a passionate investigation of questions that we need to be asking since, as Heidegger once remarked, “questioning is the piety of thought” (QT 341). Heidegger’s later work is a refinement of this passion. Some of the themes have changed since his beginnings, some of the assumptions as well. Certainly, the world had changed immensely in the years from which one might date his later work: computers, cell phones, video, and so many other inventions have changed the shape of daily life. Heidegger’s later work is an effort to respond to those changes. To what extent he has succeeded one can judge only by reading his work closely and carefully.

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38. See Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, Joan Stambaugh (trans.) (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), xix, as well as the opening sections, which are dedicated to an analysis of the very idea of a question.
MAJOR WORKS


This essay has a heuristic intention. It attempts to sketch one of the most significant concepts of philosophical and theological thought, a concept that was developed on the basis of and in critical reflection on phenomenology and existential philosophy in the twentieth century. Despite their philosophical differences and their religious differences, the various thinkers to be discussed all share a fundamental characteristic, namely, that the Being (Sein) or existence of the human cannot be conceived without including a relation to the divine. The positions and projects linked to the names Edith Stein, Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, Martin Buber, and Gabriel Marcel as well as Martin Heidegger, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich will be examined.

I. ATTEMPTS AT A CHRISTIAN AND A JEWISH PHILOSOPHY: STEIN, MARITAIN, MOUNIER, BUBER, AND MARCEL

One of the noteworthy consequences of Husserlian phenomenology was that it gave rise to quite divergent philosophical developments and elaborations in the work of his students. This applies in particular to the religious-philosophical projects of Edith Stein and Martin Heidegger. Stein, Husserl’s private assistant, born Jewish and a convert to Roman Catholicism in 1922, attempted to

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1. Edith Stein (October 12, 1891–August 9, 1942; born in Breslau (Wroclaw), Poland; died in Auschwitz Concentration Camp) was educated at the University of Göttingen (doctorate, 1916). Her influences included Catholic theology (Aquinas) and mysticism (Teresa of Ávila), Heidegger, and Husserl. She held appointments at the Universities of Freiburg (1916–19) and Göttingen (1919–22), Dominican Girls School, Speyer, Germany (1922–32), Discalced...
bring Thomistic and phenomenological thought explicitly into dialogue. For her, “Christian philosophy” (oriented by Catholicism) is supposed to find its fulfillment in theology, but without conceiving itself as theology and without making theological claims. In contrast, Heidegger, who followed her as Husserl’s assistant, grew out of Catholicism to advocate a fundamental methodical atheism in philosophy, rejecting Christian philosophy, in “Phenomenology and Theology” (1927/28), as an impossibility, as a “square circle.” For Heidegger, unlike Stein, theology requires philosophy, namely, as a “guiding corrective”; philosophy, however, in no way requires theology in order to be philosophy. How can the specificity of these disparate options, which ultimately are mutually exclusive, be more closely determined? The resolution of this question is important. In fact, it will be shown that the disagreement that emerged between Stein and Heidegger in the question of a “Christian philosophy” marks something like a foundational rupture and, at the same time, a basic structure in the field of debates presented here.

In her magnum opus, *Finite and Eternal Being*, Stein follows Heidegger and characterizes the question of Being as the central motif of her investigations (FEB xxix–xxx). For Stein, however, the “meaning of Being” can accordingly only become clear in the “overcoming” of the finite toward the infinite. If one proceeds from *Dasein* (human existence) in its radical finitude – as Heidegger does – one succumbs, in virtue of this perspective, to the danger of already cutting oneself off from the meaning of Being (FEB 20). Thus, Stein claims that what Heidegger’s project of the “destruction of the tradition” (under Nietzsche’s influence) had to reject – the thought of the infinite or the beyond – is actually crucial for philosophy. Having become a faithful Catholic, Stein thinks that she

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5. A more comprehensive individual study of Stein’s, contained in the sixth volume of her collected works, makes critical reference above all to *Being and Time* in the same sense, but also refers to Heidegger’s Kant book, as well as the later, shorter texts *On the Essence*
is called on to demand precisely this supplement to philosophy. The direction of her thinking is emphatically expressed in an ontology of the human person that combines scholastic theology with mysticism and phenomenology. It is toward this kind of ontology that her thought aims. The investigation of finite Being leads Stein “to eternal being [as] that primordial being which conditions every other kind of being” (FEB 380). Finite Being is disclosed in a “relationship of image to divine Being” (FEB 418). For Stein, the ontological and ethical presupposition of finding oneself is that one finds God (FEB 509). Stein therefore strives for a “Christian philosophy” whose “foremost task” is conceived as the “pathfinder of faith.”

Although Stein elaborates her thought with a critical view to Heidegger’s Being and Time, a certain proximity to other figures of the phenomenological movement, such as Max Scheler (1874–1928)⁶ and Hedwig Conrad-Martius,⁷ can be discerned.⁸ Thomism, which exerted a strong influence on her and which she sought to understand in intensive study after her baptism, certainly seems to be a determining element. The book Finite and Eternal Being frequently cites the authority of “St. Thomas,” but also refers to such Catholic thinkers as Maritain and Marcel, whose work, for their part, is oriented toward the concept of “person” as a means of linking ontology and ethics.

Under the title Integral Humanism, Jacques Maritain⁹ conceives of a social order arising from the primacy of the human person. Maritain proposes a
so-called “integral” or, as he also says with more pathos, “heroic” humanism as the figure of a secular Christianity oriented toward the “ideal of a fraternal community.”

The point is “a veritable socio-temporal realization of the Gospel” (IH 94). For Maritain, the latter is not characterized solely by the fact that it is communal, but rather – and above all – by the fact that it is personalistic. And that means for him, as a Thomistic thinker, that the earthly temporal life order has to pay deference “to the eternal interests of the person … in such a manner as to facilitate the access of the latter to his supernatural ultimate end” (IH 97). This main idea of a “Christian philosophy of culture” (IH 142) connects to a double line of attack against socialism and Marxism, on the one hand, and against liberal individualism, on the other. In fact, the perspective of “Christian personalism” (IH 133) as the core content of a “new Christianity” is linked to the demand for a “Copernican revolution” in the concept of political action: “to act politically in a Christian style, to bring a thoroughly Christian life to the world” (IH 252). In no way does such action mean for Maritain the return to notions of sacred unity from the Middle Ages (IH 146), but he deems it to be possible, as well as necessary, to create new political images “of an essentially Christian spirit.” This is the core of “the proper task of Catholic action” (IH 269). “In order that there should succeed to capitalist civilization in decadence a new world superior to Communism,” explains Maritain, “nothing less is required than the personalist and integral humanist principle in its widest significance” (IH 279). The “integral humanism” shows itself to be, at least for Maritain, the “solution” to the enigma of history (IH 285).

Emmanuel Mounier also proposes a decidedly Christian personalism that emphasizes, next to its personal structure, the communal character of Christian faith and life as its hallmark. The concept of personalism for Mounier also opposes the “ideology” of modern individualism, in so far as it regards humanity abstracted from all social and religious relations. The fundamental experience of a person is, as Mounier emphasizes, the experience of being spoken to, that is, the second-person experience, or, as Mounier says with reference to Buber’s philosophy of dialogue, the precedence of the You before the I (PER 20), the

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11. Emmanuel Mounier (May 1, 1905–March 22, 1950; born in Grenoble, France; died in Châtenay-Malabry) was educated at the University of Grenoble (1924–27). His influences included Bergson, Maritain, Charles Péguy, and Christian mysticism.

12. Emmanuel Mounier, Personalism, Philip Maret (trans.) (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952), 80–81; hereafter cited as PER followed by the page number.
affirmation of self-alienation. Mounier says: “Alter then becomes alienus, and I in my turn become a stranger to myself, alienated. One might almost say that I have no existence, save in so far as I exist for others, that to be is, in the final analysis, to love” (ibid.). The economy of the person is an “economy of donation” and not an economy of compensation or of calculation (PER 22). The person exposes himself as a countenance (visage) (PER 45). Radicalizing Buber’s philosophy of dialogue, Levinas even speaks of the irretrievable primacy of the Other, whose face addresses an infinite responsibility to “me,” calling on me to respond to the demands that come from him. Like Levinas, Mounier conceives of responsibility on the basis of the speech act of the response; the human is free as one who answers – and in this way he is responsible. If we hear the word in a more literal sense as a responding (and relation) to a call with a vow, then we see that responsibility is ultimately “religion,” “devotion” (PER 64). The human as a person is neither merely in himself nor for himself, but rather “movement”: movement from being toward being. Accordingly, Mounier can speak of the “superabundance” of the person, or, with Marcel, of the person as what “cannot be inventoried” (PER 67). “The personal being is made for a movement that exceeds itself,” and the person is this superabundance ultimately in relation to “one supreme Person.” Mounier concludes, “Christian personalism goes the whole way, and deduces all values from the unique call of the one supreme Person” (PER 68).

It is not by chance that Mounier refers us to Martin Buber, who is regarded as the founder of dialogical personalism. Buber’s I and Thou, which was first published in 1923, established a philosophy of dialogue that left its mark on theology (for example in the works of Friedrich Gogarten [1887–1967], Karl Heim [1874–1958], and Emil Brunner [1889–1966]), but also on philosophy, preeminently in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, whom we have already mentioned. Levinas was later to return to Buber as the “pioneer” of a thought of the Other that does not take recourse to prior knowledge or to a certain structure of consciousness (as is the case in Husserl), but rather emphasizes that the

13. Martin Buber (February 8, 1878–June 13, 1965; born in Vienna, Austria; died in Jerusalem, Israel) was educated at the Universities of Vienna (1896), Leipzig and Berlin (1897), Zurich (1898), and received a doctorate in philosophy and art history from the University of Berlin in 1904. His influences included Kant, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, and he held appointments at the University of Frankfurt (1924–33), and Hebrew University, Jerusalem (1938–51).
singularity of the relationship between I and Thou cannot be reduced to I–It relationships.\textsuperscript{16}

According to Buber, I–Thou and I–It are fundamentally distinct “basic words” characterizing man’s relationship to the world. Whereas the word pair “I–It” stands for the intentional, objectifying approach to the world, the “Thou” in the pair “I–Thou” is not a something. The Thou is not an entity that could be experienced and spoken about. “Someone who says ‘Thou’ does not have a something, he has nothing. But he is in the relationship” (IT 55), a relationship that is characterized by presence and immediacy (IT 62). According to Buber, this does not mean that there is nothing other, no one other than the Thou, which is the Other. Rather, the idea is intended to express the fact that everything else, which is other and different from me, lives in the light of the Other (IT 59). I only become I inasmuch as I say Thou. “I become via the Thou; becoming I, I speak Thou” (IT 62). Or, as we read in another passage: “Man becomes I via the Thou” (IT 80).

The “realm of the Thou” (IT 54) that is established in the basic word “I–Thou” is divided in Buber’s view into three spheres: “life with nature,” which takes shape “on the threshold to language”; the linguistically grounded and constituted “life with human beings”; and finally “speechless, but language-generating” “life with spiritual beings” (IT 57). In each Thou found in each sphere, we have to do with God as the “eternal Thou”: “In each Thou,” writes Buber, “we address the eternal [Thou], in each sphere in its own manner” (ibid.; cf. IT 113). This basic idea is developed in the third and last part of the book. For Buber, the religious dimension, the relationship to the “eternal Thou” proves to be the relationship that founds and supports all other relationships. To enter into the “pure relationship,” that is, the relationship to God, means for him to place the world “on its proper ground” (IT 127). In the eternal Thou, the world finds its unifying center “in which the extended lines of relationships intersect” (IT 148). Among the three spheres of the Thou-world, however, Buber highlights the second, the relationship to man. It is only in the relationship to the other person that a word receives a response. Hence, the relation to the other person turns out to be “the proper metaphor to the relationship to God,” because here, to say this again, a “genuine address receives a genuine answer” (IT 151). In the “pure” relationship to the eternal Thou, however, man does not have God. Man can only be regarded as a recipient here, but one who does not receive an object or a content, but rather living presence (IT 158). Indeed, it contradicts the essence of God to make him an It – even though man always tends to make him a something, an object, like any other Thou that we encounter within the world (IT 161; cf.

existential theology

IT 69). But God cannot be inferred from the world as the ultimate cause or as something of the sort. God as ultimate cause belongs to the categories of traditional onto-theology, which for Buber (no differently than for Heidegger, of whom Buber was otherwise critical\(^\text{17}\)) have to be left behind. God can “rightfully only be addressed [angesprochen], not asserted [ausgesagt]” (IT 129). Theology as speaking of God (as Bultmann also understood) is thus shown to be fundamentally problematical. It is subject to the suspicion that it degrades God to an It, to a mere object of knowledge – thus missing his presence (IT 161). How to speak of God – except in appealing to him, in prayer?\(^\text{18}\) The relationship to God can ultimately only prove itself ethically, that is, in the fact that man, as Buber says, “according to his strength, in the measure of every day realizes God anew in the world” (IT 163). It is neither an atomized subject nor a collective subjectivity that characterizes human existence appropriately. “In the beginning is the relationship,” this is Buber’s basic thesis (IT 69). This is a relationship that is established through language, dialogically. Thus, the “sphere of the intermediate” must be conceived as the “fundamental fact of human existence,” as the space of encounter between I and Thou.\(^\text{19}\)

Gabriel Marcel\(^\text{20}\) unquestionably counts as one of the central figures worthy of special attention in the frame of an account of “existential theology.” Largely forgotten today, Marcel was in his time widely discussed as the main representative of Christian existentialism. The extent of his influence can be seen in Paul Ricoeur’s early work,\(^\text{21}\) where Marcel functions as an important mediator of

18. In his essay, “Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?” (“What does it mean, to speak of God?”) (1925), Bultmann attempted to make a strict distinction between speaking “of” (von) God and an objectifying speaking “about” (über) God, and was thus remarkably close to Buber’s dialogics; with respect to the concrete existential situation of man, Bultmann also rejected the traditional distinction between subject and object as inappropriate. With a view toward the scientific-technical thought that is predominant in the present day, Heidegger reflected in his later thought on theological discourse about “Das Problem eines nichtobjektivierenden Denkens und Sprechens in der heutigen Theologie” [The problem of a non-objectifying thought and speech in contemporary theology]. Heidegger rejects “the claim that all thought as thought is objectifying” as being “groundless,” and identifies “discussing within its own realm of Christian faith what it has to think and how it has to speak in terms of its [faith’s] specific essence” as a “positive task for theology.” In this connection, however, for Heidegger it must be asked “whether theology can still be a science – because it presumably must not be a science at all” (Heidegger, Pathmarks, 59, 61).
19. As Buber puts it in his later work Between Man and Man, 202.
20. Gabriel Marcel (December 7, 1889–October 8, 1973; born and died in Paris, France) was educated at the Sorbonne (1906–1907). His influences included Bergson, Bradley, Royce, and Schelling.
Husserl, Heidegger, and Jaspers’s thought, and therefore as an important source of ideas.22 His influence is also seen in Levinas, who refers to him repeatedly and appreciatively.23 But what is remarkable about Marcel is that he wrote about the relationship between I and Thou in his *Metaphysical Journal* (1927) at almost the same time as Buber, although independently of him. In retrospect, Marcel himself noted and appreciated the substantive proximity to Buber’s dialogics. Decidedly a “Christian philosopher,” Marcel explicitly emphasizes the significance of Buber’s “philosophy of the intermediate.” He links, however, his recognition of Buber’s accomplishment with the critical question as to how the Jewish thinker’s insight “can be transferred to the level of dialogue without degenerating.” Is Buber’s characterization of the intermediate as a “relationship” not already a false objectification of what happens between I and Thou? Is the living communication with the Other not completely frozen in language, does it not inevitably lead to an objectification of the Other?24

Proceeding from the Cartesian-idealistic tradition of philosophy and in increasingly critical reflection on it, *The Metaphysical Journal* interestingly documents an effort to view the problem of existence beyond and outside the long-established metaphysical dualisms such as body–soul and immanence–transcendence. According to Marcel, the reality of the *cogito* is “of quite a different order from existence.” The existence for which Marcel is seeking is not to be *established*, as the “I am” of Descartes’s *cogito* was; it is to be *identified* in the sense that its absolute metaphysical priority must be noted.25 The point is to “determine the metaphysical conditions of personal existence” (MJ 255, my emphasis). Although it is unsystematic, and, as the author repeatedly admits, often quite obscure, the journal displays something of a conceptual center in the question of religion (God) as the question of the absolute or “pure” Thou (MJ 160; cf. MJ 86). It shows Marcel on the way to a “philosophy of the second

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person,” which regards the encounter between I and Thou as an ontological “mystery” (MJ 160). This is a secret that ultimately – in the reality of love – proves to be, as in Buber, ethical. The Thou is present not in the judgment of a proposition, but rather in the answer or better in the response to a question (MJ 199–200; cf. MJ 138). For “where no answer [response] is possible, there is room only for the ‘him’ [the It]” (MJ 138).

According to Marcel, his studies of the problem of human existence lead back to a distinction that was to provide the title of his main work, Being and Having (MJ 310–12). To have or to be, that is the question for Marcel. Being and Having contrasts two realms in its title concepts, realms that appear to be “the very nature of man’s metaphysical condition” (BH 174). According to Marcel, the realm of having is the realm “at the root of the problem or the techniques” (BH 172), while Being counts as that “sphere” (accessible in contemplation or worship) “that transcends all possible possession.” Being is the sphere in which love is rooted as “the essential ontological datum” (BH 167, 173). With this difference between being and having, Marcel is attempting to reconsider the topic of ontology, but he is doing this in a way that is entirely differently from that of Heidegger. According to Marcel (and here he looks quite close to Stein), the possibility of ontology reveals itself only “on a ground previously prepared by revelation” (BH 120). That is why Marcel sees himself directly required to caution his contemporaries against an uncritical adoption of the “language of the German phenomenologists, which is so often untranslatable” (BH 158). This directly refers to Husserl, but one would not be wrong to read this warning as addressed to a certain popular French Heideggerianism, represented by Sartre and others. Irrespective of this disassociation from “the German phenomenologists,” Marcel claims the concept “phenomenology” for his investigations. For him, phenomenology concerns a possible, accurate identification of the “nonpsychological” and, conversely, an accentuation and discovery of the decisive “content of the thought” (the “noemata” in the Husserlian sense) (ibid.). However, the ontologically primary “datum” is for Marcel, ultimately, the love that is grounded in God and that reveals existence to be a mystery. The

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27. Marcel prefers to speak of “encounter” and not of “relationship,” as does Buber, so as to emphasize the character of performance that eludes objectification. The concepts existence and objectivity are “radically dissociated” for Marcel (MJ 281), and, accordingly, the repeated question is “how it is possible to conceive a Thou that is not at the same time a him” (MJ 281; cf. 200). To put it in Levinas’s terms, the encounter with the Other resists a theoretical incorporation, the – infinite – significance of the human face resists conceptual classification (cf. Levinas, “Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel and Philosophy,” 35).

28. Gabriel Marcel, Being and Having, Katharine Farrer (trans.) (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976), 199; hereafter cited as BH.
“existence of a Christian datum” (BH 120) is thus an essential starting-point for his phenomenological-metaphysical meditations, which involve (as do those of Maritain) a critique of “modern individualism.” “But I think,” writes Marcel, “it is beyond dispute that if pure subjectivism ought really to be considered as a standpoint attained once and for all by the modern mind, then the religious question would indeed have to be regarded as obsolete” (BH 188). But he immediately adds – with reference to Maritain – that “I think that this subjectivism cannot be for one moment regarded as an established position” (BH 188–9). It is necessary to climb back up the “hill down which modern philosophy has been slipping for more than two centuries” by means of a new reflection on the (religiously grounded) meaning structures of human existence (BH 189).

This critique of modernity applies first of all to the idea of freedom in the Kantian sense. Based on the concept of autonomy, Kantian ethics strikes Marcel as an utterly “monstrous contradiction, a sort of speculative aberration” (BH 131). According to Marcel, Kant did not see “that the self can and should be transcended without there being any need for heteronomy to replace autonomy in consequence” (BH 174). Being faced with the fundamental mystery in religion, art, and metaphysics, the human becomes aware of a creative freedom that cannot be grasped as autonomy. In religion and art, it is shown that “freedom is not autonomy,” that, rather, here “the self … is entirely absorbed by love.” But Marcel extends his criticism of modern thought beyond Kant; it includes as well liberalism, Marxism, and Sartre’s existentialism. “Condemned to freedom,” as Sartre puts it, the human sees himself in a state of plain incomprehensibility, thrown back on to himself alone. However, to conceive of man as the Absolute is, in the final consequence, “self-destruction or idolatry,” as Marcel formulates it in his work Problematic Man.29 It belongs to Marcel’s basic convictions that human freedom can be defined only with reference to divine grace “in depth” (PM 60), but that freedom and grace must be understood in a language beyond a language of causality (PM 55). It is understandable that Marcel refused to accept the label of “existentialism” and characterized his position rather as a “neo-Socraticism” (PM 60). Self-questioning or putting-oneself-into-question, however, does not stop with ascertaining the mere questionability of the human. With Marcel, it opens – no differently than with Stein, Maritain, and Mounier – into religion and invocation, the invocatio dei: “You who alone possess the secret of what I am and of what I am capable of becoming” (PM 63).

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II. HEIDEGGER AND CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM:
BULTMANN AND TILLICH

At the outset, we already indicated that Martin Heidegger proposed a path entirely different from the one taken by Husserl’s former assistant Edith Stein. The conception of a Christian philosophy appears to him to be a “square circle”; the different varieties of humanism, including Christian humanism, are summarily dismissed in his later “Letter on Humanism,” without giving any indication of a detailed examination of the relevant works. Regardless of its definition, each kind of humanism remains, for Heidegger, within the horizon of metaphysics. They do not, therefore, attain the “other perspectives” on Being and the human, which for Heidegger are the only ones to offer a prospect of a radically different thinking that has overcome metaphysics. The “essence of the holy” can be conceptualized only on the basis of the “truth of Being,” and the “essence of divinity” only on the basis of the “essence of the holy.” In turn, it is only “in light of the essence of divinity” that it can “be thought and said what the word ‘God’ should name.” The later Heidegger, after the so-called “turn,” sees Hölderlin as the definitive “prethinker” and the witness to such a different thought. Thereby, Heidegger blurs or even obscures the vestiges of his own earlier, quite intensive interest in the Christian tradition, especially his notable interest in Martin Luther’s theology. In fact, he disassociates himself from his earlier close cooperation and friendship with the protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann, of course, has drawn substantial impulses from Heidegger’s Being and Time and passed them on to a whole generation of theologians through his work. Yet, in spite of all of the critique and (self-)disassociation, Heidegger

31. Correspondingly, Heidegger considers the talk of ontology as well as ethics and a union of the two as inadequate and dismisses them in favor of a “primordial ethics,” understood as “originary” thought of the truth of Being. See ibid., 271.
32. Ibid., 267.
33. See Grossmann, Heidegger-Lektüren, 11ff., as well as Karl Lehmann, “Sagen, was Sache ist: der Blick auf die Wahrheit der Existenz” and Otto Pöggeler, “Heideggers Weg von Luther zu Hölderlin,” both in Heidegger und die christliche Tradition, Norbert Fischer and Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (eds) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2007). In order to distinguish the “theological” approach of the early Heidegger from his thought after the “turning,” one can call the latter, with Françoise Dastur, a “theiological” thought. As Dastur writes: “Après la Kehre, la dimension du divin fait sa réapparition. Mais c’est là, me semble-t-il, une tout autre perspective, qui souvre, non plus théologique, mais proprement théiologique [After the Kehre, the dimension of the divine made its reappearance. But this was, it seems to me, a completely different perspective that emerges, no longer a theological, but properly speaking a theiological perspective]” (“Heidegger et la théologie,” Revue philosophique de Louvain 92 [1994], 239).
34. This generation would include such prominent figures as Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling.
could concede that he “never would have reached the path to thought” without his theological background.35

Indeed, the young Heidegger was able to represent himself – in a letter dating from August 19, 1921, to his student, Karl Löwith (1897–1973) – as a “Christian theologian.”36 In this way, Heidegger tried to characterize himself as one who strove to explore the logos of an existential understanding shaped by Christian faith. The early Heidegger regarded the early Christian life experience, as it is attested in the epistles of St. Paul, as a paradigm for the elucidation of what he calls “historical facticity” or “factual existence,” that is, a life that is profoundly determined by history (by the event of Jesus) and yet determined by a history whose source cannot be reached (since part of the event of Jesus is that he died). The fact that the grounds of one’s life are out of reach defines, for Heidegger, the facticity of human existence. Despite modeling facticity on Paul’s epistles, Heidegger conceives the business of philosophy as the “radically explication” of the facticity of human existence in its questionability without having at its disposal any support in Revelation.37 As a formally indicative hermeneutics, it can point out that there are religious dimensions, but has to leave the religious decision up to factual existence.38 As Heidegger ultimately says, faith, as a specific possibility of existence, remains the “deadly enemy” “with respect to that specific form of existence that is essential to philosophy.” Yet, Heidegger emphasizes equally and no less vehemently that this radical antithesis yields “the possibility of a community of the sciences of theology and philosophy.”39 Heidegger’s lecture “Phenomenology and Theology,” which we mentioned at the beginning, is evidence of this community. It resulted from Heidegger’s discussions with Bultmann40 at the University of Marburg. Bultmann’s own work demonstrates the possibility of theology and philosophy forming something like a community.

40. Rudolf Bultmann (August 20, 1884– July 30, 1976; born in Wiefelstede, Germany; died in Marburg) was educated at the Universities of Tübingen, Berlin, and Marburg (doctorate, 1910; habilitation, 1912). His influences included Karl Barth and Heidegger, and he held appointments at the University of Marburg (1921–51).
As we just mentioned, Bultmann’s theology received crucial inspiration from Heidegger.\textsuperscript{41} It is no exaggeration to say that Bultmann’s dialogue with Heidegger determined his theology as one guided by the question of understanding human existence, as a hermeneutical theology. In particular, the “existential” interpretation of the New Testament gave his theology a systematic expression. To this day, Bultmann’s name remains associated with this hermeneutical approach, which, somewhat misleadingly, he also called “demythologization.” Although the term “demythologization” gave rise to much controversy, the expression is basically only another word for the task, absolutely necessary in Bultmann’s eyes, of existential interpretation of biblical texts. Demythologization is done as existential interpretation, and vice versa. This formula means that biblical texts are not to be understood historically, but rather probed for the understanding of the human existence that they express. The issue in “demythologization” is “whether the New Testament offers us an understanding of ourselves that constitutes for us a genuine question of decision.”\textsuperscript{42} According to Bultmann, to be related in the present, the biblical texts – for example, the accounts of miracles and the stories of Christ’s resurrection – have to be dissociated from the mythical “world picture” presupposed in them. Without “demythologization” then, the gospel of the New Testament would not be valid for us living today. Bultmann discovers the theological reason for this claim in the fact that “myth talks about the unworldly as worldly, the gods as human” (NTM 10). Insofar as the myth itself, with its objectifying representations, obscures and undermines “its real intention to talk about a transcendent power to which both we and the world are subject” (\textit{ibid.}), it contains in itself the motive for criticizing it. The criticism allows one to interpret it so that it reveals “the truth of the Kerygma” (NTM 14), that is, the message of the New Testament. It must be stressed, as Bultmann himself has said, that the demythologizing criticism does not definitely mean “the elimination of the myth” (NTM 9). In the end, Bultmann is concerned less with myth than with the kerygma, that is, the preaching of Revelation as “an occurrence in existence.”\textsuperscript{43}


The object of theology is God. Yet, God is not an object in an abstract sense, but rather in relation to the human, that is, in the sense in which human existence – in faith – is determined by God. Therefore, Bultmann can also say that the theme of theology is “the existence of the human determined by God.” According to this notion, Christian faith is not a phenomenon of general religiousness. Faith is – concretely – “the response to the proclaimed word of God,” which opens up for human existence its distinct, “proper” self-understanding. Christian theology has no other task than “to explicate preaching in such a way that the understanding of human existence given in it emerges as an interpretation of human existence in which the human can understand himself.” Theology, accordingly, is the “conceptual explication of faithful existence,” a “task imposed on faith for faith.” As such, and as Heidegger had said in substantive agreement with Bultmann, theology is a positive science sui generis: a science serving faith.

Finally, turning from Catholicism to Protestantism, we come to Paul Tillich. Influenced by the existential philosophy of this period, Tillich explicitly discusses the theme of religion or faith in its “existential” meaning. Here existential theology refers to a theology of culture, in which all the varieties of culture are seen as determined by the Unconditional. Tillich frequently uses this expression: the Unconditional is that “which concerns us unconditionally.” The basic idea is that the symbols of the Christian message are answers to existential questions that arise from the human situation. In the modern era, the human situation

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47. *Ibid.*, 163, 166.
48. Paul Tillich (August 20, 1886–October 22, 1965; born in Starzeddel, Germany; died in Chicago, Illinois, USA) received a doctorate from the University of Breslau in 1911. His influences included Heidegger, Husserl, Kierkegaard, and Schelling. He held appointments at the Universities of Marburg (1924–25), Dresden (1925–29), and Frankfurt (1929–33), Union Theological Seminary (1933–55), Harvard University (1955–62), and the University of Chicago (1962–65).
49. Cf. on this point Werner Schüssler, “Was uns unbedingt angeht”: Studien zur Theologie und Philosophie Paul Tillichs (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 1999); for the broader context see also Hermann Fischer (ed.), *Paul Tillich: Studien zu einer Theologie der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1989).
is characterized by the experience of non-being and anxiety: the experience of “the death of God” (Nietzsche). In his work The Courage to Be, Tillich argues that nothing other than this experience is at the basis of the existentialism of the twentieth century: “[Existentialism] is the expression of the anxiety of meaninglessness and of the attempt to take this anxiety into the courage to be as oneself.”

In this description of anxiety, one can see Heidegger and Kierkegaard in the background. But, the existential expression of the experience inevitably leads to the question of whether and how such abysmal anxiety can be overcome. According to Tillich, we are able to overcome anxiety only by means of a negation of a negation, such “that the acceptance of despair is in itself faith and on the boundary line of the courage to be” (CB 175). In the same way, we are able to speak of Being appropriately and sufficiently only in the manner of a double negation. “Being must be thought of as the negation of the negation of being” (CB 179).

As such Being, God appears as “God above God” (CB 182). As he appeared in Jesus as the Christ, God is a God beyond the theistic God. In “absolute faith” and “courage,” the God of theism is in fact transcended, inasmuch as faith integrates doubt directly into itself. “Absolute faith and its consequence, the courage that takes the radical doubt, the doubt about God, into itself, transcends the theistic idea of God” (ibid.). “The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt” (CB 190). The notion that faith is not faith without doubt amounts to what Tillich calls the “dynamics of faith.” Insofar as faith includes courage, it includes doubt about itself, and insofar as it integrates doubt, it proves itself to be faith as faith in the sign of the Cross. Tillich would have completely agreed with Heidegger, who explained at the beginning of his Introduction to Metaphysics (1935) that “if such faith does not continually expose itself to the possibility of unfaith, it is not faith but a convenience. It becomes an agreement with oneself to adhere in the future to a doctrine as something that has somehow been handed down.” Heidegger continues that such faith is tantamount to “indifference,” “which can then, perhaps even with keen interest, busy itself with everything, with faith as well as with questioning.” To speak with Tillich again, it is characteristic of the “Protestant principle” not to yield to such indolence and to recognize that the element of doubt is “sublated” in faith. The certainty of faith does not prove itself in abstract self-relatedness, but rather – in reference to God as the Unconditional or Absolute – in the midst of the insecurity and uncertainty of existence. When faith is conceived in this

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51. Kierkegaard’s influence on Tillich’s thinking must be noted here. [*] For a discussion of Kierkegaard, see the essay by Alastair Hannay in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.

52. Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, 8.

53. Ibid.
way as “ultimate concern,” it is “the centered movement of the whole personality toward something of ultimate meaning and significance.”54 It is the expression of finite freedom in the face of the Absolute. In this and no other way, it is “an essential possibility of the human.”55

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

“Existential theology;” as the name for the various philosophical and theological conceptions that have been outlined in this essay, tends to denote a field of overlapping interests rather than any doctrinal coherence. The traditions from which the approaches stem are disparate, the outlooks on the possibility and shape of – primarily Christian – philosophy or theology advocated by the various thinkers are controversial, and their individual standpoints with regard to what is called “existential philosophy” are contentious. What must be noted, however, is the special significance of the thought of Heidegger, which, whether critically challenged or positively received, has been shown to have influenced all of the thinkers here surveyed.

As far as the intellectual history of the past century is concerned, the friendship between the philosopher Heidegger and the theologian Bultmann is doubtless one of the most important chapters in the dialogue between philosophy and theology. Documented in their recently published correspondence,56 this friendship was founded strikingly on the attention to the issue of thought. Perhaps what ultimately calls for thinking is existence (Dasein). But in regard to this issue, the theologian parts ways with the philosopher (or the thinker, as Heidegger might say). For the theologian, what is called “existence” is an issue that cannot be described in neutral terms. As fallen, or more precisely, sinful existence, human existence is at the same time existence determined by God. When it speaks of God, according to Bultmann’s conception, theology therefore must at the same time speak of man. What “existence” means thus refers to the relationship that is constitutive for existence: the relationship to God, who is solely present in his word and who comes toward man. And inasmuch as we have still not found the appropriate way in which to describe, express, and explain existence as the relation to God, existential theology remains relevant. It must remain on the agenda of the dialogue between philosophy and theology – whatever form it may take.

55. Ibid., 126.
EXISTENTIAL THEOLOGY

MAJOR WORKS

Martin Buber


Rudolf Bultmann


Gabriel Marcel


Jacques Maritain


Emmanuel Mounier


Edith Stein


Paul Tillich

Religion and ethics in mid-twentieth-century Europe appeared in terms of the dominant contemporary ideologies, as outdated, indeed atavistic phenomena. Science and politics, often in strange and atrocious combinations, appeared to supersede religion and ethics in molding the fate of humanity. The goals of redemption and salvation, consolation and meaning, had been usurped by competing ideologies, those of Nazism, Marxism, and liberal capitalism, among others. These ideologies shared a common pretension to scientificality and an understanding of the ends (or non-ends) of humankind in terms of political and historically determinate solutions. In such terms religion and ethics – if they had any real value – were matters of the private sphere alone. Yet, and in part in response to this situation, this same period witnessed a renewal of intellectual traditions within Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism coupled with an increasingly insistent emphasis on the transcendent – conceived in ethico-religious terms – in opposition to the immanent spheres of technological science and politics.

The revitalization of the intellectual traditions of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism was not only responding to the contemporary developments of the time, but was also and concurrently reacting against the inheritance of the nineteenth century within those denominations. The struggle with modernity in the manner of its decentering of God and religion from the mainstream of science, politics, art, and daily life generally – a struggle that arguably can be traced to the end of wars of religion in the mid-seventeenth century and the concurrent rise of the New Science – had generated many theological

1. This essay is dedicated to my late father Aibhistín Ó Murchadha, the theologian in the family.
responses: liberal Protestant theology, historical theology, modernism, and, on the other side, neo-Thomism. These responses ran many risks: those of anthropocentrism, which made theology vulnerable to a Feuerbachian-type critique; of a radical Pietistic decoupling of belief from knowledge; of an obscurantist rejection of contemporary science and ideas (best exemplified perhaps in the Papal Encyclical *Syllabus of Errors* [1864]). These issues became all the more pressing in the aftermath of the First World War. The shattering of optimism in human progress called liberal theology into question, while the neo-Thomist return not so much to Aquinas as to a scholastic Thomism was itself unconvincing, both philosophically and theologically. Within that situation, certain key thinkers emerged whose responses to these issues have had profound consequences for later thought. Indeed, the theological or religious turn in phenomenology in many ways bears the philosophical fruit of these trends, but already theologically by the middle of the century, a 180 degree shift (Karl Barth) from the inheritance of the nineteenth century had been effected.

Certain key preoccupations can be discerned in this period, which – if we look at the debates surrounding the so-called theological turn in recent French, and more recently, North American phenomenology\(^2\) – have in many respects a contemporary ring. This essay will be divided into four sections dealing with some of these key issues. The first question explored is that of the relation of God to humanity, a relation understood increasingly in this period on the basis of a robust account of revelation as articulated in different ways by Franz Rosenzweig and Karl Barth. From Gabriel Marcel onward, the importance of the Incarnation in any such understanding of revelation was fundamental, and in this motivated profound and groundbreaking analyses of the human body and materiality generally. The human body was understood by Marcel and by Emmanuel Mounier as an expression of the person, and indeed religious and ethical thought of this period is incomprehensible without some understanding of what Mounier called the “paradox of personal existence”. Underlying many of these issues are reflections on the difference between the visible world of nature and society and the invisible or the supernatural. This difference was conceptualized in terms of grace, but through a rethinking of grace especially in the work of Henri de Lubac.

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I. RELATION OF GOD AND HUMANITY

As in many spheres, in theology and philosophy one can end the nineteenth century not in 1901, but in 1914. The First World War undermined for the intellectual elites of the day – in Germany, but also well beyond that country – the belief of the previous century in “modern man.” The human being and human capacities seemed a less and less suitable model for understanding the world or the divine. Ludwig Feuerbach had long before shown the logical conclusion of a theology that emphasized the humanity of God above all else; namely, that God be reduced to nothing more than a projection of humanity. But, with the exception of Kierkegaard (who remained theologically and indeed philosophically largely uninformative until the interwar years), no other significant voice was raised against what could be called the domestication of the divine, that is, the understanding of the divine in the mirror of the human. It was only with the breaking asunder of that modern image of the human – prophesied by Nietzsche, but only realized with the First World War and the realities of industrialization – that theology began to free itself from the model of the human.

If the human and its capacities no longer ground the understanding of the divine, then nor can the highest human capacity – science – arbitrate the understanding of the divine. What we see in the immediate aftermath of the First World War is the growing emphasis on the limits and indeed the violence of the pretensions of human knowledge. Theologically the correlate to such an emphasis is a radicalization of the notion of revelation and in turn the re-evaluation of the place of the miraculous in religious understanding. Such a re-evaluation and radicalization we see in two central figures of the 1920s: Barth and Rosenzweig.


5. Karl Barth (May 10, 1886–December 10, 1968; born and died in Basel, Switzerland) was educated at the Universities of Bern, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg (1904–1908). His influences included Anselm, Kierkegaard, and Schleiermacher, and he held appointments at the Universities of Göttingen (1921–25), Münster (1925–30), and Bonn (1930–35).

Franz Rosenzweig (December 25, 1886–December 10, 1929; born in Kassel, Germany; died in Frankfurt) studied medicine at the Universities of Göttingen and Munich, and history and philosophy at the Universities of Berlin and Freiburg, receiving a doctorate from Freiburg in 1912. His influences included Buber, Cohen, and Hegel, and he founded the House of Jewish Learning, Frankfurt (1920).

Mention must be made in this context also of Rudolf Otto, whose book *The Idea of the Holy* (originally published in 1917) was, along with Barth’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the
What is most striking about both of these figures, and that which marks in them a radical break with what went before, is the centrality of miracle for both. For Rosenzweig and Barth, revelation can only be understood as miraculous. In this respect, they both reject any attempt at rationalization of revelation.

Rosenzweig points out that for ancient humanity “miracle” did not connote a break with the natural order but rather its confirmation. Miracles were signs, signs of divine providence. Crucial to miracles was the testimony of witnesses. The decline of belief in miracles corresponds to what he terms the “third Enlightenment,” that based in the critique of experience: the “historical Enlightenment.” This critique of experience rendered testimony itself suspect and relative to historical contingency. In the face of such critique two possibilities emerged: pietistic belief virtually unconnected to the historical objectivity of miracles, and rationalistic theology, which in embarrassment tries to rid itself of any dependence on the verity of miracles. For Rosenzweig, though, both mark a betrayal of the very notion of revelation, without which theology (and he thinks also philosophy) is not possible. Revelation is fundamental because it is the only bridge from subjectivity to objectivity, from the Weltanschauung of the philosopher to the “truth [which] is and remains the only soil in which truthfulness of experience can grow” (SR 107). Revelation, then, is a disclosing of truth, truth of the ultimate unity of what is: “In the authentic idea of revelation the three actual elements of the all – God, world, man – emerge from themselves, belong to one another and meet one another” (SR 115). It is difficult not to hear this echoed in Heidegger’s later notion of the fourfold. But here what Rosenzweig is concerned with is the relation of revelation to creation. For Rosenzweig, revelation is not creation, but is foreseen in creation and as such regains the authentic

Romans (originally published in 1923), one of the two most influential works in theology in the interwar years. Otto’s account of the numinous parallels some of the themes that I will be exploring in Rosenzweig and Barth. I do not discuss him here partly for reasons of space, partly also because Otto does not mark the same break with nineteenth-century theology as do both Barth and Rosenzweig, as he develops an account of religion on the basis of Schleiermacher (for all the critical distance he takes from him) with certain neo-Kantian resonances. Nonetheless, Otto’s emphasis on the “wholly other” can quite fruitfully be brought into dialogue with the work of Barth. Barth himself wrote on reading The Idea of the Holy of his “considerable joy” because, though Otto was very ‘psychologically orientated,’ he did point ‘beyond the boundaries to the moment of the numinous,’ to the ‘divine in God.’” Quoted in G. C. Berkouwer, A Half Century of Theology: Movements and Motives, Lewis Smedes (trans.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 47.

6. Cf. Franz Rosenzweig: “For the consciousness of earlier humanity miracle was based on its having been predicted, not on its deviation from the course of nature as this had previously been fixed by law” (The Star of Redemption, William Hallo [trans.] [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971], 94). The Star of Redemption is hereafter cited as SR followed by the page number.

character of revelation: that of becoming wholly and solely the fulfillment of the promise made in creation.8 The difference between creation and revelation lies in language. “The language of revelation speaks” (SR 186),9 it addresses, it names. The name is just as essential as the thing, but it cannot be derived from the thing, even though “the thing is the presupposition and mute prediction of its name” (SR 188). From things alone, from the mere fact of creation, it is impossible to reach God. God is accessible only in terms of himself, as a showing of himself, that is, in revelation. In revelation the relation of God and world opens up into a threefold relation of God, world, and human. Such revelation is the showing itself of love. “Love cannot be ‘purely human.’ It must speak … and by speaking love already becomes ‘super-human,’ for the sensuality of the word is brimful with its divine super-sense” (SR 201).

Contemporaneous with Rosenzweig, Barth also affirmed the miraculous and did so in the name of revelation.10 Similar to Rosenzweig, Barth is countering the liberal theological approach of effectively subordinating theology methodologically to science. For Barth – to use his image – theology in the nineteenth century opened its windows to that which does not belong in the house of theology and allowed it to stay.11 Nonetheless, he as much as the theologians of the previous century responded to the Kantian critique that seemed to deny to reason any claims on the divine. Kant’s arguments as to the speculative nature of any rational account of the existence or being of God are accepted by Barth. But while, for liberal theology, this led to concentration on the human reality of religious feeling and practice, for Barth the true consequence to be drawn is the distance between God and humanity. This distance, which in his early work Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, was absolute, is modified in the later work by an increasing emphasis on Christology and the phenomenon of revelation. Theology, if it has a future at all in the modern world, could have that future only through resisting any attempt to reduce the divine to the human. Christian scripture, in that context, far from being a text reducible to scientific, specifically historical, methods, bears testimony to a life, which – if properly understood – gives true insight into the human being itself. Barth defines revelation as

8. “Creation is the prophecy which is only confirmed in the miraculous sign of revelation” (SR 134).
9. The passage continues: “While the language of revelation addresses, the language of creation delineates, re-counts, de-termines.”
10. Rosenzweig was highly critical of the early Barth – the only Barth he knew – for what he saw as the overemphasis in Barth of the distance between God and humanity. Barth in his later work greatly modified this emphasis and came to see it as an overreaction to the then dominant liberal theology. Cf. Rosenzweig’s letter to Buber December 1922 in Gesammelte Schriften (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), vol. 1.2, 875.
God’s sovereign action. In other words, revelation cannot be understood from the human sphere, but must rather be understood as that received, as that for which no prestructure exists. The coming to us of the truth of and about God is revelation. Human beings know God only through his self-revelation. But this self-revelation of God is not simply a concern of theology – a discourse about God. Christian theology, Barth tells us, is really “The-anthropology.”\footnote{Ibid., 9.} In other words, theology’s real concern is not God as such but the relationship of God and human. In this contention, Barth does not differ greatly from the liberal theologians of the previous century. Where he does differ, however, is both in the emphasis he places on the divine side of that relation and the consequences he draws from this for the understanding of the human: “It is man as he is revealed in the light of revelation and only that man who can be seriously treated theologically.”\footnote{Karl Barth, 
Church Dogmatics, G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (eds). G. T. Thomson et al. (trans.) (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–1977), I.2, 296.} Anthropology, in his view, is based on theology or, more specifically, on Christology. For Barth, Jesus of Nazareth, understood in Christianity as the Christ, is not to be understood as human by extrapolation from what we know nontheologically about human beings, but rather human beings can only be understood starting from the person of Jesus Christ.

The fundamental here is the issue of sin. Jesus Christ being without sin is not less human but actually more human than any other human being. This is so because the true nature of human beings is that created by God and “what God knows of man beyond his sin … is the real creaturely nature of man.”\footnote{Barth, Church Dogmatics, III.2, 38; hereafter cited as CDIII.2 followed by the page number.} In other words, human beings as we know them are not pure expressions of their nature. The nature of human beings that we see is a fallen nature, one that has turned away from its own true source of being in God. If, then, we are to seek a human being that truly expresses its own nature, we need to find a being “like us in all things but sin.” This being we find in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth, Barth says, is man as God willed and created him. This again carries methodological implications. If we want to discover the nature of Jesus Christ, we can listen to no other “logos of supposed humanity,” but only to him. But this means that in understanding ourselves we can look to nowhere else: “Our self-knowledge can only be an act of discipleship” (CDIII.2 53). This act of discipleship, this turning toward an other in self-knowledge, actually reflects the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth: “Jesus cannot speak ‘of himself’ … Never in any event … does He seek or do His own will” (CDIII.2 63). Rather, Jesus of Nazareth always refers himself to the one who sent him. He is always one of two. Jesus of Nazareth’s participation in the Godhead is the basis of his humanity. What this means is that the
human being is the being that is essentially for God and as such surpasses all other creatures. For this reason Barth rejects – much like Heidegger – the definition of the human being as a rational animal. Such a definition goes from the general to the particular and is essentially naturalistic for this reason. But the most universal and decisive feature of human reality is the most particular about a person; namely, her existence in a history determined by God’s attitude toward her (CDIII.2 78). Only when we ask this question, when we ignore every question about human *nature* and ask about human *existence*, do we really seek the human as subject and not alone as object. But in reaching the human as subject we are nonetheless concerned with ontology, with the ontological basis of the human. Ontologically, Barth is claiming, the human is turned toward God. The human is essentially turned away from herself toward others, toward the wholly other. In that case sin is an “ontological impossibility” for the human (CDIII.2 136).15 If the human denies God, she denies herself. Sin is first and foremost ontological rather than ethical: it is an affirmation of the nothingness, which God as creator has negated. It is the ultimate nihilism as it negates not only human being but all creation. Fundamentally such nihilism arises out of a self-assertion that paradoxically is a negation of the self. This can be seen, for Barth, in the mirror of Christ: here we see the human not as the presupposition of his own being, not as self-sufficient, but as radically other directed. God in his Word is the presupposition of Christ. This means that Jesus of Nazareth is not to be understood substantially, as a timeless being. Rather, “Jesus exists only in his history” (CDIII.2 160). By history, here Barth understands something very specific – history is not the working out of that which is already intrinsic in a being, but rather the:

> history of a being begins, continues and is completed, when something other than itself and transcending its own nature encounters it, approaches it and determines its being in the nature proper to it, so that it is compelled and enabled to transcend itself in response and in relation to this new factor. The history of a being occurs when it is caught up in this movement, change and relation, when its circular movement is broken from without by a movement towards it and the corresponding movement from it, when it is transcended from without so that it must and can transcend itself outwards.

(CDIII.2 158)

Such a concept of “being as history” is, for Barth, “the existence of the man Jesus” (CDIII.2 159). Without Jesus of Nazareth, there is no history in the strict sense in which Barth is using it. In effect, what is at issue here is the relation of creator and creature: history is as history through the Incarnation, through which the creator becomes creature and the creature creator in Jesus Christ. This is the radically new event of the Incarnation, which can be understood only as history, not in terms of any ahistorical ontology. This is so because it rests on an identity between creator and creature in Jesus of Nazareth, which is not a simple identity but a relation of transcendence and response. In such a relation, history in the emphatic sense begins.

History is inaugurated in transcendence. But the self-transcendence that occurs would be impossible in and of itself. As Barth makes clear, there is no way from human self-awareness to God. The only transcendence here possible is that of response. The initiating event had to come from elsewhere, from the wholly other, from God. But this elsewhere is also here, close by, because “in Jesus Christ there is no isolation of man from God or God from man.” Furthermore: “His free affirmation of man, His free concern for him, His free substitution for him, this is God's humanity.”

II. INCARNATION AND HISTORY

The question of history addresses one of the key concerns of modern thought. With the dethronement of the ideal of modern man, the understanding of history as progress also became, for both religious and secular thinkers, an issue of increasingly anxious concern. Fundamental to such concerns is the place of material progress in human history, a concern related closely to the question of technology. While both Barth and Rosenzweig emphasized the incapacity of humanity to reach the divine, hence the need for revelation, arguably the twentieth century saw the fulfillment of the technological promise of almost unlimited development of the human capacity to act on the world, and concurrently an increased emphasis on the materiality of the world and indeed of the human being itself. In France, the work of Marcel and Mounier was important in somewhat contrasting ways in reflecting these developments in broadly Christian terms. They did so by problematizing the mode of relation to the

17. Ibid., 48.
*18. For biographical information and major works for Marcel and Mounier, see the essay by Andreas Grossmann in this volume.
material world, namely, that of incorporation, of embodied being, in terms of a “higher” destiny for both than simple additive increase in material goods.

Paul Ricoeur credits Marcel with having opened up “the way for a philosophy of the lived body [corps proper] and given to philosophy the means of thinking the incarnation”\(^{19}\) through his critique of sensation as message and the body as instrument. Fundamental to this achievement was Marcel’s distinction between being and having, in terms of which the body holds a particularly ambiguous position: it seems to be something we have yet, unlike other things we have, we cannot dispose of it. The body is the condition of possibility both of our being and of our having. The relation of having is itself an ambiguous one in the sense that as a relation of possession it leaves us open to being “devoured by what we possess.” As Marcel puts it, “It seems to be the essence of my body or of my instruments insofar as I treat them as possessions, that they should tend to suppress me, I [moi] who possesses them.”\(^{20}\) This, Marcel suggests, is all the more evident where I am inactive, where I merely possess inertly my inert possession. When, however, I work on them creatively – Marcel gives the examples of the garden for the gardener, the farm for the farmer, the piano or violin for the musician, the laboratory for the scientist – then the possibility exists of transmuting or sublimating the relation of having into one of being (\textit{ibid.}, 180). In such cases the duality of possessing and possessed is abolished in a “living reality” (\textit{réalité vivante}) (\textit{ibid.}). Such living reality is, for Marcel, always incarnate.

The relation to “my body” is neither one of pure having or of pure being. As he puts it: “to be incarnated is to appear to oneself as body, as this particular body, without being identified with it nor distinguished from it.”\(^{21}\) This peculiar situation, which is fundamental to my being in the world, is nonrelational: there is no relation between self and body because relations exist only between objects. Incarnate being exists and existence Marcel understands as “participation.” Participation is not to be understood as relation, because such an understanding would involve an objectification of participation and as such its denial. The key notion here is that of sensation: sensation cannot be understood relationally in terms of message and translation as is routinely done. Indeed, any notion of translation is out of place here: “sensation is immediate, the basis of all interpretation and communication, hence not itself an interpretation or communication” (\textit{CF} 25). This immediacy, however, gets lost in action: action is

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19. Ricoeur, in Gabriel Marcel, \textit{Tragic Wisdom and Beyond}, Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (trans.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 222, translation modified. This is part of a conversation between Ricoeur and Marcel reproduced in \textit{Tragic Wisdom and Beyond}.


directed toward objects and cannot help but understand sensations as messages from such objects “without bothering about the absurdity of describing them in this manner” (ibid.).

Sensation is reception, but what is it to receive? To receive, Marcel understands in terms of receiving another person – admitting or welcoming “an outsider into one’s home” (CF 27). Being at home is not a relation of objects, but rather a feeling, indeed a mysterious feeling: “I cannot refer to my feeling at home unless I grant or imply that the self does or can seem to itself to impregnate its environment with its own quality, thereby recognizing itself in its surroundings and entering into an intimate relationship with it” (ibid.). Thus, in exploring sensation Marcel comes unexpectedly to the phenomenon of hospitality. As a welcoming into one’s home, hospitality is a welcoming into that region in which the self seems to itself to impregnate its own quality. In this sense, to receive is to invite the stranger into participation with that region impregnated with those qualities. Once receptivity is understood in terms of hospitality, it does not “fill up a void with an alien presence but [makes] the other person participate in a certain plenitude” (CF 28).

Marcel concludes from this analysis that since Aristotle feeling has falsely been identified with passivity. Feeling rather has an active element: taking oneself up or opening oneself up to … (CF 29). It is this active element that turns feeling into creativity. A key notion, for Marcel, here is that of admiration. Commenting on a contemporary dramatist who declared admiration for him to be a humiliating state, Marcel states in “Belonging and Disposability” that this is the “same as to treat the subject as a power existing for itself and taking itself as a center” (CF 49). This is the result of a free choice to resist participation, resist the feeling of receptivity. But, conversely, to affirm admiration to be “an exalted state is to start from the inverse notion that the proper function of the subject is to emerge from itself and realize itself primarily in the gift of oneself” (ibid.). This gift of oneself is what Marcel understands as creativity: not a self-expression, but rather a becoming other in expression. In this sense creativity is responsive. Response is “the wholly inner reaction evoked by an appeal” (CF 51). The appeal of the other does not coerce us but rather “mysteriously restores

22. In reading Marcel and Mounier, one finds some themes, such as hospitality, that have emerged more recently in French thought. It is perhaps indicative of the relative neglect of Marcel’s (and Mounier’s) work in France today that (as far as I am aware) no reference is made to him in the work on hospitality by Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Chrétien, or Jean-Luc Marion. For their respective accounts of hospitality see Jacques Derrida, Of Hospitality, Rachel Bowlby (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Jean-Louis Chrétien, L’Arche de la parole (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), and Jean-Luc Marion, Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness, Jeffrey L. Kosky (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).
us to ourselves” (*ibid*.). The creative individual responds freely to this appeal, this call. The work that is to be accomplished by his creative act is the “embodiment of his vocation, and that vocation is related to others and to the world. It is his way of giving himself” (CF 53). This sacrifice Marcel understands as being characteristic of the saint (CF 56). I will return to vocation and the figure of the saint in the next section, but for the moment I want to relate this discussion to the distinction between problem and mystery in Marcel in the context of his account of technology and progress.

In “An Outline of a Concrete Philosophy,” Marcel himself states the distinction between the mysterious and the problematic quite succinctly as follows: “A problem is something which one runs up against, which bars the way … A mystery, however, is something in which I find myself involved” (CF 68). That which bars the way is something that is set before me as a problem to be solved. This Marcel tends to understand along the model of the machine: a machine breaks down, this malfunction can be examined from the outside, and certain techniques can be employed to get it running again. The problematized finds its place in an order, which is an order for me, in the end an extension of my own body. The mysterious, on the other hand, is something I find myself in; it can never become a problem for me, because it is not for me at all. Rather, I experience it as that which transcends and envelops me. The mysterious cannot even strictly speaking be acknowledged, but only greeted (CF 69).

What this points to is a decentering of the subject, something at the core of the personalist movement of which Marcel can be considered part. While individualism aims to center the person on himself, personalism aims to decenter him, to open up new perspectives. At the heart of such a decentered person is *generosity*. “Personal being is generosity,” according to Mounier. In other words, the personal being is one that does not close itself down according to the model of things, but opens itself up to the other. As with Marcel and Barth, for Mounier the model of such openness to others is to be found in Jesus Christ, and more specifically in the Incarnation. Furthermore, again in line with their thinking, for Mounier the Incarnation places history at the heart of thought: “Christianity was to graft human history into the very heart of divine life, through the mediation of Christ incarnate.” But, while Marcel tends to dichotomize problem and mystery, thereby separating the history of salvation from secular history, Mounier begins with the human being as maker: “the nature of man is artifice.”

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The creative potential of the human being is not to be found only in art, poetry, and metaphysics, as Marcel seems to imply, but in the banality of the instrumental world. For the Christian, then, no dichotomies are possible, not even one between the spirit and technology. In this respect Mounier quotes Bergson against Marcel in affirming the inner dialectic of machine and mysticism, problem and mystery. For Mounier, technology is an extension of the body and as such cannot be divorced from the Christian dialectic of body and spirit, implicit in the doctrines of the Incarnation and Resurrection. The exploitation of nature Mounier understands in terms of this dialectic of matter and consciousness as an opening up of the highest possibilities of humanity. But this is not to be understood as a possession of nature, but rather as its humanization rooted in the relation of naming affirmed in Genesis (PER 13). “To deny nature as given [in order] to affirm it as work [œuvre],” he says (PER 12). As he puts it further, “Nature is not the property of the human being, but a sort of natural sacrament which contributes to the turning towards God, as he contributes himself to the orientating of nature to God.” In this respect, Mounier makes an anti-Jansenist affirmation of the world. Quoting St. Paul, he states that the Christian must be in the world as if not of the world, but he stresses the first part of the sentence, namely being in the world. Politically this found expression in his Christian socialism; but more fundamentally it meant an understanding of the relation of transcendence and immanence as one of mixture in which all dichotomies are reduced neither to monistic materialism or spiritualism (Mounier affirms clearly that personalism is not spiritualism [PER 10]), nor to any dualism, but rather to the body as the expression of personal being.

Understood in this way, Christianity, far from being an obstacle to progress, is its richest expression. Progress, as Mounier understands it, cannot be non-teleological: progress is always toward something, hence the idea of indeterminate progress is a *contradictio in adiecto*. It is only in terms of a history of salvation that progress makes sense. This salvation, however, needs to be understood not in individual, but rather in collective, or even cosmic, terms (PER 64). Salvation is being understood here in terms of the “glory of God,” which marks the end of

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29. Jansenism was a movement within the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that was particularly strong in France. In its heyday, it was associated with the Port Royal philosophers and theologians such as Arnaud and Pascal. Jansenism stressed human depravity and the need for grace in order to reach salvation. Jansenist thinking remained strong in France well into the eighteenth century.
history as the final reconstituted unity of God, history, and the human race. “The idea of certain solidarity between the fate of the universe and the destiny of man was already familiar to the Fathers of the Church.”

The problem of modernity is not so much its belief in progress, but in its misconception of the nature of progress. Such a misconception poses serious dangers, which were, for Mounier, particularly apparent with the rise of fascism. The key term in his analysis of this danger was “person.”

III. THE “PARADOX OF PERSONAL EXISTENCE”

“[B]eing a person in view of the present threat to man from the material world and its organization” was the major focus of personalist philosophy from Scheler through Mounier and beyond. The place of the person was at the forefront of the movement in France that led to the founding of the periodical Esprit. We need first of all to become clear on this very concept of “person.” Mounier, along with Marcel and later Ricoeur and Levinas, distinguished person from self in the sense of the self-same. In Mounier’s terms, such a distinction can best be understood in relation to the “paradox of personal existence.”

The “paradox of personal existence” Mounier understands as the fact that being a person is the most human form of existence but is one that must be incessantly conquered (PER xix). This paradox is not accidental but essential to personhood, as a person is a free and creative existence. For this reason, unlike objects, persons cannot be defined. For Mounier, a classic philosophical mistake is to understand persons in terms of objects. This mistake he finds in Hegel, whose system he conceives as an imperialism of the impersonal order (PER xxiv). The impersonal order is that of objects, systems, and forseeability. Such an order fails to understand movement. For Mounier, under the influence of Bergson, movement is that which can neither be quantified nor predicted. Fundamentally, movement is not locomotion, but rather the movement of personalization of the person (PER 19). This movement lies at the core of the paradox of personal existence: the person is never manifest in the totality of its

34. In this respect Mounier echoes Sartre’s slogan of “existence precedes essence,” but in fact his affirmation of the person has more in common with Rosenzweig’s statement that the distinctiveness of a man is not accidental, but his essence. Cf. Rosenzweig, The Star of Redemption, 64.
existence; rather the in itself – en soi – of the person is what Mounier calls the secret (PER 35–6). At the core of the person is that which is secreted, that which does not appear, which remains foreign to the world. The person is in this sense not in the order of being at all. Rather, the “person is more a presence than a being, an active presence without basis [sans fond]” (PER 35). Such personal existence we discover not through an analysis of objects in the world, but rather by recollection or meditation (recueillement), which is a relation to itself beyond the distractions of the world. Such meditation is the coming to understanding of the singular presence of the person, which I can only know from within. The person’s relation to the world derives from this inner knowledge and is first manifest in the sense of modesty. Mounier understands modesty as the sentiment of the person that his manifest existence is not to be taken as his total existence. In this sense, physical modesty is not rooted in any sense of the impurity of the body, but rather in the person’s sense that he – as an incarnate being – is infinitely more than his body as perceived and seen (PER 35–6).

Much of this account has commonalities with the analysis we find in Sartre. One is reminded specifically of Sartre’s account of nudity and gracefulness in Being and Nothingness.35 The distinction between person and object reminds us also of the Sartrean dichotomy of pour soi and en soi. However, the implications that Mounier derives from this are quite different and these can be seen if we look at his accounts of freedom and of vocation. “Freedom is not welded [rivée] to a personal being as a condemnation, it is offered to him as a gift” (PER 58, translation modified).36 The reference to Sartre here is clear: for Mounier, freedom is not the negating power to nihilate, but rather is the gift of the capacity to value. Mounier recognizes in nature two forms of freedom: that of indifference and that of the indetermination (PER 54–5). The former is a type of freedom that human beings can never fully realize. The latter, which is present at the molecular level, is not genuine freedom but does lay the precondition of freedom in that it opens up domains of choice. Only the person is, however, truly free and that freedom is fundamental to the inner movement that is characteristic of the person. This freedom is not a freedom of choice in the Sartrean sense. Mounier furthers Bergson’s insight into the abstract nature of choice by emphasizing the centrality of value to freedom. My freedom begins with the sense of the freedom of the other. Faced with that freedom, I am faced not with an object but with a value, or rather with the affirmation of value. I discover my freedom in my response to that affirmation of value. The free human being in

36. “La liberté n’est pas rivée à l’être personnel comme une condamnation elle lui proposée comme un don.”
that sense is the responsible human being (PER 64).37 Freedom is in the encountering of that which is other to me. It begins with that encounter with being and is manifest in an affirmation of being. Against Sartre, Mounier claims that only thus can one sensibly speak of being in a situation: for Sartre, nothing is ever encountered, because freedom as he conceives it “creates the obstacle itself, and never comes against ultimate limits.”38 As such, for Mounier, “it is ultimately useless to talk about the notion of situation if the concept of encounter with it is eliminated.”39 Understood as response to an encounter with being, freedom, Mounier affirms, is always situated. Its situatedness is not simply negative, in the sense of being a limitation to freedom: freedom is liberation, it involves a movement toward the other – a movement of personalization of the world and of myself. In that sense freedom does not isolate, it rather unites, indeed it is “religion” and “devotion” in the original sense of those words (ibid.). Freedom is, in this sense, responsibility toward another and toward oneself. Both these senses of responsibility are captured by the notion of vocation.

For all the emphasis on the secrecy and inner life of the person, Mounier is clear that the person as incarnate being is both inner and outer. As he puts it: “the person is an inside which has need of the outside” (PER 44). This outer movement Mounier understands as desire. In her desire the person discovers her vocation. Such vocation is not something solitary; rather, it truly expresses freedom as a permanent devotion. It is permanent devotion to what Mounier calls three “united societies” (society being understood as being in relation to specific kinds of being, of which relations with fellow humans only constitute one): under her, the society of matter; beside her, the society of fellow human beings; and above her, the totality of spirit.40 The singularity of each person consists in the manner in which she responds to each of these calls, the manner in which in the freedom of her response she values matter, the mixture of matter and spirit, and spirit. These calls are, for Mounier, calls to love as devotion. Such love finds its exemplar in God, specifically in the creative acts of God. Creatio ex nihilo, for Mounier, expresses a supreme being characterized by an infinite capacity for singular acts of love.41 Such creative acts are free as loving, not as violent, affirmations of the self. Above all, the singularity of love is reflected in vocation, which is never generalizable. At the same time, vocation, like love, is

37. There are parallels here with Marcel. To quote again from Ricoeur’s conversation with Marcel, he says to Marcel: “For you, the freedom of response goes beyond the freedom of choice” (Tragic Wisdom and Beyond, 241).
39. Ibid., 104.
40. Mounier, L’Engagement de la foi, 17.
41. Ibid., 9.
unifying. Indeed, for Mounier, the renouncing of one of the threefold vocations toward the societies mentioned above is materialism. “Materialism” is not, in this understanding, a reduction of reality to matter, but rather the displacing of matter from its proper place in reality. The human vocation is to devote oneself to matter as that which expresses divinity, creation. This expression begins with the body itself. This Mounier terms “Christian extremism,” an extremism of the Incarnation: “it always chooses in the real and for the real.” Vocation is found at its ultimate in the saint. The saint lives the threefold call of devotion and does so in the singularity of his own being. The saint takes his exemplar in Christ, not in the world. This requires an openness to the secrecy of the heart in which Mounier affirms, quoting St. Paul, God reveals his son in me.

IV. THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

In the figure of the saint is expressed one of the key problems of religion in twentieth century thought, namely the relation of religion – or more specifically, in terms of Europe, the relation of Christianity and Judaism – to the world, or more specifically the modern world. Although this issue had institutional, political, and communicative aspects, it concerned in the first instance the deeply “metaphysical” problem of the relation of the visible to the invisible, something manifest within the churches themselves. Already Aquinas pointed out that the term “church” had an equivocal meaning: both the physical building (and by extension the visible institutions) and the spiritual people of God on their (spiritual) journey. In the wake of the liberal theology of the nineteenth century (and to a lesser extent the modernist movement in the Roman Catholic Church), a strong reaction against the perceived reduction of the invisible to the visible is evident in religious and theological thinking in Germany and France. We have already discussed this in terms of Rosenzweig’s and Barth’s accounts of revelation. According to the latter, the fatal move in eighteenth-century theology occurred in the work of Johann Franz Buddeus, for whom religion was not

42. Ibid. 24.
43. Ibid., 202. See Galatians 1.15–16. Louis Lavelle, the successor of Bergson at the Collège de France and a contributor to Esprit, engaged in a striking meditation on the figure of the saint in a book published in 1951 entitled The Meaning of Holiness. Lavelle stressed in respect to the saint, as does Mounier, the intersection of transcendence and immanence: “holiness belongs to eternity – but to eternity which is incarnate in time” (Louis Lavelle, The Meaning of Holiness, Dorothea O’Sullivan [trans.] [London: Catholic Book Club, 1956], 24).
44. Johann Franz Buddeus (1666–1729), a Lutheran theologian who taught at Jena, is best known for his critique of Spinoza. Although an orthodox Lutheran, his thought was strongly influenced by Pietism.
Religion and ethics

to be understood in the light of revelation, but rather revelation in the light of religion.\textsuperscript{45} Religion understood as a human, historically specific phenomenon now became the site of revelation. On that basis the question of the religion of Christ could meaningfully be asked and a gap opened up (as it was by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing) between the faith of Christ and the faith in Christ. Out of this, for Barth, arose the increasing dependence of nineteenth-century theology on the philosophy of religion and, indeed, methodologically, it led to the situation in which theology allowed itself to be told by philosophy, history, and the natural sciences what the free investigation of truth really is.\textsuperscript{46} In such a situation, religion becomes one cultural phenomenon among others, and Christianity a subset of that cultural phenomenon. What is lost here, for Barth, is the specificity of revelation. In opposition to this, Barth states: “Revelation is understood only where we expect from it, and from it alone, the first and last word about religion.”\textsuperscript{47} Christianity in this sense is not the fulfillment of religion, but rather that which abolishes religion – or rather that which sublates religion (Barth’s term is \textit{Aufhebung}) into that which is open to justification from without. Religion is constantly falling into idolatry, but such a judgment of idolatry is possible only in the light of revelation. The light of revelation is an invisible light, is the light of the sovereign act of God, which act however can only be understood in its relation to human beings: the “Word of God” addressed to humanity.

Even for those who would not draw such radical consequences as Barth, the problem of the relation of the visible and the invisible is one that exercised religious thinkers of this time. The Kierkegaardian critique of visible Christianity in the name of the invisible became a dominant theme. Concurrently, especially within Roman Catholicism, the intersection of the visible and invisible became thematic, finding particular expression in the theology of the “mystical body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{48}

The problem that many theologians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, set themselves – and a problem, that we find also in such thinkers as Simone

\textsuperscript{45} Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics} I.2, 288–9.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 293.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 295.
\textsuperscript{48} The notion of the “body of Christ” as that in which all members of the Christian church participates goes back to St. Paul (cf., e.g., Ephesians 5.22–32). The term “mystical body of Christ” is more recent, dating probably from the twelfth century. In our period, a theology of the mystical body of Christ was developed by the German theologian Karl Adams and was received enthusiastically in the French-speaking Roman Catholic world through the work of Yves Congar. For Mounier, this theology was one of collectivism, of the person understood not as individual but in his ethical and political responsibility as participating in an invisible, because spiritual and supernatural, destiny. (Cf. Hellman, \textit{Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left}, 49–50).
Weil,49 Mounier, Marcel – was how to understand the intersection of the natural and the supernatural beyond inherited dichotomies. Fundamental to this was the question of grace. Traditionally in Christian thinking there is a tension between nature and grace based in the gratuitousness of the loving gift of God. Henri de Lubac,50 in a breakthrough work, called into question the then pervasive concept of “pure nature.”51

Within Roman Catholic theology, a dominant manner of understanding the relation of nature and grace was through the postulation of a “pure nature.” Pure nature refers to the human being with a body and rational soul, which have purely natural capacities and a purely natural end. This natural end would be the love of God, but the love of God as the author of that nature and those capacities. In theological terms, this pure nature is a construct; such a human being for most Roman Catholic theologians never actually existed. The human being that does in fact exist has a supernatural destiny, a destiny that has a source beyond the visible world, beyond that world that corresponds to its capacities. The point of this construct, though, is to emphasize the gratuitousness of grace: such a nature would have no knowledge of, and would not in any way be owed, a supernatural destiny. But implicit in this concept is a certain dichotomy of natural and supernatural that allows a – if only notional – separation of the visible realm of natural capacities from the invisible realm of grace. Such a separation is shown by de Lubac to have served a profound methodological purpose in modernity. The force of de Lubac’s argument is, in the first place, historical: to show that the notion of pure nature is a modern one, which has been read back into Aquinas by modern Thomists. De Lubac quotes Maritain as maintaining that:

in the time of William of Vair and Charron, and later of Descartes, it was as though thinkers who were still Christian had thought up a purely natural man whose duty was to philosophize, and upon

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49. Simone Weil (February 3, 1909–August 24, 1943; born in Paris, France; died in Ashford, England) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1928–31). Her influences included Émile Chartier (“Alain”), Buddhism, and Hinduism, and she held appointments at lycées in Le Puy, Auxerre, Roanne, and Bourges (1931–36).

50. Henri de Lubac (February 20, 1896–September 4, 1991) was ordained to the Catholic priesthood (Jesuit) in 1927, and studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome (1928). He held appointments at the Catholic University of Lyon (1929–61), and the College of Cardinals (1983–91).

51. De Lubac’s book *Surnaturel*, published in 1946, caused a major debate in Roman Catholic theological circles by questioning the concept of “pure nature.” I will rely solely on his later (1965) book *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, which responds to (and takes account) of the main contributions to this debate. Hereafter de Lubac’s *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, Rosemary Sheed (trans.) (London: Chapman, 1967) will be cited as MSN.
whom was superimposed a man with the theological virtues and a duty to merit heaven. (Quoted in MSN 233–4)

This allows the separation of theology from other disciplines and the evacuation of theology from the realm of the human considered in terms of such a nature, which although theologically hypothetical reflects very well the presupposition of modern anthropology.

De Lubac argues in response for the reintegration of the natural and the supernatural, the visible and the invisible. He rejects the methodological move of constructs such as pure nature. For one thing such constructs presuppose a dichotomy of nature and supernatural even when theologians go on to deny the actuality of such a dichotomy. Second, the hypothesis, although possible, concerns as he says another universe and one that is not constituted by God’s call. To place oneself in a universe in which one is not destined to see God is, de Lubac affirms, impossible: “You may put into this hypothetical world a man as like me as you can, but you cannot put me into it” (MSN 77). He goes on to say that between those two people (the man like me and me) there is a difference in nature. In other words, the place to begin in understanding the gratuitousness of grace is in its concrete reality. This concrete reality de Lubac understands as the dynamic of call and desire. The desire to see God is not an accident, but rather is essential to human nature as constituted by God’s call. This call is a call to finality, that is, a call to fulfillment of the nature of each person. “As soon as I exist … no other finality … seems possible for me than that which is now really inscribed in the depths of my nature; there is only one end and therefore I bear within me, consciously or otherwise, a ‘natural desire’ for it” (MSN 72).52

Yet despite this, de Lubac emphasizes the distance between the natural and the supernatural: “between nature as it exists and the supernatural for which God destines it, the distance is as great, the difference as radical, as that between non-being and being” (MSN 107). Similarly to Rosenzweig, de Lubac distinguishes here between creation and revelation: through creation human beings are brought into being, but by grace they are called to their final supernatural end. To understand how these two belong together, it is necessary to see the nature of the gift involved. De Lubac is quick to deny the analogy with gift giving: in gift giving, the giver and the receiver preexist; in the divine gift, he says, quoting Marcel, “all is gift. He who receives the gift is himself the first gift

52. Karl Rahner makes a similar point using the vocabulary of the personal being: “it is precisely the essence of the personal being (his paradox without which he cannot be understood) that he is ordained to personal communion with God in love (by nature) and must receive just his love as free gift” (“Concerning the Relationship Between Nature and Grace,” in Theological Investigations, vol. 1, Cornelius Ernest [trans.] [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961], 305).
he receives” (MSN 100). But the gift of creation does not necessitate the gift to a supernatural destiny. As created, human beings have a capacity for the supernatural, but this capacity de Lubac compares to a birthplace rather than a seed or embryo (MSN 109). The natural capacity is not a disposition, indeed the supernatural end is “natural to [the human being] without being naturally accessible to him” (MSN 110). This is not a faculty but rather an “aptitudo passiva” (ibid.). The desire for God, although a natural inclination, is not an inclination sufficient or appropriate to its object (MSN 111). It depends rather on the sovereign action of God: grace.

Within the visible the invisible is traced. This is, for de Lubac, inherent in creation itself. He quotes Bonaventure in saying that creation is double (duplicis est creatio): once as nature, then as grace. This doubling is manifest in the human being, who “was not created to remain within the bounds of nature” (MSN 141). This means that any natural account of the human, any cosmological account, that is, any account that places the human being in the world and only in the world, loses sight of that destiny embedded in the deepest desire of the human being – a desire essential to human nature (MSN 142).53

This appeal to the transcendent as that which cannot be suspended – even methodologically – in considering the human suggests that in every sphere of existence there is at work in the immanent world an invisible instance, an instance understood as vocation, as call and response. The denial of that call is at all times possible, but it is a denial that places the human being against its own nature.

V. CONCLUSION: THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE

With Levinas’s publication of Totality and Infinity in 1961, a new era of philosophy was opened up, although this became apparent only much later.54 Although his initial breakthrough was characterized by Levinas himself in terms of a reversal of the priority of ontology over ethics, ethics in Levinas’s sense is that space opened up by transcendence. The force of Levinas’s thought is to reaffirm the priority of transcendence and the positivity of the infinite. The affirmation of transcendence (variously understood) – against the immanentist tendencies of modernity – is evident in each of the thinkers we have looked at. In each of them (and in others whom, for lack of space, we have not touched on), the

53. Here he says, “there is something in man, a certain capacity for the infinite, which makes it impossible to consider him one of those beings whose whole nature and destiny are inscribed in the cosmos.”
54. This era is often termed that of “new phenomenology.”
irreducibility of discourse about the divine to worldly discourse means that there is manifest in human desire an excess, one that is without ground. This excess we can, without distortion, term the ethical. To understand the human purely rationally is to do so in a discourse sufficient to itself. But such a discourse has no need of the other, no need to listen, no need for vocation. Vocation is not the determination of a plan of life, but rather the answering of a call from elsewhere. Such a rupturing call “cuts across vision,” in other words, throws vision back on itself, exposing its pretensions to self-sufficiency. While vision commands, the ear in attending to the vocation waits. Waiting, Weil tells us, is not passivity, but the act of attention. “Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached … thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it.” Such openness, for Weil, is not confined to a private piety of faith, but rather is essential to all truth, because only through attention does an object disclose itself to the one who studies it. In that sense, all knowledge aims at prayer, which is “attention … directed towards God.” Attention is an act constituted by its own insufficiency. Such insufficiency, however, is not divorced (any more by Barth than by Marcel or Mounier or de Lubac) from the ontological – the natural, the visible, the fallen – but only from an ontology not informed by the religious impulse of transcendence. Indeed, this religious impulse, this impulse of receptivity towards the self-revealing, is understood in this period from different standpoints as liberating the question concerning the human from totalizing systems; in this way the human is made manifest in response to a vocation, a vocation that constitutes not a utopian projection, nor even a prescription, but rather the very being of the person.

MAJOR WORKS

Karl Barth


57. Ibid., 59.

Henri de Lubac


Franz Rosenzweig


Emmanuel Mounier


Simone Weil

We are able to come to understand the philosophy of the concept only in its opposition to a philosophy of consciousness or a philosophy of the subject. In a way, we must even say that the philosophy of the concept is defined by this very opposition. And, as Saussure’s linguistics shows, where language is made of “differences without positive terms,” neither of the terms seem to make sense without the other. Moreover, both the philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of the subject maintain a certain amount of indeterminacy. In particular, the opposite of the philosophy of the concept can be called either a philosophy of consciousness or a philosophy of the subject. The opposition first appears in the last lines of Jean Cavaillès’s posthumous work, “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” which was not published until 1947. But then, one has to wait for Georges Canguilhem’s reference to Cavaillès, in the 1960s, for this opposition to really impose its mark on French philosophy. From then on, this opposition

1. Jean Cavaillès (May 15, 1903–February 17, 1944; born in Saint-Maixent (Deux-Sèvres, Poitou-Charentes), France; died in Arras) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1923–26) and the Sorbonne (1926–27). His influences included Brunschvicg and Husserl, and he held appointments at the École Normale Supérieure (1931–35), lycée in Amiens (1937), the University of Strasbourg (1938–41), and the Sorbonne (1941).

2. Georges Canguilhem (June 4, 1904–September 11, 1995; born in Castelnaudary, Languedoc, France; died in Marley-le-Roi) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1924–28). His influences included Bergson, Paul Bernard, and Nietzsche, and he held lycée appointments in Charleville (1929–30), Albi (1930–31), Douai (1932–33), Valenciennes (1933–35), Béziers (1935–36), and Toulouse (1936–40), then appointments at the University of Strasbourg (relocated to Clermont-Ferrand, 1941–45; in Strasbourg, 1945–48), and as Inspecteur Générale de Philosophie (1948–55), Director of the Institut d’Histoire des Sciences et des Technique and Chair in the History of Philosophy of Science at the Sorbonne (1955–71).
structures French philosophy of the 1960s and 1970s. Canguilhem’s texts are very much polemical, and they are intended to defend Michel Foucault and early structuralism against phenomenology. The debate between structuralism and phenomenology then becomes omnipresent in French philosophical circles to the point that, as contemporaries relate, one had to be on the side of the concept or on that of the subject: there was no way out. Later still, Foucault gives a wider scope to this opposition. Underneath the opposition, Foucault states, there are two tendencies that have shaped philosophy in France since the Enlightenment: experience and science. However, the opposition between the concept (science) and the subject (experience) seems to disappear from the philosophical debate in the 1980s. Philosophers today may appeal to the philosophy of the concept, Alain Badiou for example, or to the philosophy of the subject, as Jean-Michel Salanskis does. But the opposition now remains marginal, and the appeal to the concept or to the subject is understood as referring to a tradition rather than a contemporary debate.

Insofar as the opposition between philosophy of the concept and philosophy of consciousness or of the subject was based in a polemic, the opposing categories seemed to shift and remain vague. Nevertheless, the opposition is not meaningless. One might even be tempted to characterize the French philosophical tradition by the very existence of this opposition. Indeed, it seems to catch a particular tradition of philosophy. For example, the opposition would make no sense in the context of German idealism. Thinking of Kant or Hegel, one cannot oppose the concept and the consciousness. Similarly, the opposition would work neither in analytical philosophy nor in American pragmatism. The simple possibility of opposing consciousness to concepts seems to be peculiar to this period of French philosophy (roughly from 1947 to 1985). One can de facto offer this (nominal) definition of French thought as a set a philosophies that should be able to be categorized under “philosophy of the concept” or “philosophy of the subject.” One thing is clear, however. During this period, the idea of a philosophy of the concept expresses a response to phenomenology. But as we just mentioned, neither of the terms is well defined by itself, and the philosophy of consciousness does not unequivocally refer to phenomenology. On one side, we must include doctrines such as Léon Brunschvicg’s (1869–1944) “critical

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3. Pierre Macherey, in personal conversation with the author.
4. See, for example, Alain Badiou, *Logic of Worlds*, Alberto Toscano (trans.) (London: Continuum, 2009), 7–8, with a remarkable shift in the names associated with the two opposed traditions.
idealism,” doctrines that are not related to phenomenology; and, on the other side, we would be hard pressed to decide whether to include certain philosophies heavily influenced by phenomenology within a philosophy of consciousness or, even, a philosophy of the subject. Nevertheless, it is clear that the perspective of building an alternative philosophy to phenomenology is at the center of the idea of philosophy of the concept.

The aim of this essay is to analyze the idea of a philosophy of the concept and the opposition to phenomenology that it represents. In this perspective, we will study three texts, by Cavaillès, Canguilhem, and Foucault. We will first simply present these texts, going backward from Foucault to Canguilhem and Cavaillès. We will then discuss in greater detail the meaning of the philosophy of the concept in Cavaillès, in order to understand better the different moves that then enable Canguilhem and Foucault to give a wider meaning to the opposition between the concept and the subject. As we will see, there are three steps involved in the development of this opposition (represented by Cavaillès, Canguilhem, and Foucault). But these three steps make the opposition unstable. It then becomes quite difficult to extend the opposition to the philosophical positions found in subsequent twentieth-century French thought, in particular, those of Deleuze and the later Merleau-Ponty.

I. THREE STEPS IN THE DEFINITION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CONCEPT

It is Foucault who gives the widest scope to the opposition between the philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of the subject. Paradoxically, the Foucault text that summarizes this division in French philosophy, during the 1960s and 1970s, was first published in English in 1978. It is the introduction that Foucault gives to the first English translation of Canguilhem’s *The Normal and the Pathological*. Foucault’s article would be published in French only in 1985, after Foucault’s death, in a volume of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* dedicated to the work of Canguilhem. At the very beginning, Foucault draws a line that “separates a philosophy of experience, of sense and of subject and a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality and of concept. On the one hand, one network is that of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty; and then another is that of

*6. For a discussion of Brunschvicg, see the essay by Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capiellères in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.*

*7. For more on Merleau-Ponty, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in this volume. For more on Deleuze, see the essay by Daniel W. Smith in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*
Cavaillès, Bachelard, and Canguilhem.” The revised French text is more detailed than the English translation:

[C’est une ligne] qui sépare une philosophie de l’expérience, du sens, du sujet et une philosophie du savoir, de la rationalité et du concept. D’un côté, une filiation qui est celle de Sartre et Merleau-Ponty; et puis une autre, qui est celle de Cavaillès, de Bachelard, de Koyré et de Canguilhem. Sans doute, ce clivage vient de loin et on pourrait en faire remonter la trace à travers le XIXème siècle: Bergson et Poincaré, Lachelier et Couturat, Maine de Biran et Comte.

The English translation would be:

[this is a line] that separates a philosophy of experience, of sense and of subject, and a philosophy of knowledge, of rationality and of concept. On the one hand, one filiation is that of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty; and then another is that of Cavaillès, Bachelard, Koyré, and Canguilhem. Probably, the separation dates from far back and one can trace it through the twentieth century: Bergson and Poincaré, Lachelier and Couturat, Maine de Biran and Comte.9

Later, we will discuss the remark on phenomenology that in the English text replaces the last sentence of the French text. In both texts however, the “concept” and the “subject” are inscribed in wider sets of terms, “experience, meaning, and subject” on one side, and “knowledge, rationality, and concept” on the other. In addition, in the French text at least, these opposite sets of terms are taken to

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8. Michel Foucault, “Introduction,” in Georges Canguilhem, The Normal and the Pathological, Carolyn R. Fawcett, in collaboration with Robert S. Cohen (trans.) (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 8. This essay was revised and first published in French as “La Vie: L’Expérience et la science,” in Revue de métaphysique et de morale (January 1985); it was reprinted in Dits et écrits, Daniel Defert and François Ewald (eds) (Paris: Gallimard NRF, 1994), vol. 4. The quote in French that follows can be found in Dits et écrits, 764.

[*] For more on Sartre, see the essays by S. K. Keltner and Samuel J. Julian, and William L. McBride in this volume.

Gaston Bachelard (June 27, 1884–October 16, 1962; born in Bar-sur-Aube, Champagne, France; died in Paris) was educated at the Collège de Bar-sur-Aube (1919–22), and received a doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1929. He held appointments at the Collège de Bar-sur-Aube (1919–30); Faculté des Lettres de Dijon (1930–40), and the Sorbonne (1940–55).

describe two deep trends in French philosophy, which, as Foucault adds a few lines below, date from the Enlightenment. These two remarks are enough to distinguish Foucault’s view from that of Canguilhem.

Canguilhem’s comments on the opposition “concept versus subject” appear in a series of texts on Cavaillès from the 1960s. Intended for the general public, these texts are not strictly academic. Here is one example taken from a speech given for the inauguration of the amphitheatre Jean Cavaillès at the Sorbonne. Canguilhem refers to the posthumous work of Cavaillès, “On Logic and the Theory of Science”. In fact, it is Canguilhem himself who gave the title to this manuscript, which Cavaillès had simply left as his “philosophical testament.” Before we look at this passage, we should recall the historical context behind Canguilhem’s statements. Active in the underground since the French capitulation in 1940, Cavaillès created and led an important resistance group. He was first arrested in 1943. He wrote his posthumous work while in prison. He escaped but was arrested a second time and, eventually, was shot by the Nazis in 1944.¹⁰ These actions made Cavaillès very famous. So, now let us look at what Canguilhem says:

This text [“On Logic and the Theory of Science”] ends with several pages which seemed at first enigmatic to most of us. But we can understand today that the enigma was an announcement. Twenty years in advance, Cavaillès delineated the task that philosophy is now taking up: to substitute the primacy of the concept, the system, or the structure, for the primacy of lived or reflected consciousness. And it happens that this philosopher [Cavaillès] who does not believe in history in the existential sense, refutes in advance, by the actions he led while feeling that he was being led, by his carnal participation in history and by his historical death, the existentialist argument of those who try today to discredit what they call “structuralism” by condemning it to engender, among other misdeeds, a passivity before what has been accomplished.¹¹

¹⁰. For more details, see the biography of Cavaillès by his sister, Gabrielle Ferrière, Jean Cavaillès: A Philosopher in Time of War, T. N. F. Murtagh (trans.) (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

¹¹. Georges Canguilhem, “Inauguration de l’amphithéâtre Jean Cavaillès,” in Jean Cavaillès, Œuvres complètes de philosophie des sciences (Paris: Hermann, 1994), 674. The French is: “Et il se trouve que ce philosophe qui ne croit pas à l’histoire, au sens existentiel, réfute par avance, par l’action qu’il mène en se sentant mené, par sa participation charnelle à l’histoire et par sa mort historique, l’argument existentialiste de ceux qui cherchent aujourd’hui à discréditer ce qu’ils appellent le structuralisme en le condamnant à engendrer, entre autres méfaits, la passivité devant l’accompli.”
Canguilhem relies on both Cavaillès’s actions and his philosophy in order to defend early structuralism. An argument against structuralism, broadly speaking, could be that, by putting aside the subject, one loses the ground for moral responsibility. That is, if the person is only an effect of the structure, he cannot be responsible for his action. And therefore all philosophy can do is observe the structures and their changes: “passivity before what has been accomplished.” Canguilhem’s answer to this criticism is clear: Cavaillès holds a philosophical position similar to that of structuralism (we will return to this similarity), but he still felt a moral demand. The feeling led him to actions, which the existentialists had not done. Canguilhem himself was active in the underground. His speech continues in this way:

Today some philosophers cry with indignation because certain other philosophers have formed the idea of a philosophy without a personal subject. The philosophical work of Jean Cavaillès may be called upon in order to support this idea. His mathematical philosophy was not built with reference to the subject who could be identified as Jean Cavaillès. This philosophy from which Jean Cavaillès is radically missing has commanded a form of action which led the philosopher through the narrow path of logic to the point from which one does not come back. Jean Cavaillès is the logic of resistance lived all the way up to death. Let the philosophers of the existence, of the person, do as much next time if they can.12

Canguilhem certainly uses an argument ad hominem. More generally, one could question to what extent the actions of a philosopher can be called on to support or undermine his or her philosophy. We will discuss later how Cavaillès’s philosophy, which only concerns mathematics, could appear to Canguilhem as “commending” a certain form of action.

In addition to being ad hominem, Canguilhem’s remarks are highly polemical, even more so than those of Foucault. They do not intend to give a historically accurate account of Cavaillès’s position in French philosophy. Their aim is both to praise the philosopher – for Cavaillès, shot by the Nazis, was certainly a hero – and to defend, in a heated polemic, structuralism. Cavaillès becomes the tutelary figure of structuralism, both theoretically and politically. Cavaillès here appears to give to structuralism both theoretical roots and a political caution. If we compare Canguilhem’s remarks with those of Foucault, we also see two differences. First, in opposition to the “concept,” Foucault speaks of the

“subject” and he associates it with two other terms, “experience” (*vécu*), and “meaning” (*sens*). Canguilhem speaks in turn of “consciousness,” “subject,” or “person.” The opposite of the “concept” is not always designated with the same term, as if the philosophy of the concept could not name its opponent. It is certainly significant that the philosophy of the concept does not always have the same meaning. Second, in Foucault’s text, the philosophy of the concept is a deep trend in philosophy in France, a trend that dates from the Enlightenment, whereas in Canguilhem’s texts, the philosophy of the concept appears as a new movement, a “task that philosophy is now taking up.” The meaning, and the importance, of the philosophy of the concept have changed from Canguilhem to Foucault. It has, by Foucault’s time, established itself and is looking for deeper roots.

But if we now go to the last lines of “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” to which Canguilhem refers in comments for the inauguration of the Cavaillès amphitheater, “the philosophy of the concept” seems more elusive. After a lengthy examination of Husserl’s phenomenology, which takes about half the book, Cavaillès argues for a “philosophy of the concept” against the “philosophy of consciousness.” This is what he says: “It is not a philosophy of consciousness but a philosophy of the concept that can give a theory of science [une doctrine de la science]. The generating necessity is not the necessity of an activity, but the necessity of a dialectic.” As Canguilhem notes, these lines are enigmatic. They end Cavaillès’s essay, without giving much information on the nature of this philosophy of the concept. And Cavaillès’s early death does not allow him to develop this project called a “philosophy of the concept” or, as he had written one year earlier, a “dialectic of concepts.” Our next task will be an examination of Cavaillès’s writings in order to understand his idea of a philosophy of the concept and its relationship to phenomenology. But we can say now, at the least, that these texts from Cavaillès, Canguilhem, and Foucault, indicate a progression, three steps in the constitution of a “philosophy of the concept”: (i) a project for Cavaillès; (ii) a contemporary movement for Canguilhem; (iii) an established trend for Foucault. They also show an ambiguity concerning the opposite of the philosophy of the concept: (i) a philosophy of “consciousness”; (ii) a philosophy of the “subject” or of the “person”; (iii) a philosophy of “experience, meaning and subject.”

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II. CAVALLÈS’S EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE CONCEPT

Our task now is to investigate at length the philosophy of the concept and the response to phenomenology that it underlies. Cavaillès’s first two books, which were his two doctoral theses, were published in 1938. His thèse complémentaire, Remarques sur la formation de la théorie abstraite des ensembles (Remarks on the formation of the abstract theory of sets), describes the development of Cantor’s theory from the early work in analysis up to the paradoxes. His primary thesis, Méthode axiomatique et formalisme (Axiomatic method and formalism), concerns the problem of the foundations of mathematics. It ends with Gödel’s theorem. Both books are historical studies. It is only in the conclusion of the second thesis (the last ten pages or so) that Cavaillès delineates a philosophical position. This position is still very much influenced by Brunschvicg, and Cavaillès himself acknowledges he has taken his model from Brunschvicg’s 1912 work, Les Étapes de la philosophie mathématique (The stages of mathematical philosophy).

The posthumous work, “On Logic and the Theory of Science”, takes a new turn. Abandoning the history of mathematics, Cavaillès aims here to investigate the philosophical tradition in order to find a philosophy that is faithful to mathematics. “On Logic and the Theory of Science” does not, however, set forth a philosophical theory. The book is purely critical. It only presents a tradition that ends with Husserl and, according to Cavaillès, one that calls for a philosophy of the concept, instead of Husserl’s philosophy of consciousness. To set up this movement, Cavaillès starts with Kant’s analysis of logic. As is well known, Kant defines logic as the science of the form of thought and he separates mathematics from logic since mathematics relies not on a logical analysis but on constructions in intuition. To prove that the sum of the angles of a triangle equals two right angles, the geometer does not analyze the concept of a triangle; he draws a figure and reasons on the basis of this figure. The status that Kant gives to logic leads to several difficulties. In particular there is the question of how one is to obtain the logical form from the concrete thought. Quite generally, Kant’s position opens up two paths for the philosophy of mathematics. On one side, one may emphasize that mathematical development is irreducible to logical analysis. One then comes to what Cavaillès calls the “philosophies of immanence,” Brouwer and Brunschvicg.14 On the other side, one may concentrate on logical

14. Luitzen Egbertus Jan Brouwer (1881–1966) was a Dutch mathematician best known for his work in topology and as the founder of the mathematical philosophy of intuitionism.
analysis and try to build a logic that would recapture mathematical development. On this side, one is led to Bolzano’s theory of science.\textsuperscript{15}

Cavaillès defers the critical examination of Brouwer and Brunschvicg’s positions. He mentions a single, but essential difficulty. In different ways, Brouwer and Brunschvicg put aside logic and analyze reflexively the acts of the consciousness that does mathematics. It is in this manner that they intend to account for the development of mathematics: by describing the acts of the subject. The question that Cavaillès then raises is how one passes from mathematics to consciousness. Mathematics does not speak of the acts of consciousness. So how, with what philosophical hypothesis, may one see in a mathematical development a series of subjective acts?

This discussion takes only one long paragraph. Instead of examining Brouwer and Brunschvicg’s positions more thoroughly, Cavaillès follows the second path, through Bolzano’s theory, which leads him eventually to logical positivism. The problem with logical positivism, according to Cavaillès, is the following. The aim of reducing mathematics to tautologies eliminates the need to refer mathematical propositions to an independent objectivity. However, logical positivism (like Hilbert’s program) uses a formalization of mathematics and metamathematical reasonings that considers mathematical signs as independent objects. Cavaillès argues that mathematical signs, signs as they are used in a mathematical activity, are the products of the history of mathematics. Therefore, logical positivism happens to reintroduce an independent objectivity in the foundations of mathematics, and the status of this objectivity (the objectivity of the signs) is far from clear. Logical positivism then calls for a general theory of the relationship between our acts, in mathematics, and their objects, and, according to Cavaillès, this is what Husserl’s phenomenology offers. So Cavaillès engages in a detailed examination of phenomenology, which takes about half of the entire book.

The last part of “On Logic and the Theory of Science” is one of the first discussions in French of Husserl’s phenomenology. From the viewpoint of the philosophy of mathematics, Cavaillès finds several points of disagreement with Husserl. But the point that leads up to the call for a philosophy of the concept is Husserl’s theory of history in his later writings, in particular, as it is found in “The Origin of Geometry.”\textsuperscript{16} As is well known, in “The Origin of Geometry,” Husserl discusses the nature of the history of mathematics by means of the example of geometry. Geometrical concepts are constituted on the basis of the lifeworld. What then happens in the development of geometry is that the orig-

\textsuperscript{15} Bernhard Bolzano (1781–1848) was a Czech logician whose work was a major influence on Brentano and Husserl.

inal meaning of the concepts is, to use Husserl's word, “sedimented.” The original meaning is, in a way, forgotten. It no longer appears in the way we use our concepts. However, it has not completely disappeared. It is still there but it is hidden, implicit in our geometry. Thus it is possible to reactivate the original meaning of geometrical entities. One does not need to study *in concreto* the history of geometry. One rather has, by a phenomenological analysis, to reenact the process of the constitution of geometrical entities. By reflection, one discovers the acts that first produced geometrical entities and, in this way, clarify their original meaning.

In the phenomenological view, the history of mathematics is a process of growth in which the foundations are “sedimented,” not reshaped but buried by progress. In a way, nothing changes. The past, the origin of geometry, is still present in our geometry. Cavaillès's contention is precisely that the history of mathematics shows changes, or a real becoming, where the past is literally erased from the present. For example, when a new theory is introduced that generalizes a former one, the meaning of the concepts is radically modified. The former concepts now appear as specifications of more general ones. Their original meaning is irremediably lost: “One of the essential problems of the doctrine of science is that progress itself may not be augmentation of volume by juxtaposition, in which the prior subsists with the new, but a continual revision of contents by deepening and eradication.” Cavaillès's conclusion is that the reflexive analysis, on which phenomenology is based, is of no interest for the understanding of the history of mathematics. What one must understand is the internal workings of the becoming of mathematics, the way in which concepts call for one another and transform themselves. This “dialectic” has nothing to do with an analysis of consciousness. As we have seen, “It is not a philosophy of consciousness but a philosophy of the concept that can give a theory of science. The generating necessity is not the necessity of an activity but the necessity of a dialectic.”

Although we understand better the movement leading up to a call for the philosophy of the concept, in fact what we have seen is a movement that splinters, with one branch ending with Husserl’s phenomenology, and the other with Brouwer’s and Brunschvicg’s positions, which also represent philosophies of consciousness. As we noted, in “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” Cavaillès does not discuss in detail their positions, but we can find elements that explain

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his rejection of Brunschvicg’s “critical idealism” in some of his other writings. Brunschvicg thinks that the foundation of mathematics lies in its history. In fact, “science [namely, mathematics] taken outside its history is an abstraction.”\textsuperscript{19} New methods, or new theories, always appear as answers to specific problems in the existing fields. They have, so to speak, a context. In fact, the various steps of the history of science have, in Brunschvicg’s epistemology, the same structure. There is an open problem. “Human reason,” in Brunschvicg’s words, invents a new concept, leading to a new theory. But this concept must then be verified in experience; in the case of mathematics, it must prove its fruitfulness in the existing theories, or, in the case of physical science, in the empirical world. The history of science is then a “dialogue,” a “mutual reaction” between human reason with its faculty of invention, and experience, where new concepts must be tested.\textsuperscript{20}

Like Bachelard, Cavaillès inherits Brunschvicg’s historical perspective. However, he will try to dispense with Brunschvicg’s reference to “human reason.” Already, in the 1938 thesis, Cavaillès argues that the history of mathematics has an “internal necessity.” That is, Cavaillès believes that new methods, or new theories deriving from them, are entirely determined by the open problems of the existing fields. Each step in the history of mathematics can be accounted for by considering the problems that were raised immediately before, as Cavaillès demonstrates with the example of Cantor’s set theory, which seems to stem from an attempt to solve certain problems in the analysis of Fourier series.\textsuperscript{21} Thus there is no need to refer to Brunschvicg’s “reason” or to any subjective motivations (such as the psychology of the mathematician). Cavaillès thus gives a kind of autonomy to the history of mathematics: since its development can be explained internally, by analyzing the open problems in the existing theories, one can consider the history of mathematics in abstraction from the fact that it is produced by mathematicians or that it may refer to something else (such as the physical world). It has an objectivity that is independent both of the physical world and of the human mind: “There is an objectivity of the becoming of mathematics, an objectivity that is itself grounded mathematically”,\textsuperscript{22} or:

Science [in fact, mathematics] is no longer considered as a simple intermediary between the human mind and being in itself, depend-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Léon Brunschvicg, \textit{Les Étapes de la philosophie mathématique} (Paris: Blanchard, 1912), 458, my translation.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, 574.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} In particular, “La Pensée mathématique,” in Cavaillès, \textit{Œuvres complètes de philosophie des sciences}, 600–601.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Cavaillès, “Remarques sur la formation de la théorie abstraites des ensembles,” in \textit{Œuvres complètes de philosophie des sciences}, 226, my translation.
\end{itemize}
ing as much on one as on the other, and not having its own reality. Now science is regarded as an object *sui generis*, original in its essence of its own, autonomous in its movement.23

The philosophy of mathematics then becomes the analysis of this historical development. We find against Brunschvicg a point similar to that made against Husserl, namely, that the philosophy of consciousness misses the main problem, which is to understand the “becoming” of mathematics, its necessity and its transformations. This necessity in mathematics cannot be accounted for by an analysis of our acts. It depends on relations internal to mathematics, between the concepts or between former problems and new methods.

A closer reading of Cavaillès's texts would certainly show other elements in his criticism of the philosophy of consciousness.24 Cavaillès questions the possibility of reflection on *lived-experience* (“vécu” in French, “Erlebnis” in German; “Erlebnis” is a key term of Husserl's phenomenology, usually rendered in English as “lived-experience,” but sometimes as “mental process”). Some of his analysis also seems to point toward a constitution of subjectivity through the historical development of mathematical concepts, therefore reversing the phenomenological perspective (which describes the constitution of concepts in subjectivity) and anticipating structuralism. However, the root of Cavaillès's rejection of the philosophy of consciousness lies, as we have seen, in the uselessness of the philosophy of consciousness: it cannot account for the becoming of mathematics.

We must add two remarks on Cavaillès. The first concerns his relationship with Spinoza. In his remarks at the inauguration of the amphitheater Jean Cavaillès, Canguilhem alluded to Cavaillès's Spinozism. However, the importance of Cavaillès’s reference to Spinoza does not come from his writings, but from a spoken remark to Raymond Aron. Although one may see a “Spinozistic atmosphere”25 in all of his writings, Cavaillès mentions the name “Spinoza” and the derivative “Spinozistic” only once. But, when summoned to explain his involvement in the underground, Cavaillès answers, “I am Spinozist. I believe in necessity. The necessity of mathematical inferences, the necessity of the history of mathematics, the necessity also of the struggle in which we are engaged.”26 In his *Ethics*, Spinoza posits two parallel developments, in the ideas that call

the philosophy of the concept

for one another, and in the things themselves that lead to one another. Now Cavaillès seems to relate the history of mathematics to the developments of ideas, in Spinoza’s system, and to allude to a parallel development in history itself. Therefore, just as mathematical problems require certain solutions, historical situations require certain actions. And, as the mathematician does what is required to solve an open problem, Cavaillès acts according to what the situation requires from him. This oral remark to Aron lies at the bottom of Canguilhem’s reference to Cavaillès. It, indeed, establishes a link (although not a necessary relation) between Cavaillès’s philosophy and his action during the war. In that sense, it seems indeed to refute the existentialists’ argument that a philosophy without subject was condemned to “passivity before what has been accomplished.” In fact, Spinoza, against Descartes, will remain the tutelary figure of the philosophy of concept. He will be particularly important for Althusser and his school.27

Our second remark concerns the importance that Cavaillès himself gives to the expression “philosophy of the concept” or “dialectic of concepts.” Although the call for a philosophy of the concept concludes what Cavaillès called his “philosophical testament,” it is not clear that it represents the center of Cavaillès’s outlook. Indeed, one year before writing “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” Cavaillès mentions in a shorter essay called “Transfini et continu” (Transfinite and continuation) that “The relationship between the dialectic of concepts and intuitive superposition remains the central problem of the philosophy of mathematics.”28 “Intuitive superposition” describes the way in which different modes of expression in mathematics – such as figures in geometry, formulas in logic or in algebras, the drawing of graphs in analysis – interact and, in this interaction, acquire meaning. The problem that Cavaillès raises concerns the attempt to understand how new concepts can, so to speak, “incarnate” themselves in new modes of expression. The mathematician does not invent a new concept, a new theory, and then devise a way to express the new domain of thought that he has opened. This is so because a concept, or a theory, can only be used, or is only truly possessed, when it is transcribed into an appropriate medium of expression. But how can a concept find its expression when one already needs this expression in order to truly possess the concept? In any case, in the passage we just quoted, the “dialectic of concepts” appears as only one level of the philosophy of mathematics, while a second level seems to be the study of the “intuitive superposition,”


that is, the study of transformations and interactions in the mathematical modes of expression. It could be that, in his last work, Cavaillès concentrates on one aspect of what is for him the full problem of the philosophy of mathematics. If so, one may doubt that the expression “philosophy of the concept” already had for Cavaillès the importance that it will acquire in the French postwar philosophy.

III. CANGUILHEM AND STRUCTURALISM

Whereas Cavaillès’s call for a philosophy of the concept expresses (at least in part) his later philosophical standpoint, Canguilhem’s analysis in the passage we quoted above is not clearly related to his own philosophy. In fact, the philosophy of the concept, in this passage, is basically identified with “structuralism.” The word “structuralism” could be deciphered by a whole array of philosophies that relate subjectivity to structures. To put this simply, “structuralism” would mean that the subject is considered as an effect of a structure. Against phenomenology, such a structuralism would claim that there are structures independent of the subject and that they determine our subjectivity. One can include under this structuralism authors such as Lacan, Althusser, and Foucault. This is not to say that these authors hold the same position. On the one hand, for example, although Althusser relates his concept of ideology back to Lacan, Althusser’s concept of “ideology” constitutes the subject in its very existence. The ideology, which means the implicit conceptual background of our society, is based on a process of “interpellation” (“hey you”), that gives rise to the existence of individuals. Indeed, Althusser never mentions a notion of subjectivity that would precede the ideological individuals that we are. On the other hand, Lacan recognizes a primordial “I,” the subject of the enunciation in “I think,” or “I lie.” This “I,” for Lacan, is devoid of content, and only gains its content through the imaginary and symbolic structures that are imposed on it by the Other. In the same way, Foucault’s The Order of Things describes the genesis of Man in the modern epistêmē, without touching on the existence of a subject.

*29. For further discussion of Althusser, see the essay by Warren Montag in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6; for Lacan, see the essay by Ed Pluth in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5; and for Foucault, see the essay by Timothy O’Leary in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.


As we seen, the philosophy of the concept, for Cavaillès, is a project, a philosophy that does not yet exist. For Canguilhem however, the philosophy of the concept is a self-asserting movement in contemporary philosophy. Besides, in “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” the call for a philosophy of the concept is first motivated by the inability of the philosophy of consciousness to understand the development, the very “becoming” of mathematics, even though Cavaillès may elsewhere intend to relate the constitution of the subject to the becoming of science. By Canguilhem’s time, this point – relating the constitution of the subject to the becoming of science – occupies the center of the “philosophy of the concept”: the constitution of the subject in structures that are independent of the subject. One could say that this point explains the shift in terminology from the philosophy of “consciousness,” in Cavaillès’s texts, to a philosophy of the “subject” or of the “person” in Canguilhem’s analysis. The “philosophy of consciousness” refers to a methodology. It refers to the idea of explaining the origin and the development of mathematics by a reflection on our acts. Above all, it is this methodology that Cavaillès rejects. Yet, the opposition between the philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of the “subject” puts into question, rather than the methodology, the fundamental domain of philosophy, the domain of being on which it bases its account. Thus, one may note differences and shifts between Cavaillès’s call for a philosophy of the concept and Canguilhem’s analysis. Nevertheless there is a marked continuity, and the authors of the “philosophy of the concept,” above all others, Althusser and Foucault, refer to Cavaillès.

IV. FOUCAULT’S AMBIGUITY

Foucault transforms more deeply the opposition between the philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of the subject. The philosophy of the concept, with Foucault, has become a deep trend of French philosophy, dating back to the Enlightenment. But let us look again at the name of the authors that, as we saw in the French version of the passage from his Introduction to Canguilhem’s The Normal and the Pathological, Foucault relates to the philosophy of the concept. It is hard to see how Poincaré and Bachelard could be said, in Cavaillès or Canguilhem’s sense, to side with the concept as opposed to the subject. As is well known, in his controversies with Couturat, Russell, or Hilbert, Poincaré stresses the role of the subject in mathematics.33 In particular, Poincaré argues

*33. Some of these controversies are discussed in the essay by Babette Babich in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
against nonpredicative definitions in arithmetic or analysis.\textsuperscript{34} Nonpredicative
definitions, which define an object by referring to the set to which the object
belongs (as in “the tallest tree of the forest”) presuppose, according to Poincaré,
that the objects exist independently of our definitions (just as trees in a forest
do). For, if one considers that objects are created by our definitions, there is a
circle in claiming to create an object on the basis of a collection in which the
object already appears. But nonpredicative definitions seem to lead to paradoxes.
This outcome is, for Poincaré, a sign that nonpredicative definitions are illegiti-
mate. Mathematical objects must be treated as the mathematician’s creations,
and that implies certain restrictions on mathematical rationality. Poincaré antici-
pates Brouwer’s intuitionism. He would be placed, in Cavaillès’s opposition, with
Brouwer on the side of the philosophy of consciousness.

In the same way, Bachelard is a direct heir of Brunschvicg. He takes up
Brunschvicg’s description of the history of science as a “dialogue” between
reason and experience.\textsuperscript{35} Reason invents new concepts that must be tested in
experience, as if Reason was asking questions to Experience, and Experience
answering by a yes or a no. It is true that Bachelard introduces a domain that
does not appear in Brunschvicg’s writings: the imagination. The prime objec-
tive of science, according to Bachelard, is to break with the imaginary, the poet-
ical description of the universe, and develop conceptual schemes that may be
precisely verified. In another series of writings, Bachelard analyzes in detail our
imagination, which is built around the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire.
Bachelard describes his two-sided philosophical project as a “bi-psychoanalysis”:
a psychoanalysis of science that describes its break with imagination, and a
psychoanalysis of imagination that describes science’s structure. Althusser will
relate his notion of ideology to Bachelard’s imagination. He will in particular
borrow the idea that science emerges from its prehistory (in imagination or in
ideology) by a break or by what Althusser calls an “epistemic cut.”\textsuperscript{36} However,
it is again clear that, in Cavaillès’s opposition or in Canguilhem’s opposition,
Bachelard would belong with Brunschvicg on the side of the philosophy of the
subject. The reference to “psychoanalysis,” in Bachelard’s project, confirms the
central character of the subject.

One must then conclude that Foucault gives a new meaning to the opposition
between concept and subject. But, in Foucault’s text, the opposition, although
it clearly refers to Canguilhem and Cavaillès, concerns a wider set of terms:
“experience, meaning, and subject,” on the one side, and “knowledge, rationality,

\textsuperscript{34} See Henri Poincaré, Science and Method, F. Maitland (trans.) (London: Thomas Nelson and
Sons, 1914).


\textsuperscript{36} Louis Althusser, “On the Materialist Dialectic,” in For Marx, Ben Brewster (trans.) (New York:
and concept” on the other. In fact, Foucault seems to conflate two different oppositions. He certainly takes up the opposition, inaugurated by Cavailléès, between the philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of consciousness. But Foucault brings together this first opposition with a second one: an opposition between a philosophy that aims at describing experience, at “bringing experience to expression,” in the words that Merleau-Ponty uses in *The Visible and the Invisible*, and a philosophy that rather sees itself as an analysis of knowledge, in its plurality, or an analysis of the history of science. In the English version of the quote from the Introduction to Canguilhem’s *The Normal and the Pathological*, immediately after the passage we quoted above, Foucault describes the second filiation, Cavailléès, Bachelard, and Canguilhem, as a completely different way to take up phenomenology, “heterogeneous” to the way Merleau-Ponty and Sartre had taken it up.\(^37\) However, it seems that, here, Foucault refers to the idea of phenomenology rather than to phenomenology’s classical texts. The examination of Husserl’s phenomenology, which takes up about half of “On Logic and the Theory of Science,” is certainly crucial for Cavailléès. But one would not make the same claim for Bachelard and Canguilhem. In fact, in the remainder of his article, Foucault opposes Canguilhem’s idea of the living with the lived-experience of phenomenology.\(^38\) Thus it seems that the second network, Cavailléès, Bachelard, and Canguilhem, if related to phenomenology, appear as a completely different way to do phenomenology, or a completely different acceptation of phenomenology. The analysis of knowledge played very little role in French phenomenology (in Sartre or Merleau-Ponty). This tradition of philosophies of science, which reconsidered experience in light of knowledge, offered a means to break with phenomenology.

Let us add two more remarks. First, if Foucault brings together two different oppositions – concept against subject, knowledge against experience – the examples of Poincaré and Bachelard show that the two oppositions are by no means equivalent. By conflating them, Foucault truly changes the opposition put in place in the writings of Cavailléès and Canguilhem. Second, Foucault’s view has the effect of hiding certain possibilities on the checkerboard of French philosophy. One of these possibilities, which finds no place in Foucault’s opposition, is a phenomenology of mathematics, such as that of Jean-Toussaint Desanti in *Les Idéalités mathématiques* (Mathematical idealities).\(^39\) Another possibility, which

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the relation between philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of knowledge seems to erase, is a philosophy of experience that would not be a philosophy of consciousness. This nonconsciousness philosophy of experience would be the exact counterpart to Poincaré and Bachelard’s positions, which are philosophies of knowledge but also philosophies of consciousness. One example would be Merleau-Ponty’s later ontology. In the notes for *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty, in 1961, is one of the first, after Cavaillé, to explicitly oppose his philosophical project to the “philosophies of consciousness.” Another example could be Deleuze, in particular in the period of his collaboration with Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus* can hardly be seen as a philosophy of consciousness in the sense that Cavaillé rejects. But nor is it a philosophy of knowledge in the sense of Foucault’s opposition.

V. CONCLUSION

We have reviewed three steps in the opposition between the philosophy of the concept and the philosophy of consciousness or the philosophy of the subject. This opposition is a polemical one, and its terms do not always have a precise meaning. Nevertheless, we have seen that each of these three steps gives different values to this opposition and delineates different responses to phenomenology. For Cavaillé, the philosophy of the concept first means a change in methodology: it is useless to investigate the becoming of science by a reflection on the acts of the subject. For Canguilhem, the philosophy of the concept seems to refer essentially to the structuralist idea that the subject is constituted as an effect of (social or psychological) structures that the subject does not determine. For Foucault, finally, the philosophy of the concept becomes the philosophy of knowledge, a philosophy that centers itself on the analysis of knowledge, in opposition to a philosophy that finds its foundations in the description of our immediate experience.

The relationships between phenomenology and the analytic tradition – the main rival to phenomenology in the twentieth century, which eventually became the dominant approach in anglophone academic philosophy – are complex and became increasingly fraught over the course of the century.\(^1\) Early in the twentieth century, there was considerable interaction between both phenomenological and analytic European philosophers. Husserl, for instance, was one of the first philosophers to recognize the philosophical significance of Gottlob Frege (arguably the founder of analytic philosophy). Similarly, Bertrand Russell read Frege and Meinong, and corresponded with them in German; Wittgenstein moved between Austria and Cambridge; Moore read Brentano and chaired one of Husserl’s lectures in London; Ryle lectured on Austrian philosophy at Oxford; Carnap attended Husserl’s seminars in Freiburg in 1924–25; and so on. On the other hand, there was lack of knowledge of the different traditions: for instance, Paul Ricoeur lamented that he could find no one in Paris from whom to learn Russell’s philosophy in the 1930s and Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy*
(1946) is notorious for its poor treatment of European philosophers such as Nietzsche and for ignoring twentieth-century developments apart from “the Philosophy of Logical Analysis.”

While there was interaction and discussion between the various schools and traditions, the Second World War seemed to have had a decisive impact and, in the postwar years, the two traditions grew apart and developed separately from one another, leading eventually to a kind of détente, although one based largely on mutual ignorance. Karl-Otto Apel, Jürgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur are rare examples, in the period under discussion, of European philosophers who sought to incorporate the insights of Wittgenstein, Austin, Searle, and others. Meanwhile, Anglophone analytic philosophers, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, simply paid no attention to phenomenology and its European followers. It was not until the end of the 1970s that analytically trained philosophers such as Richard Rorty began to pay close attention to Husserl, Heidegger, and the phenomenological tradition. The “analytic” response to phenomenology in fact has to be found largely on the European continent and then within the larger neo-Kantian tradition.

Some of the sharpest critical responses to phenomenology (primarily, the work of Husserl and Heidegger) came from within the loosely organized phenomenological movement itself, and indeed many of these criticisms anticipated those made subsequently by analytic philosophers. As Ricoeur put it, phenomenology is “both the sum of Husserl’s work and the heresies issuing from it.” In this chapter, however, I shall be concerned with what may be broadly construed as the analytic reception of phenomenology. Because neo-Kantian criticisms of phenomenology in many ways anticipated and indeed inspired the analytic criticisms, it will be necessary to discuss the neo-Kantian reaction to phenomenology en passant. Furthermore, I will begin my narrative a little earlier than 1930, since critical responses to phenomenology began to appear especially after Husserl published his major book on phenomenological method, the programmatic Ideas I in 1913; and, owing to the absolute dearth of interrelations between the

3. A noteworthy exception is Wilfrid Sellars, who allowed some room for phenomenology, albeit without the Wesensschau, and who had studied Husserl with his teacher Marvin Farber, who himself had studied with Husserl in Freiburg.
4. In this regard, Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* groups Russell with Husserl as epistemological foundationalists and links the later Wittgenstein with Heidegger as critics of foundationalism and representationalism. [*] For a discussion of Rorty, see the essay by David R. Hiley in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
traditions during the 1960s, I will end my survey a little later than 1970 with the
Searle–Derrida debate that began in 1977. I take this encounter to be one of the
paradigmatic cases, although Searle himself denied that this debate represented
“a confrontation between two prominent philosophical traditions.”7

I. CHALLENGES TO PHENOMENOLOGY IN EUROPE

Phenomenology was inaugurated as a specific method at the outset of the twen-
tieth century by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), especially in the Introduction to
the second volume of his massive “breakthrough” work, Logische Untersuchungen
(Logical Investigations; 1900/1901).8 Husserl systematically developed phenomenology in his subsequent publications, that is, Ideas I (1913), Formal and Transcendental Logic (1929), Cartesian Meditations (1931), and the articles of The Crisis of the European Sciences that appeared in the journal Philosophia (1936). In the period from 1913 to 1929, Husserlian phenomenology vied with neo-Kantianism (Windelband, Rickert, Natorp, Cassirer)9 as the most prominent philosophical movement in Germany, with phenomenology gradually challenging and eventually eclipsing the once dominant neo-Kantian tradition, while the tradition of “life philosophy” (Lebensphilosophie; Dilthey, Simmel) remained a somewhat minor voice until the revival of Nietzsche’s work in the 1930s. The neo-Kantians took phenomenology seriously and engaged critically with it: Paul Natorp, for instance, reviewed both Husserl’s Logical Investigations and his Ideas I, and was prescient in predicting that Husserl would move closer to neo-Kantianism. When, in 1916, Husserl moved from the University of

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Göttingen to take up the Chair of Philosophy in Freiburg (previously occupied by Heinrich Rickert), phenomenology became installed in the neo-Kantian heartland. In the following decade or so, from 1916 to 1928 (the year of his official retirement), Husserl established himself as the most influential philosopher in Germany. His protégé Martin Heidegger was his preferred successor and, with Husserl’s support, succeeded him to the Chair of Philosophy in Freiburg in 1928. Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit (Being and Time; 1927), which Husserl himself had arranged to be published in his Jahrbuch, had immediate impact, but the ground for his fame had already been prepared by his lectures at Marburg (1923–28), which had already made him famous with a generation of students, as Hannah Arendt would later recall.¹⁰

Heidegger’s own intellectual formation owed much not only to Catholic neo-Thomism (through which he encountered Brentano’s work on Aristotle, which led him to Husserl),¹¹ but also to neo-Kantians such as Rickert (his Doktorvater) and Emil Lask. Despite his ten-year exposure to Husserl, in his magnum opus Heidegger deliberately linked phenomenology to hermeneutics, as found in the German tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, as well as drawing on Kierkegaard’s and Jaspers’s existentialism, and thereby changed phenomenology radically from within. Presuppositionless, descriptive eidetic insight, gained under the rigorous application of the epochē, gave way to interpretation, historical situatedness and an appreciation of human finitude and of the anxiety involved in personal existence. Husserl’s term “consciousness” (Bewusstsein) was replaced by Heidegger’s “Dasein” (existence).¹² Soon after, with the publication of Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Heidegger deliberately distanced himself from neo-Kantianism, very publicly in his famous Davos debate with Ernst Cassirer in 1929.¹³

When he eventually came to read Being and Time in 1929, Husserl was deeply disturbed by Heidegger’s distortion of transcendental phenomenology. He was also especially disturbed after he read Georg Misch’s 1931 study, Lebensphilosophie


¹³. For Heidegger’s debate with Cassirer, see Martin Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Richard Taft (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 171–85.
which discussed Husserl, Heidegger, and Dilthey in terms that suggested it was Heidegger who was the leading new voice of hermeneutical phenomenology insofar as he had absorbed the best impulses of life philosophy: the attempt to grasp life itself. Husserl embarked on a series of responses to the Heideggerian challenge that culminated in his 1936 *The Crisis of the European Sciences*. But his young assistant Eugen Fink also sought to defend Husserl’s phenomenology against its critics – in particular in his 1933 *Kant-Studien* article “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism,”16 which Husserl himself explicitly endorsed – in which he responded to the accusation that with *Ideas I*, Husserl had drawn closer to neo-Kantianism.

By 1930, phenomenology had become something of an orthodoxy in Germany and was already beginning to experience a backlash. Thus, for example, Max Horkheimer, in his speech inaugurating the newly emerging Frankfurt School, had characterized phenomenology as belonging to “traditional” rather than “critical” theory.17 The neo-Kantians, following Rickert, had renewed their attack on phenomenology, precisely because they claimed there was no pure given back to which phenomenological intuition could turn. They were effectively challenging what Sellars would later call the “myth of the given.” Scheler’s sudden death in 1928 and Heidegger’s “turning” (die Kehre) away from the constraints of academic philosophy during the 1930s also contributed to the decline of phenomenology, as did the Nazi purge of Jewish academics from the universities. Even younger German philosophers sympathetic to phenomenology – including Gadamer and Fink – believed that Husserlian phenomenology needed to be wedded to something more fundamental: in Gadamer’s case, it was hermeneutics and the nature of language; in Fink’s, it was Hegelian speculation.

After the Second World War, interest in phenomenology sharply declined in Germany. Husserl had died in isolation in 1938; Heidegger was under a teaching

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suspension and was giving private talks on German poets such as Hölderlin; Fink was developing his own philosophy, writing about Nietzsche; Gadamer was developing hermeneutics (and reviving Hegel); and critical theory would eventually be revived when exiled members of the Frankfurt School (including Adorno) returned to Germany. In addition, emerging young philosophers such as Habermas were shocked by Heidegger’s lack of self-questioning regarding his National Socialist activities, as instanced by the fact that in his published 1935 lectures Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger had left standing remarks concerning the “inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism. Moreover, Heidegger’s invocation of “metaphysical” concepts such as the “being of beings” was considered anathema by philosophers who follow the positivist rejection of metaphysics as nonsense. Phenomenology’s legacy was now tainted both by Heidegger’s connection with fascism and by the unfashionable specter of reviving metaphysics!

As we have seen, phenomenology was being challenged in Germany by neo-Kantian and Frankfurt School thinkers during the 1930s–1950s. But phenomenology also came under attack from various offshoots of the neo-Kantian tradition, especially the Vienna Circle movement that gradually evolved into logical positivism. I will now turn to the analytic challenge to phenomenology, which I will present in the form of four paradigmatic confrontations.

II. FOUR CONFRONTATIONS

The first confrontation: phenomenology (Husserl) and Viennese logical positivism (Schlick) plus neo-Kantianism (Natorp and Rickert)

Phenomenology, itself the child of the Austrian tradition of philosophy founded by Bolzano and Brentano, did have a specific line of influence in Vienna

during the development of logical positivism.\textsuperscript{21} Felix Kaufmann (1895–1949),\textsuperscript{22} a graduate in jurisprudence and an enthusiastic reader of Husserl’s phenomenology, attended meetings of the circles around Hans Kelsen (his doctoral supervisor), the economist Von Mises, and the group that eventually became known as the Vienna Circle. Kaufmann had a significant influence on the social phenomenology of the young Alfred Schutz,\textsuperscript{23} and his book on the \textit{Infinite in Mathematics and its Exclusion} (1930)\textsuperscript{24} was highly regarded by Husserl. Kaufmann often discussed Husserl at meetings of the Vienna Circle (supposedly much to the annoyance of Schlick and some others) and also wrote on the relations between phenomenology and logical empiricism. In 1938, Kaufmann emigrated to the United States where, as an academic (teaching law and philosophy) at the New School for Social Research, he wrote several papers on the relation between phenomenology and analysis and, indeed, debated with his fellow émigré Rudolf Carnap on the nature of induction and truth in the pages of the newly founded \textit{Philosophy and Phenomenological Research}.\textsuperscript{25} It is clear that Carnap respects Kaufmann and that Kaufmann was recognized as an influential mediator between phenomenology and the emergent logical positivist tradition.\textsuperscript{26} In particular, Kaufmann defended Husserl’s concept of \textit{Wesensschau} against Moritz Schlick’s criticisms (which I will discuss below), and argued that Husserl’s concept of evidence (\textit{Evidenz}) had been misunderstood by those critics who regarded it as a subjective feeling of certainty.

During the early 1930s, critical philosophical responses to phenomenology came especially from Vienna Circle logical positivists such as Schlick and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} On the influence of Kaufmann on Schutz, see Michael D. Barber, \textit{The Participating Citizen: A Biography of Alfred Schutz} (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004), 16–17.
\item \textsuperscript{24} For an English translation, see Felix Kaufmann, \textit{The Infinite in Mathematics}, Brian McGuinness (ed. and trans.) (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978).
\item \textsuperscript{26} See especially Felix Kaufmann, “Phenomenology and Logical Empiricism,” in \textit{Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl}, Marvin Farber (ed.) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940). For a full list of his works, see Harry P. Reeder, “A Chronological Bibliography of the Works of Felix Kaufmann,” appendix in Kaufmann, \textit{The Infinite in Mathematics}.
\end{itemize}
Admittedly, Schlick had already challenged Husserl’s phenomenology in the first edition (1918) of his Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre (General Theory of Knowledge). Husserl responded to Schlick’s criticisms in the foreword to his second edition of the Sixth Investigation (which was published as a separate volume in 1921). Here Husserl asserts that many criticisms drawn from outside phenomenology fail to understand the effect that bracketing has on one’s opinions and convictions. He dismisses as absurd the view that Schlick attributes to him:

How readily many authors employ critical rejections, with what conscientiousness they read my writings, what nonsense they have the audacity to attribute to me and to phenomenology are shown in the Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre of Moritz Schlick. On page 121 of that work it is said that my Ideas “asserts the existence of a particular intuition, that is not a real psychic act, and that if someone fails to find such an ‘experience,’ which does not fall within the domain of psychology, this indicates that he has not understood the doctrine, that he has not yet penetrated to the correct attitude of experience and thought, for this requires ‘peculiar, strenuous studies.’” The total impossibility that I should have been able to utter so insane an assertion as that attributed to me by Schlick in the above italicized sentences, and the falsity of the rest of his exposition of the meaning of phenomenology, must be plain to anyone familiar with this meaning.

The tone of Husserl’s dismissal of Schlick indicates that there is a certain hostility in his attitude to him. Husserl is incredulous that Schlick apparently believes that his eidetic intuition is not also a real psychic act. Husserl goes on to remark: “I must expressly observe that, in the case of M. Schlick, one is not dealing with irrelevant slips, but with sense-distorting substitutions on which all his criticisms are based.” Husserl is particularly annoyed that a doctrine of special

27. Moritz Schlick (April 14, 1882–June 22, 1936; born in Berlin, Germany; died in Vienna, Austria) was educated at the University of Berlin. His influences included Carnap, Planck, and Wittgenstein, and he held appointments at the University of Vienna.
28. The second edition of Schlick’s Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre is translated as General Theory of Knowledge. Schlick dropped most of the Husserl discussion and condensed his criticisms into a single paragraph in the second edition; Moritz Schlick, General Theory of Knowledge, A. E. Blumberg and H. Feigl (trans.) (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1985), 139. For an interesting discussion, see Roberta Lanfredini, “Schlick and Husserl on the Essence of Knowledge,” in Logical Empiricism, Parrini et al. (eds).
30. Ibid.
or indeed mystical intuition is being attributed to him and to phenomenology. Husserl believes the meaning of the *epoché* has been completely misunderstood by Schlick. Phenomenology is not a Platonic gazing at essences given in a kind of intellectual intuition; it is based on hard work, akin to mathematics.

In fact, Schlick had been targeting Husserl’s account of essential intuition (*Wesensschau*) in the *Logical Investigations* from as early as 1910.31 In general, Schlick was opposed to the idea that knowledge (which he conceived of as essentially propositional) could be any kind of intuition. As he puts it in a 1932 paper, “Form and Content: An Introduction to Philosophical Thinking”: “Intuition is enjoyment, enjoyment is life, not knowledge.”32 For him, the pure content of intuitive experience was inexpressible. He writes, “The difference between structure and material, between form and content is, roughly speaking, the difference between that which can be expressed and that which cannot be expressed.”33 And he goes on to say: “Since content is essentially incommunicable by language, it cannot be conveyed to a seeing man any more or any better than to a blind one.”34 For Schlick, one can see a green leaf and say that one sees the green leaf, but one’s saying it does not communicate the intuitive content “green.” This is his position against phenomenology. Schlick maintained that all knowing involved seeing-as and hence conceptualizing and judging. Pure intuiting, for Schlick, could not have the status of knowing. Ironically, Schlick does not challenge Husserl on the basis of any kind of verifi cationism. Both Husserl and Schlick were advocates of kinds of empiricism whereby knowledge is founded on perceptual experience, but Husserl always rejected positivism on the grounds that it overly narrowly restricted the content of experience (to sense data) and did not grasp the nature of what Husserl termed “categorial intuition.”

Nevertheless, the brief but acrimonious debate between Husserl and Schlick more or less set the tone for future confrontations between phenomenology and the nascent analytic movement. Schlick returned to attack Husserl’s phenomenology again in 1930, this time attacking Husserl’s defense of synthetic a


priori propositions (Husserl’s “material a priori”), which Schlick regarded as empty tautologies, rather than significant eidetic insights.\textsuperscript{35} For Schlick, as for logical positivism in general, there is no synthetic a priori. Schlick followed Wittgenstein’s \textit{Tractatus} in holding that \textit{a priori} statements were simply tautologies and as such did not “say” anything. For Husserl, on the other hand, there are certain truths that are \textit{a priori} but that depend on the nature of the matter in question.\textsuperscript{36} Thus, something being blue and at the same time yellow is not, for him, a purely formal truth based solely on the law of noncontradiction, but rather an \textit{a priori} synthetic truth grounded in the essential nature of color as essentially dependent on surface. Interestingly, as we will see below, the mature Wittgenstein would side with Husserl against Schlick on this issue of the synthetic \textit{a priori}.\textsuperscript{37}

Husserl may have been particularly irked by Schlick precisely because the latter was repeating a criticism of phenomenology’s reliance on intuition that was to be found not just in the nascent logical positivist tradition to which Schlick belonged but also in orthodox neo-Kantianism. For neo-Kantianism, it was a matter of orthodoxy that intuitions without concepts were blind. Prominent German neo-Kantians of the day, including Rickert and Natorp, as well as other prominent philosophers such as Hans Cornelius (one of Adorno’s teachers), had also criticized phenomenology’s assumptions concerning pure unmediated givenness. Phenomenology was seen as a new form of irrational or nonconceptual intuitionism, and, as such, would be doomed to failure. Indeed, Rickert and others said as much in their criticisms of Husserl.

It is one of the ironies of the history of philosophy that in his early lectures at Freiburg, Heidegger, himself a student of Rickert, takes up the challenge of defending phenomenological intuition against both Natorp and Rickert. In his 1919 lecture course, “The Idea of Philosophy and the Problem of Worldview,” Heidegger takes issue with Natorp’s criticism that phenomenology’s claim to be founded in immediate intuition is bankrupt since all immediacy has to be mediated by concepts and since consciousness, which is the basis for all objectification, is itself something that escapes determination. For Natorp, original experience can at best be “theoretically regained” or “reconstructed” by some


\textsuperscript{36} For a recent discussion, see Jocelyn Benoist, \textit{L’A priori conceptuel: Bolzano, Husserl, Schlick} (Paris: Vrin, 1999). Benoist carefully distinguishes the question of the nature of analyticity (as raised by Quine) from the question of the nature of the synthetic a priori.

\textsuperscript{37} For a discussion of the transformation from the early to the late Wittgenstein, see the essay by Bob Plant and John Fennell in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}.  

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kind of working back through the original “construction” process whereby the experience was subsumed under generalizing concepts. Natorp, then, challenges the view that phenomenology can recover direct unmediated experience. Phenomenology can at best be a “reconstruction” of experience.

Against Natorp’s critique, the young Privatdozent Heidegger defends phenomenological viewing by arguing that conceptual description is in fact founded in an original experience that is originally nontheoretical in character. Furthermore, it is a mistake to consider phenomenological “signification” to be itself another kind of standpoint; it is in fact the attempt to free thinking from standpoints. The “original sin” against phenomenology, as Heidegger puts it in the same lecture course, is to assume that the phenomenological stance is merely another standpoint. For Heidegger, phenomenological meaning-apprehension goes along with the life process itself and grasps the essential “worldliness” of experience in a nonfalsifying way. According to Heidegger, now embarking on his own original conception of phenomenology, phenomenology essentially operates with what he terms in 1919 “hermeneutical intuition” (hermeneutische Anschauung).

Heidegger is, as we can clearly see, already on the road to the hermeneutic transformation of Husserlian descriptive phenomenology.

In later lecture courses, Heidegger offers a similar defense of phenomenology against his former teacher Rickert. In agreement with Natorp, Rickert also maintained that experience necessarily involves conceptualization and he would soon afterward (in 1920) publish a virulent critique of the “vitalism” of the then popular life philosophy (which Rickert understood broadly as including Nietzsche, Simmel, Dilthey, Bergson, Scheler, et al.) on the grounds that life had...


40. Heidegger, Towards the Definition of Philosophy, 94; Gesamtausgabe 56/57, 111.

41. Heidegger, Towards the Definition of Philosophy, 93; Gesamtausgabe 56/57, 109. Interestingly, at various points in his own lecture courses, Husserl himself designated the original sin of philosophy as the fall into psychologism and naturalism.

42. Heidegger, Towards the Definition of Philosophy, 99; Gesamtausgabe 56/57, 117.
to be conceptualized in order to be understood. 43 Rickert attacks those supposed life philosophers who argue for the need to remain “true to life.” This is simply impossible for Rickert, since reality is grasped not just through sense impressions, but is mediated through language. Language, with its generalizations and “species names,” is, according to Rickert, precisely a necessary reduction of the complexity of the world of sensuous experience. It is conceptualization that brings order and system into the world of sensory experience that otherwise would be a chaos of fleeting sensations (as Kant had pointed out). Rickert concludes that “what is directly experienced as reality cannot be known. Thus, there is no metaphysics of life. … Life, as the unmediated reality, can only be lived through. As immediate life it mocks any attempt to get to know it.” 44 Of course, Rickert shared Husserl’s disdain for what they regarded as irrationalist “life philosophy,” brimming with “enthusiasm” but lacking solid argumentation and conceptualization. Indeed, it was largely owing to Heidegger and Jaspers that more existentialist figures such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were reclaimed by the philosophical tradition. Scheler too had been responsible for a new appreciation of the role of personhood, emotions and feelings, in philosophy, but neo-Kantianism resisted the lure of life philosophy and continued to insist that the business of philosophy was the clarification of scientific knowledge, not the celebration of life. Even the term Erlebnis, dear to both Dilthey and Husserl, is a concession to vitalism, according to Rickert, and he identifies and criticizes the urge toward life that is to be found in Heidegger’s philosophy (inspired by Dilthey).

The attack of the positivists was essentially a reprise of the original criticisms of phenomenology made by the neo-Kantians. Yet Husserl remained well disposed to the neo-Kantians, especially Natorp. During his Freiburg years, he also maintained formal but cordial relations with Rickert and corresponded with him frequently. Indeed, as he pointed out to Rickert, both were in agreement in opposing the increasingly dominant naturalism. Both phenomenology and neo-Kantianism understood philosophy to be primarily an a priori and transcendental enterprise and resisted all attempts at naturalism. On the other hand, Husserl was more antagonistic toward the new positivism. Having originally been an admirer of Ernst Mach, one of the forerunners of the Vienna Circle, and having characterized phenomenology, with its unprejudiced viewing, as

44. The German reads: “… was als Realität unmittelbar erlebt wird, kann nicht erkannt werden. Also gibt es keine Metaphysik des Lebens. … Das Leben als das unmittelbar Reale lässt sich nur erleben. Es spottet als unmittelbares Leben jedem Erkenntnisversuch” (Rickert, Die Philosophie des Lebens, 113; my translation).
the genuine positivism in Ideas I §20, in later years Husserl went on to claim in The Crisis of the European Sciences that “positivism, in a manner of speaking, decapitates philosophy,”\(^{45}\) by ignoring the role of the subject in the constitution of knowledge.

*The second encounter: Carnap reads Husserl and Heidegger*

The second encounter between phenomenology (this time represented by Husserl and Heidegger) and analytic philosophy (this time represented by Carnap) was even sharper in tone than the earlier dispute between Husserl and Schlick. Heidegger’s famous *Antrittsrede*, “What is Metaphysics?,” delivered at the University of Freiburg in July 1929, was deliberately provocative and evoked very strong reactions. Carnap, who was present at the talk, was, reputedly, appalled by Heidegger’s claims. His reply, entitled “The Overcoming of Metaphysics Through the Logical Analysis of Language,” appeared in the new journal of the logical positivists, *Erkenntnis*, volume 2, in 1931.\(^{46}\) Carnap’s essay was actually a programmatic manifesto against traditional metaphysics involving the supposed demonstration of the meaningless of metaphysical claims based on a “logical analysis” of meaning. With this essay, the battle between a certain tendency in phenomenology (regarded by Carnap as a kind of obscurantism) and logical analysis (later transformed into “analytical philosophy”) had begun.\(^{47}\) Indeed, the journal *Erkenntnis* had been explicitly founded by Carnap and Reichenbach to preach the logical positivist message and explicitly advocate “scientific philosophy.”\(^{48}\) Carnap’s attack on Heidegger was in effect a deliberate declaration of war, just

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47. For a discussion of some of these battles see the essays in Parrini et al. (eds), *Logical Empiricism*; see especially Gottfried Gabriel, “Carnap’s ‘Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language’: A Retrospective Consideration of the Relationship between Continental and Analytic Philosophy.”

48. As Carl Hempel recalled in 1975, “The old *Erkenntnis* came into existence when Hans Reichenbach and Rudolf Carnap assumed the editorship of the *Annalen der Philosophie* and gave the journal its new title and its characteristic orientation; the first issue appeared in 1930. The journal was backed by the Gesellschaft für Empirische Philosophie in Berlin … and by the Verein Ernst Mach in Vienna, whose philosophical position was strongly influenced by that of the Vienna Circle; a brief account of these groups, and of several kindred schools and trends of scientific and philosophical thinking, was given by Otto Neurath in ‘Historische Anmerkungen’ [vol. 1, 311–14]” (Carl Hempel, “The Old and the New ‘Erkenntnis,’” *Erkenntnis* 9 [1975]).
as Heidegger’s own Inaugural Address was meant to challenge both Husserl and neo-Kantianism.

For subsequent followers of analytic philosophy, Carnap’s essay has been seen as effectively unmasking Heidegger’s nonsense (literally). Indeed, the significance of Carnap’s criticisms of Heidegger may be compared with Heidegger’s own criticisms of Cassirer in his famous Davos debate of 1929. Just as Heidegger’s debate with Cassirer had the eventual result of elevating phenomenology over neo-Kantianism in Germany, Carnap’s debate with Heidegger had the eventual result of elevating analytic philosophy over Heideggerian phenomenology in the anglophone world.49

In fact, however, Carnap was actually much closer to Husserlian phenomenology than many analytic philosophers have been willing (until recently, for example, in the work of Michael Friedman50) to acknowledge. Carnap had been a student of the neo-Kantian philosopher Bruno Bauch at Freiburg, and had even attended Husserl’s seminars in 1924–25, when he was living near Freiburg and assembling the material that would become *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (The logical construction of the world; 1928).51 Carnap became associated with the Vienna Circle after he moved to take up a position in Vienna in 1926, introduced through his friend Hans Reichenbach.52 In 1929, Carnap, along with Hans Hahn and Otto Neurath wrote the manifesto of the Vienna Circle, which aimed at propagating a “scientific conception of the world ["wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung"]” in opposition to traditional metaphysical and theological worldviews.53 This manifesto suggested that the survival of metaphysical outlooks could be explained by psychoanalysis or by sociological investigation,

49. Carnap participated in the debate at Davos. Michael Friedman claims that Carnap’s virulent attack on Heidegger in “Overcoming Metaphysics Through the Logical Analysis of Language” essay grew directly out of his encounter with Heidegger in Davos in 1929 (A Parting of the Ways. Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger [La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2000], x).

*50. See, for example, the essay by Michael Friedman and Thomas Ryckman in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.


but most advanced was the “clarification of the logical origins of metaphysical aberration, especially through the works of Russell and Wittgenstein.”

Husserl, Heidegger, and Carnap all shared a view of philosophy as attempting to clarify certain basic matters and getting beyond certain traditional philosophical problems that they regarded as “pseudo-problems” (Scheinprobleme). Husserl himself often made derogatory remarks about “windy metaphysics” not grounded in intuition and indeed his clarion call “to the things themselves” was meant to be a repudiation of metaphysical speculation. So the rejection of metaphysics alone did not single out Carnap’s approach from that of the phenomenologists. Furthermore, Carnap cited Husserl in positive terms in several places in the Aufbau, as he had earlier done in his dissertation published as Der Raum (1922), where he discusses Husserl’s views on the intuited nature of space. There is even some debate about the extent of Husserl’s influence, especially on Carnap’s central conception of “construction” (Aufbau). Carnap certainly played down the influence in later years but it is clear that, in the mid-1920s, he was well disposed toward the Freiburg phenomenologist.

In general, the Aufbau shows strong neo-Kantian influences, although Carnap is also deeply in debt to the new Russellian “logistics,” which he regards as the “most comprehensive” (Aufbau §3). Following on from the tradition of Meinong, Husserl, and others, who were also seeking a “theory of objects,” Carnap is seeking to identify various forms of object and begins broadly from the division between physical objects, psychological objects, and cultural objects. Like Husserl, Carnap operates with a very wide conception of an “object” – an object is anything about which a statement can be made (and hence includes relations, events, etc.). Carnap confirms the positive connection between his approach and Meinong’s theory of objects as well as Husserl’s “mathesis of experiences” (as he finds explicated in Husserl’s Ideas I).

Analytic philosophers may be surprised to learn that Carnap even invokes Husserl’s epoché approvingly in Aufbau §64. In speaking about beginning from one’s personal experiences (which Carnap, adapting the term “methodological

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56. See Richardson, Carnap’s Construction of the World, 153–4. Carnap wanted to maintain both that purely geometrical space was a formal construct, derivable from mathematics, and that physical space was experienced in intuition, albeit it in a limited way.
57. Carnap, Logical Structure of the World, 9. Carnap refers to Husserl’s Ideas I (1913), §75, but this does not seem to be the right reference for “mathesis.”
individualism,” calls “methodological solipsism”), Carnap says that he will suspend belief as to whether the beliefs are actual or not:

At the beginning of the system, the experiences must simply be taken as they occur. We shall not claim reality or nonreality in connection with these experiences; rather, these claims will be “bracketed” (i.e., we will exercise the phenomenological “withholding of judgment”, epoche, in Husserl’s sense (Ideas I §§31, 32).58

Interestingly, perhaps inspired by the Humean approach (which Husserl himself, following Brentano, adopted in the first edition of the Logical Investigations until convinced by Natorp of the need to recognize the “I”), Carnap believes that original experiences are given in a non-egoic manner (Aufbau §65). They do not have to be related to a “subject” or a “self,” concepts that Carnap believes are higher “constructions” in his sense. Some kind of “I-relatedness” is not an original property of the basic experiences, Carnap claims, since to invoke the “I” is already to invoke “others” and these are higher-order entities, outside the original given. Departing from the mature Husserl of Ideas I (who had restored the pure ego as the transcendental source of all experience), Carnap believes that the assumption that experiences must be related to a subject is actually a prejudice driven by the subject–predicate structure of our language. Carnap acknowledges that in divorcing experiences from subjects he is departing from certain philosophical “systems,” including that of Husserl (Carnap refers to Ideas I, 65; presumably §37).59 The Aufbau then offers the kind of building-up or construction of objects from experiences that Husserl’s phenomenology also tried to trace, but it does so by avoiding the introduction of the pure or transcendental ego.60

59. Ibid., 106.
60. In an illuminating article, Abraham Stone has summarized the correlations between Husserl and Carnap in the Aufbau as follows: “Carnap’s initial realm of the ‘autopsychological’ clearly corresponds (as he explicitly points out [Logical Structure, §64]) to Husserl’s region of pure consciousness; its fundamental objects are called Erlebnisse. Next comes the physical realm, where, as in Husserl, the fundamental objects are ‘things.’ Carnap even follows Husserl on the detailed steps by which such ‘things’ are constituted: first, a level of visual things (Sehdinge), i.e., mere colored surfaces moving in space (Husserl, Ideas I, §151; Carnap, Logical Structure, §128); then, a narrowly ‘physical’ level of quantitative description in which movement is determined by strict causal law (Husserl, Ideas I, §52; Carnap, Logical Structure, 180–82); finally, the level of ‘intersubjective’ objects (though in this case, as both make clear, there is a kind of interweaving by which higher-order, psychological objects are used to complete the constitution of lower-order, physical ones) (Husserl, Ideas I, §151; Carnap, Logical Structure, §§148–9). After the physical realm comes a ‘heteropsychological’ one (corresponding to Husserl’s psychological region), and finally a realm or realms of Geist. Carnap follows Husserl, moreover, in referring to the process responsible for this structure, by which one object is
In his 1931 article “Overcoming Metaphysics,” Carnap continues in the spirit of the Vienna Circle manifesto to apply the methods and procedures of the new logic (which Heidegger himself had written about as early as 1912) to show that Heidegger’s “metaphysical” claims about nothingness were not just false but literally nonsensical. It is worth noting that Heidegger is but one target of Carnap’s analysis. Carnap makes clear that he could have drawn his nonsensical statements from any one of a number of “metaphysicians” and, indeed, those cited in the paper include Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Bergson, as well as Heidegger. Carnap uses the concept of “pseudo-statements” in order to criticize Heidegger. A “pseudo-statement” is a sentence that has a surface grammatical sense but which on analysis turns out not to assert anything that is meaningful (capable of verification) and hence that is literally meaningless. As Carnap puts it, such pseudo-sentences accord with “historical-grammatical syntax” but violate “logical syntax.”

In “Overcoming Metaphysics,” Carnap argues that there is a fault in human language that admits sentences (both meaningful and meaningless) that possess the same “grammatical form.” Carnap suggests that sentences in Heidegger’s 1929 essay – Carnap places Heidegger in “the metaphysical school” – such as “The Nothing nothings” (Das Nichts selbst nichtet) bear a superficial grammatical resemblance to acceptable sentences such as “The rain rains.”61 But this sentence is misleading because, Carnap asserts, “nothing” cannot function like a name. He points to the difference between the “is” of predication (e.g. “he is hungry”) and the “is” of existence (e.g. “he exists”) and asserts that the correct logical form of the “is” of existence is that it is applicable only to predicates, and not to signs for objects. Carnap writes:

To be sure it has been known for a long time that existence is not a property (see Kant’s refutation of the ontological proof of the existence of God). But it was not until the advent of modern logic that full consistency on this point was reached: the syntactical form in which modern logic introduces the sign for existence is such that it

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61. Heidegger’s text is quoted by Carnap: “What is to be investigated is being only and – nothing else; being alone and further – nothing; solely being, and beyond being – nothing. What about this nothing? … Does the Nothing exist only because the Not, i.e., the Negation, exists? Or is it the other way around? Does Negation and the Not exist only because the Nothing exists? … We assert: the Nothing is prior to the Not and the Negation … Where do we seek the Nothing? How do we find the Nothing … We know the Nothing. … Anxiety reveals the Nothing. … What about this Nothing – The Nothing itself nothings [Das Nichts selbst nichtet]” (“The Overcoming of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” 24).
cannot, like a predicate, by applied to signs for objects, but only to predicates …

This extends the Frege–Russell treatment of the existential quantifier. According to Carnap in his essay “Overcoming Metaphysics,” Heidegger makes the logical mistake “of employing the word ‘nothing’ as a noun [Gegenstandsnamen]” instead of recognizing it is a negative existential sentence or assertion. Carnap's approach, of course, is precisely an application of Russelian logical analysis (as exemplified by Russell in his “On Denoting” [1905]) to a typical sentence of metaphysics to show that its apparently meaningful grammatical form masks an underlying logical nonsense.

Carnap's attack on Heidegger has been seen in some analytic circles as devastating. His views were popularized in the anglophone world by A. J. Ayer, especially in his Language, Truth and Logic, published in 1936, shortly after Carnap's visit to London. But the original target for the logical positivists had been Hegel and, when logical positivism moved to Britain, neo-Hegelians such as Bradley and Greene. Carnap's article, however, went much further in its attacks, not just targeting Hegel (who also writes about the Nothing), but even criticizing Descartes for his supposed pseudo-statement “I am,” presented as the conclusion of his cogito ergo sum. Most analytic philosophers would not follow Carnap in his analysis of the supposed logical flaw in Descartes's famous dictum, yet he was treated as having effectively dismissed Heidegger. In fact, between the 1930s and the 1970s, analytic philosophy was largely defined by its overt hostility to all forms of metaphysics, but the situation has changed rapidly since the 1970s and something called “analytic metaphysics” – inspired by the work of Roderick Chisholm, Peter Strawson, David Lewis, David Armstrong, and others – is now a leading branch of analytic philosophy. Moreover, Carnap's rejection

62. Ibid., 28.
63. In Language, Truth and Logic (1936), for instance, A. J. Ayer quotes a sentence from Bradley's Appearance and Reality as nonsensical: “the Absolute enters into, but is itself incapable of, evolution and progress.” In the same work, Ayer also criticizes Heidegger's assumption that “Nothing” is “a name which is used to denote something peculiarly mysterious,” but he himself makes clear that he is repeating Carnap's analysis in his “Overcoming Metaphysics” article of 1931. See A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover, 1952), 36.
64. In large part, the debate between phenomenology and logical positivism was about the meaning and status of the a priori. As Friedman, among others, has pointed out, Carnap's reaction to phenomenology, and indeed to Heidegger, was complex. Husserl's account of the a priori comes close to that of the logical positivists. Of course, both Carnap and Heidegger had received their initial training in neo-Kantianism. See Friedman, A Parting of the Ways, and his essay “A Turning Point in Philosophy: Carnap–Cassirer–Heidegger,” in Logical Empiricism, Parrini et al. (eds); see also Gabriel, “Carnap's 'Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language.'”
of Heidegger has in fact been revisited by analytic philosophers, many of whom now acknowledge the limitations of Carnap’s approach.

In 1935, Carnap delivered three lectures in London, published as *Philosophy and Logical Syntax*. In these lectures, he states that the only proper task of philosophy is logical analysis and offers as his example the logical analysis of metaphysics. Carnap defines metaphysical statements as follows: “I will call metaphysical all those statements which claim to represent knowledge about something which is over or beyond all experience, e.g., about the Essence of things, about Things in themselves, the Absolute, and such like.”65 He includes statements by ancients such as Thales (“the Essence and Principle of the world is water”), Heraclitus, Anaximander, Pythagoras, and Plato, as well as moderns such as Spinoza, Schelling, Hegel, and Bergson. According to Carnap, all the statements of metaphysicians of this kind have no empirical content, hence no possibility of being verified and are thereby literally nonsensical. The supposed problems of metaphysics were, for him, in reality pseudo-problems. Carnap does allow for metaphysical statements to have a function, namely, an expressive one, similar to the function of “lyrical verses”: “The metaphysician believes that he travels in territory in which truth and falsehood are at stake. In reality, however, he has not asserted anything, but only expressed something, like an artist.”66

Although Heidegger never directly replied to Carnap, he does seem to have been affected by Carnap’s criticism. Thus, in his 1943 “Postscript to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” Heidegger insisted that one of the chief “misconceptions” concerning his position was that it “declares itself against ‘logic.’”67 Heidegger goes on to claim that logic has degenerated into “logistics” and that “exact thinking” is not really the most rigorous or penetrating form of thinking: “exact thinking merely binds itself to the calculation of beings.”68 Calculative thinking is in pursuit of mastery; in opposition to this, there is another form of thinking, which Heidegger here calls “essential thinking,” whose aim it is to find the word that speaks “the truth of being.” The question “How is it with the nothing?” is not a question of logic. The “nothing” is more originary than the logical concepts of “not” and negation. The fundamental mood of anxiety reveals the nothing in a

66. Carnap, “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” 79. Interestingly, in these lectures, Carnap takes issue with Wittgenstein’s claim in the *Tractatus* that his own statements were without sense. For Carnap, the sentences of the *Tractatus* have sense as logical analysis but not as a competing metaphysics.
67. For further discussion of Heidegger’s early work on logic, see the essays by Miguel de Beistegui and Babette Babich in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.
way that is more primordial. Heidegger simply shifts the ground for the entire discussion. Issues from within formal logic cannot affect a kind of thinking that is more originary than logic.

The third encounter: Cambridge (Wittgenstein) and Oxford (Ryle) consider phenomenology

In general Ludwig Wittgenstein69 seems to have been uninterested in phenomenology, just as he was uninterested in or impatient with other philosophical movements of the time – including the logical positivists, whom he himself had influenced and who continued to admire him, even after he had abandoned the position that they embraced! There have been suggestions that his work of philosophical clarification has much in common with the kind of method pursued by Husserl in his *Logical Investigations*, but the precise nature of Wittgenstein’s knowledge of that book has not been established.70 Occasionally, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Wittgenstein employed the term “phenomenology” in a positive sense, with an entire chapter of his so-called “Big Typescript” (1933) entitled “Phenomenology is Grammar.”71 Similarly, in some remarks made in 1929, Wittgenstein offered apparently sympathetic reflections on Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, wherein he recognized the importance of “anxiety” or “dread” (*Angst*) and related the notion of the experience of astonishment concerning the experience of running up against the limits of language.72 In remarks that were recorded by Friedrich Waismann, Wittgenstein said:

I can readily think what Heidegger means by Being and Dread. Man has the impulse to run up against the limits of language. Think, for example, of the astonishment that anything exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is also

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69. For a detailed discussion of Wittgenstein, see the essay by John Fennell and Bob Plant in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.
no answer to it. Everything which we feel like saying can, a priori, only be nonsense. Nevertheless, we do run up against the limits of language. … This running up against the limits of language is Ethics. I hold that it is truly important that one put an end to all the idle talk about Ethics – whether there be knowledge, whether there can be values, whether the Good can be defined, etc.73

Heidegger had discussed the nature of Angst in Being and Time §40, but he returned to it also in his July 1929 lecture “What is Metaphysics?,” which we have already discussed. Around this time also, in 1930, Wittgenstein made a comment, recorded by his friend Maurice O’Connor Drury, concerning Schlick’s upcoming presentation at the Moral Science Club in Cambridge, where he had been asked to speak about phenomenology. Wittgenstein commented acidly: “You ought to make a point of going to hear this paper, but I shan’t be there. You could say of my work that it is ‘phenomenology.’”74 In several of his remarks, Wittgenstein speaks of a kind of phenomenology of color experiences, for instance, that cannot be contradicted by physics; and he acknowledges the appeal of phenomenology in his Remarks on Color. But more than that, in his later career Wittgenstein was developing an appreciation for a priori synthetic propositions that Schlick has explicitly rejected as part of the phenomenologist’s toolbox.

Meanwhile, at Oxford, the ordinary-language philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976),75 who was responsible for lecturing on phenomenology and Austrian philosophy, had his own way of reading Husserl and others.76 Initially, Ryle was reasonably well disposed toward phenomenology, both for its descriptions of conscious states and for its conception of philosophy as independent of the sciences. But by the late 1930s, he had come to reject it in favor of a kind of linguistic behaviorism that repudiated most “internalist” accounts of the stream of consciousness.

75. Ryle was a graduate of Oxford in classics and philosophy, who spent his entire academic life at Christ Church, and he eventually became Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy.
Very early in his lecturing career, Ryle reviewed Husserl’s Polish student Roman Ingarden’s *Essential Questions* (*Essentiale Fragen*)\(^{77}\) in *Mind* in 1927 and Heidegger’s *Being and Time*\(^{78}\) in *Mind* in 1929, just two years after that work had originally appeared in German, and, in 1929, he even visited Husserl in Freiburg and discussed phenomenology with him.\(^{79}\) Ryle initially seemed to have been quite favorably disposed to phenomenology, which he saw as offering the same kind of conceptual analysis that he favored. In 1932, Ryle contributed a fairly detailed article explaining phenomenology to the *Supplementary Volume* of the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*,\(^{80}\) and his later articles on phenomenology (especially his review of Husserl’s American student Marvin Farber’s *The Foundations of Phenomenology*\(^{81}\)) are extremely valuable and insightful with regard to the initial reception of phenomenology in the anglophone world.\(^{82}\)

In his 1932 article “Phenomenology,” Ryle points out that phenomenology, which he defines as the “science of the manifestations of consciousness,” is not to be confused with phenomenalism. He explains Brentano and his fellow phenomenologists as asking the question: “What is it to be a case of remembering, judging, inferring, wishing, choosing, regretting, etc.?” (CP1 167). This, for Ryle, is a conceptual question totally distinct from empirical inquiries into what causes one to remember, and so on. Ryle therefore explicitly endorses the phenomenologists’ separation of their discipline from empirical psychology. He further agrees with Husserl that the discipline of phenomenology is a priori. Phenomenology, for Ryle, is a kind of a priori conceptual analysis. He disagrees, however, with Husserl’s claim that phenomenology is a rigorous science, since Ryle simply thinks that philosophy generally, as the “analytic investigation of types of mental functioning,” has nothing to do with science: “Philosophical methods are neither scientific nor unscientific” (CP1 168). Philosophy is *sui

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82. In the postwar years, Ryle became more emphatic in his criticisms of many aspects of phenomenology’s manner of proceeding. While Ryle’s quirky writing style may sound today somewhat chauvinistic in its championing of Anglo-Saxon values over those he styles “Teutonic,” there is no doubt that he makes every effort to understand phenomenology as well as to criticize it.
analytic philosophy and continental philosophy

generis, although that does not mean that it is occupied with special sorts of entities such as abstract objects, sense data, and other philosophical terms of art. Interestingly, in endorsing Husserl’s apriorism, Ryle agrees with Husserl’s opposition to various forms of naturalism and empiricism. Ryle further agrees with Husserl that philosophy should not engage in the construction of speculative systems. While he does find some metaphysical constructions in Husserl, Ryle goes on to assert: “But with his [Husserl’s] official view, that the business of philosophy is not to give new information about the world but to analyze the most general forms of what experience finds to be exemplified in the world, I completely agree” (CP1 170).

On the other hand, Ryle explicitly disagrees with Husserl’s account of ideal entities (abstract objects, propositions, and so on), which he thinks is close to Meinong’s. He opposes the view that one can have essential or eidetic insight in the manner of a supposed direct inspection of essences. As Ryle sees it, Husserl often speaks as if one simply inspects or “constatates” (Ryle’s word) essences.83 This is misleading because he also talks about identifying the eidetic laws. Ryle writes:

> Philosophy is, accordingly, a kind of observational science (like geography); only the objects which it inspects are not spatio-temporal objects but semi-Platonic objects which are out of space and time. These are correlates to acts of conception and judgment, though whether it is essential to them to be so correlative or whether it is accidental is left rather obscure by Husserl’s writings. (Ibid.)

Ryle supposes that Husserl conceives these ideal objects as something independently subsisting (akin to Meinong), although for Ryle, Husserl is not clear enough on this point. In his later writings on phenomenology, Ryle continues to dismiss Husserl’s Platonism concerning these ideal entities (CP1 219). He believes it is both an “impropriety” and a “nonsense” to speak of seeing essences in this manner (CP1 220). Taking his cue from the later Wittgenstein, Ryle notes that “we elucidate their significations by fixing the rules of their uses and not by any operation of gazing at any wearers of labels” (CP1 221). For Ryle, thought does not begin with a vocabulary and then develop a syntax; rather, “its vocabulary is syntactical from the start.” In his 1946 review of Farber’s The Foundations of Phenomenology, Ryle is more emphatic:

> The proprietary method claimed for Phenomenology is a sham, and Phenomenology, if it moves at all, moves only by the procedures by

83. See Ryle, “Review of Marvin Farber,” CP1 221.
which all good philosophers have always advanced the elucidation of concepts, including consciousness-concepts. Husserl’s practice bears this out. He does often produce acute original and illuminating elucidations of such concepts. (*Ibid.*)

Ryle concedes that Husserl engages in conceptual clarification, but in general, as he puts it in his review of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, he fears that the phenomenological approach will end in a “windy mysticism.” In “Phenomenology,” Ryle thinks that Husserl does not have to cling to the doctrine of eidetic intuition. Indeed, for Ryle, the main doctrine of phenomenology is the thesis that all consciousness is consciousness of something; in other words, that all consciousness is intentional, or, in Ryle’s terms, “transitive” (CP1 171). Although he is deeply interested in Husserl’s account of intentionality, Ryle ends up criticizing its conception of mental acts as “consciousness-of.” Rather, Ryle thinks (following the former Wykeham Professor of Logic, John Cook Wilson’s views), mental acts such as believing involve reference to knowledge; and hence “knowledge-of” should replace Husserl’s locution of “consciousness-of.” In his “Phenomenology” of 1932, we already see phenomenology being criticized from the standpoint of the newly emerging analytic philosophy of language. Furthermore, Ryle is explicitly unhappy with Husserl’s turn to a kind of “egocentric metaphysic” (CP1 174), having gone beyond its original purpose of providing conceptual analyses of mental acts or states.84

In his main work, *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Ryle rejected all philosophical efforts to postulate an ego or Cartesian-style mind as some kind of “ghost in the machine,” favoring instead a behaviorist, “dispositionalist” account of sentences that purported to involve mental predicates. Ryle writes:

> It is being maintained throughout this book that when we characterize people by mental predicates, we are not making untestable

84. In the 1950s, Ryle participated in the famous Royaumont conference in France, along with Merleau-Ponty. Unfortunately, there does not appear to have been much useful exchange of views. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Ayer, who was stationed in Paris attached to the British Embassy, and Merleau-Ponty were known to have had lengthy conversations and to have radically disagreed. In one encounter in 1951, recorded by Georges Bataille, Ayer, Bataille, and Merleau-Ponty took opposing sides on the meaning of a sentence such as the “sun existed before humans were on earth,” with Ayer insisting it was completely meaningful and Bataille being incredulous. Unfortunately, we know little more about these conversations. See A. J. Ayer, *Part of My Life: The Memoirs of a Philosopher* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 285. For an interesting analysis of the Ryle–Merleau-Ponty debate, see Juha Himanka, “Does The Earth Move? A Search for a Dialogue between Two Traditions of Contemporary Philosophy,” *The Philosophical Forum* 31(1) (Spring 2000), esp. 58–9.
inferences to any ghostly processes occurring in streams of consciousness which we are debarred from visiting; we are describing the ways in which those people conduct parts of their predominantly public behavior.\textsuperscript{85}

As a result, Ryle was characterized as a logical behaviorist and his views strongly influenced his student Daniel Dennett, who employs the Rylean strategy of the “category mistake” to diffuse ontological commitments with regard to mental entities.\textsuperscript{86} Ryle was now rejecting the very concept of a stream of consciousness and was advocating that our mental categories (what he calls “category habits”) be replaced by new “category disciplines” that are purged of Cartesian myth. Ryle’s views on the ego, of course, are actually not far removed from those of Jean-Paul Sartre, especially as given in his 1936 essay \textit{The Transcendence of the Ego}, where Sartre too tries to dissolve reference to the ego in sentences such as “I am chasing a street-car.” For Sartre, the immediate conscious experience has the form “street-car to be chased.” Ryle’s criticism of Husserlian approaches to consciousness, then, might not have extended to all phenomenology’s exponents. The problem with the encounter between phenomenology and ordinary-language philosophy as exemplified by Ryle at Oxford, is that the confrontation was one-sided. The phenomenologists and their continental followers rarely showed interest in what was happening in the anglophone world. For all intents and purposes, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Feigl, and others, were completely absorbed into anglophone, Anglo-American philosophy, and their roots in European thought were ignored until a new subject, the history of analytic philosophy, emerged in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{87}

\textit{The fourth dimension: John Searle and Jacques Derrida arguing over Austin}

The fourth paradigmatic encounter I will discuss in this essay is the confrontation that took place between the American philosopher John R. Searle and the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the late 1970s. While this is somewhat outside the parameters of the historical period under consideration in this volume, it has to be acknowledged that the 1960s perhaps represents a particularly barren period in terms of the relations between analytic and continental philosophy (understood here as the legacy of phenomenology) generally. On the one hand, it was only in the postwar years that many of the classics of the continental

\textsuperscript{86} See, for instance, Daniel C. Dennett, \textit{Content and Consciousness} (London: Routledge, 1969).
\textsuperscript{87} A milestone in the development of the history of analytic philosophy was Michael Dummett’s \textit{Origins of Analytical Philosophy}, originally delivered as lectures in Bologna in 1987.
tradition – Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* (translated 1970), Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (translated 1962), Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (translated 1958), and Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (translated 1962) – first began to be discussed seriously in the anglophone world. Philosophers such as John Wild, J. N. Findlay, Hazel Barnes, and others played an important intermediary role here. On the other hand, a growing hostility to continental philosophy and an increasing insistence that philosophy as such was analytic become particularly strident in the English-speaking world during that decade. Philosophically, the 1960s is a period of apartheid and separate development, and it is difficult if not impossible to find a fruitful encounter between analytic philosophy and phenomenology. Within the analytic tradition there were lone voices – such as those of P. F. Strawson (defending descriptive metaphysics), and Wilfrid Sellars – that were relatively favorably disposed to certain kinds of post-Kantian philosophy, but there was no serious effort to engage with phenomenology or its continental followers.

Hence the need to look to the 1970s to round off our narrative. The confrontation that I want to consider ostensibly took place over Derrida’s interpretation of the Oxford philosopher’s John Austin’s account of performatives, but it reaches to the very heart of Searle’s and Derrida’s versions of what constituted the nature of language, the practice of philosophy, and indeed the standards governing textual interpretation. This debate continues to generate controversy as to its importance for the confrontation between so-called “analytic” and “continental” ways of philosophizing, and represents a convenient place for us to end our story in this essay.

Searle studied at Oxford in the 1950s with Austin and others. He initially worked on philosophy of language and became well known for his book *Speech Acts* (1969), which systematized Austin’s work on performatives and other kinds of illocutionary acts. In Europe, Searle’s work had a strong influence on both Habermas and Apel. Searle then moved to write on issues in the philosophy of mind and especially on the nature of intentionality. Searle’s *Intentionality* (1983) is modeled on his earlier analysis of speech acts. Just as, in speech acts, there is a distinction between propositional content and illocutionary force, in intentional states there is a similar distinction to be found between the propositional content and its propositional attitude or what Searle terms “psychological mode.” Searle claims that in researching his book *Intentionality*, he could find nothing useful in the analytic literature:

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So I turned to the phenomenologists, and the book that I was urged to read was Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*. Well, I read the First Logical Investigation, and, frankly, I was very disappointed. It seemed to me that it was in no way an advance on Frege and was, in fact, rather badly written, unclear, and confused. So I abandoned the effort to try to learn something about intentionality from previous writers and just went to work on my own. … I learned nothing from Husserl, literally nothing, though, of course, I did learn a lot from Frege and Wittgenstein.  

Searle, then, claims to have rediscovered intentionality and to have made it intelligible within analytic philosophy of mind without further reference to the phenomenological tradition.

In contrast to Searle’s, Derrida’s intellectual formation came primarily through his engagement with the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger in particular. He wrote three early, formative studies on Husserl. Derrida’s work was deeply inspired by a “linguistic turn” that took place in French philosophy in the 1960s largely through the influence of Heidegger’s later essays on language, on the one hand, and the renewed interest, starting with the later Merleau-Ponty, in the protostructuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, on the other. While most often associated with poststructuralism, by his own account, Derrida remained deeply indebted to Husserlian phenomenology and the practice of the *epoché* in particular.

It is true that for me Husserl’s work, and precisely the notion of *epoché*, has been and still is a major indispensable gesture. In everything I try to say and write the *epoché* is implied. I would say that I constantly try to practice that whenever I am speaking or writing.

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91. For a discussion of Derrida’s philosophical formation and influences, see my *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 435–73. [*] See also the essay on the linguistic turn in continental philosophy by Claire Colebrook in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
Derrida’s controversy with Searle was occasioned by the publication of an English translation of his essay “Signature Event Context” in the first issue of a new journal of textual studies from Johns Hopkins University – *Glyph* – in 1977.93 As Searle recalls, there was a reading group at Berkeley, of which he was a part, and someone proposed reading this Derrida essay. He was very critical of the paper and was invited to submit his comments to the new journal. His reply, “Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida,” appeared in the same volume of *Glyph*.94

In his original paper, Derrida offers a complex and often enigmatic discussion of Austin’s use of performatives. Derrida’s paper in general is a meditation on the supposed centrality of the communicative function of language and involves discussion of the views of Condillac (taken as maintaining the classical view of language as a representation of ideas) and Husserl, as well as Austin. Derrida’s topic is the multiple nature or “polysemy” of communication, and his essay introduces many of his more familiar themes, including *différance*, the absence of the signified, and so on. Indeed, part of his aim is to explain and apply aspects of Husserl’s analysis of language. Sentences (even observational sentences) have sense even apart from the experience that is being described. The experience may be absent. Similarly, in written language, the “speaker” may be absent. A key feature of linguistic acts is their “iterability,” by which Derrida means that linguistic statements need to be repeatable and be able to function outside their immediate context, and especially beyond the purview of the immediate range of receivers, listeners, readers, and so on.

The essay begins with a short quotation from Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), where Austin states that for simplicity he will restrict his discussion to spoken utterances, and indeed literal speech, excluding such things as an actor pronouncing words on stage, or other “parasitic” forms, such as playful speech, metaphors, and so on. Austin writes: “Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways parasitic on its normal use – ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language.”95

93. Derrida’s essay was originally delivered as a paper at a Canadian conference in 1971, whose overall theme was “communication,” and was published in *Marges de la philosophie* in 1972.
In his essay, Derrida challenges the view that there is a single meaning to communication, and indeed points to the complex nature of what is supposed under the notion of “literal meaning” and the complexities introduced by metaphorical uses of language. For Derrida, the true complex nature of language where metaphor, and so on, are in play from the beginning is being ignored here, making Austin’s otherwise interesting analysis beside the point. Derrida carefully focuses on Austin’s apparently innocent use of the metaphorical term “parasitical,” which suggests that metaphorical and analogical uses of language are extensions of the basic literal function of language, as if that “literal” function was itself perfectly clear. Metaphor, fiction, and so on, are seen by Austin and others as some kind of (perhaps dispensable) add-on to the literal use of language.96

In his reply, Searle simply dismissed Derrida’s interpretation of Austin as a misunderstanding, owing, he claims, mostly to Derrida’s ignorance of post-Wittgensteinian developments in linguistics and the philosophy of language. Searle denies that iterability is a specific feature of written rather than spoken language. Rather, permanence is what distinguishes the written mark. In reply, Derrida claims he has been misunderstood, his statements taken out of context, ignoring the larger claims of his other work, and so on. Derrida’s evasion, his play on the very notion of seriousness in philosophy, all indicate that he was not seeking to seriously engage with his opponent. Searle regarded his “debate” with Derrida as a non-event and refused to continue it. He later commented:

With Derrida, you can hardly misread him, because he’s so obscure. Every time you say, “He says so and so,” he always says, “You misunderstood me.” But if you try to figure out the correct interpretation, then that’s not so easy. I once said this to Michel Foucault, who was more hostile to Derrida even than I am, and Foucault said that Derrida practiced the method of obscurantisme terroriste (terrorism of obscurantism). We were speaking French. And I said, “What the hell do you mean by that?” And he said, “He writes so obscurely you can’t tell what he’s saying, that’s the obscurantism part, and then when you criticize him, he can always say, ‘You didn’t understand me; you’re an idiot.’ That’s the terrorism part.” And I like that. So I wrote an article about Derrida.97

III. CONCLUSION: MORE OF THE SAME

To be sure, the context of analytic philosophy had changed considerably as the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* replaced the earlier Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. Where the backdrop to Carnap’s approach had been the *Tractatus* view, the backdrop to the Oxford ordinary-language philosophy of Ryle and Austin – which Searle encountered in the 1950s – was the view that what ordinary speech enshrines makes sense and is somehow “right.” Nevertheless, the exchange between Searle and Derrida in many ways resurrects a point at issue between earlier opponents such as Heidegger and Carnap; namely, whether language can be exact and also precisely refer to the real world in some literal way. Both Carnap and Searle begin from the literal use of language, which they see as fundamental to science as the articulation of truth. Both Heidegger and Derrida, on the other hand, see language as essentially and inescapably symbolic and metaphorical. For them, the poetic function is not one function among many of language, but is rather the primary force that makes language possible at all. It is precisely because language points beyond itself and indeed beyond what is immediately indicated that it is capable of functioning for the transmission of meaning. At the time of his dispute with Heidegger, Carnap was trying to fix the meanings of language, or at least to have a scientific language that was logically purified and unambiguous and which picked out the one true world (although later Carnap moved to recognize the multiplicity of irreducible “conceptual schemes,” as his pupil Hilary Putnam terms them). Heidegger, on the other hand, was growing increasingly dissatisfied with the stultified language of the philosophical tradition and wanted to exploit the poetic resources and ambiguities in language, especially the German and ancient Greek languages, as ways of expressing the manner in which Being reveals and conceals itself across history.

In what has come to be known as analytic philosophy generally, enormous emphasis is placed on the values of clarity, accuracy, precision, and rigor in argumentation. From that point of view, Heidegger and Derrida are seen as needlessly obscure, engaged in “rhetoric” or literary allusion, offering bad arguments or even no arguments at all. Indeed, as we have quoted above, Searle even used the phrase (which he claims he took from Foucault’s assessment of Derrida) “terrorist obscurantism.” Even Rorty, who agrees with much of what Derrida has to say, is quite willing to concede that “Searle is … right in saying that a lot of Derrida’s arguments … are just awful.” On the other hand, Heidegger,

98. Wilfrid Sellars spoke about Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* having moved analytic philosophy from its Humean to its Kantian phase.

as we also saw, regarded such demands for exactitude as part of calculative rather than originary thinking. Phenomenology privileged eidetic insight and description over argumentation. Of course, the later Wittgenstein had a similar view of philosophy as presenting a particular view on matters or perhaps escaping from the grip of a prevailing mistaken picture of things. This does not require argumentation but rather what Husserl would call a “change of attitude” (*Einstellungänderung*) or what Thomas Kuhn would call a “paradigm shift.”

There is no doubt that there is obscurity in Derrida and Heidegger; but this is seen as necessary in relation to the complexity of the thought and its need to break its relation to its tradition. Rigorous argumentation, moreover, is but one aspect of philosophical inventiveness. The Platonic dialogues show how discussions can lead to aporias and to insights that are not quite what was intended in the argumentation. Hermeneutics, for Heidegger, had exactly this function. Indeed, Husserl’s own position was that phenomenology came through insight and attention to what is *given* and gained by insight, rather than through argumentation and deduction. In a sense, the encounters between analytic philosophy and phenomenology have constantly returned to this battleground originally staked out by the neo-Kantians: the relation between sensuous intuition and conceptualization (which itself requires language).

This tension between what can be intuited and what must be deduced continues in the latest versions of the debate. For example, influential commentators, including Hubert L. Dreyfus, have interpreted Searle himself as pursuing a kind of phenomenology with his close description of the essential conditions of intentionality and his interest in consciousness, perception, and other themes familiar to phenomenology. In reaction, Searle has attempted to distinguish his practice of (what he terms) *logical analysis* from what he takes to be *phenomenological analysis*. This distinction largely repeats the kinds of distinction of approach made by Schlick against Husserl, Ryle against Husserl, Carnap against Heidegger, and so on. Yet, it would be wrong to think that the encounters are simply indications of incorrigible misunderstandings and misconnections. Phenomenology continues to develop and mutate and analytic philosophy has discovered that it is not just a method but a tradition that has its own hermeneutical dimensions. Indeed, there is little agreement today as to what constitutes the core of analytic philosophy, and there are challenges to the whole idea of philosophy as a *priori* analysis of intuition. One positive gain is that many analytic philosophers have recognized that phenomenology does have some

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value. Searle, for instance, is critical of phenomenology, and yet, in a certain sense, has written approvingly of what phenomenology tries to do: “I want to emphasize at the start that if phenomenology is defined as the examination of the structure of consciousness, I have no objections whatever to phenomenology. My misgivings are about some specific authors and their practice of this method.”¹⁰¹ Searle goes on to say, and perhaps we should leave this as a suitable last word for this essay: “Properly understood, there is no conflict between analytic philosophy and phenomenology. They offer noncompeting and complementary methods of investigation and anybody prepared to do serious work should be ready to use both.”¹⁰²

¹⁰². Ibid., 323.
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<tr>
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<td>Bacon, <em>Novum organum</em></td>
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<td>1633</td>
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<td>Condemnation of Galileo</td>
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<td>1634</td>
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<td>Establishment of the Académie Française</td>
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<td>1637</td>
<td>Descartes, <em>Discourse on Method</em></td>
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<td>1641</td>
<td>Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em></td>
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<td>1642</td>
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<td>Rembrandt, <em>Nightwatch</em></td>
<td>English Civil War begins</td>
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<td>1651</td>
<td>Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em></td>
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<td>1662</td>
<td><em>Logique du Port-Royal</em></td>
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<td>1665</td>
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<td>Newton discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1667</td>
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<td>Milton, <em>Paradise Lost</em></td>
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<td>1675</td>
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<td>Leibniz discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1677</td>
<td>Spinoza, <em>Ethics</em></td>
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<td>1687</td>
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<td>Newton, <em>Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica</em></td>
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<td>Leibniz, <em>Monadologie</em></td>
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<td>Hume, <em>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em></td>
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<td>Diderot and D’Alembert, <em>Encyclopédie</em>, vols 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>Rousseau, <em>Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes</em></td>
<td>Voltaire, <em>Candide</em></td>
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<td>Rousseau, <em>Du contrat social and Émile ou de l’éducation</em></td>
<td>Goethe, <em>Sorrows of Young Werther</em></td>
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<td>Death of Hume</td>
<td>Adam Smith, <em>Wealth of Nations</em></td>
<td>American Declaration of Independence</td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</em></td>
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<td>Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”</td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</em></td>
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<td>Birth of Arthur Schopenhauer</td>
<td>Gibbon, <em>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</em></td>
<td>US Constitution</td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>Death of d’Holbach</td>
<td>Adoption of <em>La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen</em></td>
<td>French Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic</td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der Urteilskraft</em></td>
<td>Edmund Burke, <em>Reflections on the Revolution in France</em></td>
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<td>Mozart, <em>The Magic Flute</em></td>
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<td>Tom Paine, <em>The Rights of Man</em></td>
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<td>Mary Wollstonecraft, <em>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</em></td>
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<td>Creation of the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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<td>Death of Robespierre</td>
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## CHRONOLOGY

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<tr>
<td>1795 Schiller, <em>Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen</em></td>
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<td>1800 Fichte, <em>Die Bestimmung des Menschen</em> Schelling, <em>System des transcendentalen Idealismus</em></td>
<td>Beethoven’s First Symphony</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804 Death of Kant</td>
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<td>Napoleon Bonaparte proclaims the First Empire</td>
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<td>1805</td>
<td>Publication of Diderot, <em>Le Neveu de Rameau</em></td>
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<td>1806 Birth of John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Goethe, <em>Faust, Part One</em> Reinstatement of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university</td>
<td>Napoleon brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end</td>
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<td>1807 Hegel, <em>Die Phänomenologie des Geistes</em></td>
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<td>1812 (–1816) Hegel, <em>Wissenschaft der Logik</em></td>
<td>Jane Austen, <em>Emma</em></td>
<td>Battle of Waterloo; final defeat of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1815 Hegel, <em>Encyclopedia</em> Ricardo, <em>Principles of Political Economy</em></td>
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<td>1817 Hegel, <em>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</em></td>
<td>Mary Shelley, <em>Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</em></td>
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<td>1818 Birth of Karl Marx</td>
<td>Byron, <em>Don Juan</em></td>
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<td>1819 Schleiermacher, <em>Hermeneutik</em> Schopenhauer, <em>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</em></td>
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<td>1821 Hegel, <em>Encyclopedia</em></td>
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<td>Death of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1823</td>
<td>Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony</td>
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<td>1830 (–1842) Auguste Comte, <em>Cours de philosophie positive</em> in six volumes</td>
<td>Stendhal, <em>The Red and the Black</em></td>
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<td>1831 Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, <em>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</em></td>
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<td>1832 Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Clausewitz, <em>Vom Kriege</em></td>
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<td>1833 Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey</td>
<td>Pushkin, <em>Eugene Onegin</em></td>
<td>Abolition of slavery in the British Empire</td>
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<td>PHILosophical EVENTS</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<td>1837</td>
<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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<td>1841</td>
<td>R. W. Emerson, <em>Essays: First Series</em></td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)</td>
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<td>Alexandre Dumas, <em>The Count of Monte Cristo</em></td>
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<td>Kierkegaard, <em>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</em></td>
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<td>1847</td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>On the Conservation of Force</em></td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Publication of the <em>Communist Manifesto</em></td>
<td>The beginning of the French Second Republic</td>
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| 1851                | Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*  
Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*  
The Great Exhibition is staged at the Crystal Palace, London | Napoleon III declares the Second Empire  
(–1856) Crimean War |
| 1852                | H. D. Thoreau, *Walden* |                  |
| 1853                | Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* |                  |
| 1854                | Birth of Sigmund Freud |                  |
| 1855                | Birth of Ferdinand de Saussure, Death of Comte |                  |
| 1856                | Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*  
Gustav Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* |                  |
| 1857                | Birth of Henri Bergson, John Dewey, and Edmund Husserl  
Mill, *On Liberty* |                  |
<p>| 1859                | Charles Darwin, <em>Origin of Species</em> | (–1860) Italian Unification, except Venice (1866) and Rome (1870) |
| 1861                | Johann Jakob Bachofen, <em>Das Mutterrecht</em> | Tsar Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia |</p>
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<td>1863 Mill, <em>Utilitarianism</em></td>
<td>Édouard Manet, <em>Olympia</em></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>(-1869) Leo Tolstoy, <em>War and Peace</em></td>
<td>Surrender of General Robert E. Lee signals the conclusion of the American Civil War</td>
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<td>1866 Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Crime and Punishment</em></td>
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<td>The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1868 Birth of Émile Chartier (&quot;Alain&quot;)</td>
<td>Birth of W. E. B. Du Bois Creation of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)</td>
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<td>1870</td>
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<td>1872 Nietzsche, <em>Die Geburt der Tragödie</em></td>
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<td>1873 Death of Mill</td>
<td>(-1877) Tolstoy, <em>Anna Karenina</em></td>
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<td>1874 Birth of Max Scheler Émile Boutroux, <em>La Contingence des lois de la nature</em> Brentano, <em>Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt</em></td>
<td>First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Berthe Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley)</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>Premier of Georges Bizet's <em>Carmen</em></td>
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<td>1876 Death of George Sand (Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin)</td>
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<td>1877 Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<td>1878</td>
<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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<td>1882</td>
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<td>1885</td>
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<td>1886</td>
<td>Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
<td>Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1888</td>
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<td>Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1889</td>
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<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of</td>
<td>The first public screening of projected motion pictures</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Athens hosts the first Olympic Games of the modern era</td>
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<td>1897</td>
<td>Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1898</td>
<td>Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
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<td>Death of Nietzsche and Félix Ravaission</td>
<td>Planck formulates quantum theory</td>
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<td>(--1901) Husserl, <em>Logische Untersuchungen</em></td>
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<td>Birth of Theodor W. Adorno, Jean Cavaillès, and Hans Jonas</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>(--1905) Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist</td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Hyppolite</td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d'Avignon</em></td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>L'Evolution créatrice</em></td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. O. Quine</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article</td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<td></td>
<td>on Husserl: “Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>conception d’une Logique pure” in *Revue de métaphysique</td>
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<td></td>
<td>et de morale*</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Birth of Albert Camus, Aimé Césaire, and Paul Ricoeur</td>
<td>Marcel Proust (1871–1922), <em>Swann's Way</em>, the first volume of *Remembrance of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husserl, <em>Ideen</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jaspers, <em>Allgemeine Psychopathologie</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unamuno, <em>Del sentimiento trágico de la vida</em></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Ortega y Gasset, <em>Meditaciones del Quijote</em></td>
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<td>Germany invades France</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Publication of Saussure’s <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Death of Durkheim</td>
<td>Lenin, <em>The State and Revolution</em></td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Birth of Louis Althusser</td>
<td>Karl Barth, <em>Der Römerbrief</em></td>
<td>Proclamation of the Weimar Republic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Death of Georg Cantor and Lachelier</td>
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<td>End of the First World War</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td></td>
<td>German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) founds the Bauhaus School</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Ratification of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution extends suffrage to women</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>Rosenzweig, <em>Der Stern der Erlösung</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bataille begins his twenty-year career at the Bibliothèque Nationale</td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>Ulysses</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Buber, <em>Ich und Du</em> Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded</td>
<td>Kahil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Birth of Jean-François Lyotard Sartre, Raymond Aron, Paul Nizan, Georges Canguilhem, and Daniel Lagache enter the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>André Breton, <em>Le Manifeste du surréalisme</em> Thomas Mann, <em>The Magic Mountain</em></td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Gilles Deleuze, Frantz Fanon, and Zygmunt Bauman</td>
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<td>First Surrealistic exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Birth of Michel Foucault Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl’s phenomenology: <em>Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</em></td>
<td>The film <em>Metropolis</em> by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Bauhaus school building, designed by Gropius, is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Sein und Zeit</em> Marcel, <em>Journal métaphysique</em></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, <em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Birth of Noam Chomsky</td>
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<td>The first television station begins broadcasting in Schenectady, New York</td>
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## CHRONOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
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<tr>
<td>The first work of German phenomenology appears in French translation: Scheler's <em>Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l’étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle</em></td>
<td>Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) writes <em>The Threepenny Opera</em> with composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950)</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway, <em>A Farewell to Arms</em></td>
<td>Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) writes <em>The Threepenny Opera</em> with composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth of Jürgen Habermas</td>
<td>Erich Maria Remarque, <em>All Quiet on the Western Front</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik</em> and <em>Was ist Metaphysik?</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Husserl, <em>Formale und transzendentale Logik</em>, “Phenomenology” in <em>Encyclopédia Britannica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wahl, <em>Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cassirer and Heidegger debate in Davos, Switzerland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levinas, <em>La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ortega y Gasset, <em>La rebelión de las masas</em></td>
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<td>1931</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s <em>Cartesian Meditations</em></td>
<td>Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husserl’s <em>Ideas</em> is translated into English</td>
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<td>1932</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth of Stuart Hall</td>
<td>Aldous Huxley, <em>Brave New World</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bergson, <em>Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion</em></td>
<td>BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaspers, <em>Philosophie</em>, 3 vols</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wahl, <em>Vers le concret</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
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<tr>
<td>André Malraux, <em>Man’s Fate</em></td>
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### Chronology

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
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<th>Political Events</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1933 | University in Exile is founded as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research  
(-1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études | Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* |  

| 1935 | Marcel, *Être et avoir* | Penguin publishes its first paperback |  

| 1936 | Husserl, *Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*  
Mounier, *Manifeste au service du personnalisme*  
First issue of *Life Magazine* |  

| 1937 | Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous | Picasso, *Guernica* |  

| 1938 | Death of Husserl | Sartre, *La Nausée* |  

| 1939 | Sartre, *Esquisse d’une théorie des emotions*  
Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium  
Founding of Philosophy and Phenomenological Research  
(-1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* | Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*  
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* |  

| 1940 | Death of Benjamin  
Marcel, *Du refus à l’invocation*  

| 1941 | Death of Bergson  
Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* | Death of James Joyce  
Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* |  

| 1942 | Birth of Étienne Balibar  
Death of Edith Stein  
Camus, *L’Étranger* and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l’absurde* |  |  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1942 | Merleau-Ponty, *La Structure du comportement*  
Lévi-Strauss meets Roman Jakobson at the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York |  
Herman Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*  
Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* | Bretton Woods Conference and establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
Paris is liberated by Allied forces (August 25) |
| 1943 | Death of Simone Weil  
Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*  
Sartre, *L’Être et le néant* |  
Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*  
Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers* | End of the Second World War in Germany (May); atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of War in Japan (September)  
Establishment of the United Nations |
| 1944 | Marcel, *Homo viator: Proléromènes à une métaphysique de l’espérance*  
Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* |  
George Orwell, *Animal Farm*  
Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of *Les Temps modernes* | Beginning of the French Indochina War  
Establishment of the Fourth Republic |
| 1945 | Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la “Phénoménologie de l’esprit” de Hegel*  
Sartre, *L’Existentialisme est un humanisme* and *Réflexions sur la question juive* |  
Bataille founds the journal *Critique*  
Eugene O’Neill, *The Iceman Cometh* |  |
| 1946 | Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*  
Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*  
Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus”  
Levinas, *De l’existence a l’existent*  
Merleau-Ponty, *Humanisme et terreur: Essai sur le problème communiste*  
Mounier, *Qu’est-ce que le personnalisme?*  
| Camus, *The Plague*  
Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank*  
Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus* |  |
| 1947 |  |
| 1948 |  |  | Creation of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (–1951) Marshall Plan  
The United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
Debut of *The Ed Sullivan Show*  
Nathalie Sarraute, *Portrait of a Man Unknown*  
Sartre, *Situations II: Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* |
### CHRONOLOGY

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
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<th>Political Events</th>
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</table>
| 1948 | Althusser appointed agrégé-répétiteur ("caïman") at the École Normale Supérieure, a position he holds until 1980 | Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*  
George Orwell, 1984  
Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort found the revolutionary group and journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* | Foundation of NATO |
| 1949 | Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe*  
Levinas, *En découvrant l'existence avec Husserl et Heidegger*  
Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*  
Marcel, *Le Mystère de l'être. Vol. 1: Reflexion et mystère*  
Heidegger's *Existence and Being* is translated | J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*  
Marguerite Yourcenar, *Memoirs of Hadrian* | Beginning of the Korean War |
Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl’s *Ideas I* | Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*  
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* | |
| 1951 | Death of Alain and Wittgenstein  
Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*  
Camus, *L'Homme révolté*  
Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” | Lacan, together with Daniel Lagache and Françoise Dolto, founds the Société française de psychanalyse  
Crick and Watson construct the first model of DNA | Death of Joseph Stalin  
Ceasefire agreement (July 27) ends the Korean War |
| 1952 | Death of Dewey and Santayana  
Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*  
Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France | | Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20)  
Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule |
| 1953 | Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l’écriture*  
Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (posthumous)  
Lacan begins his public seminars | Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception* | |
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?</em> <em>Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em></td>
<td>Hungarian Revolution and Soviet invasion</td>
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<td>Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
<td>The French colonies of Morocco and Tunisia gain independence</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Camus, <em>La Chute</em></td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss, <em>Anthropologie structurale</em></td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sartré's <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td>Founding of <em>Philosophy Today</em></td>
<td>The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em></td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em></td>
<td>Charles de Gaulle is elected president after a new constitution establishes the Fifth Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gadamer, <em>Wahrheit und Methode</em></td>
<td>Chinua Achebe, <em>Things Fall Apart</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sartre, <em>Critique de la raison dialectique</em></td>
<td>William S. Burroughs, <em>Naked Lunch</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spiegelberg, <em>The Phenomenological Movement</em></td>
<td>Elie Wiesel, <em>Night</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td></td>
<td>(–1960) The first feature films by directors associated with the French “New Wave” cinema, including, in 1959, <em>Les Quatre Cent Coups (The 400 Blows)</em> by François Truffaut (1932–84) and, in 1960, <em>A bout de souffle (Breathless)</em> by Jean-Luc Godard (1930– )</td>
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<td>The Sorbonne's &quot;Faculté des Lettres&quot; is officially renamed the &quot;Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines&quot;</td>
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<td>1959</td>
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<td>Günter Grass, <em>The Tin Drum</em></td>
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<td>Gillo Pentecorvo, <em>The Battle of Algiers</em></td>
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<td>Marguerite Duras, <em>Hiroshima, Mon Amour</em></td>
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<td>Harper Lee, <em>To Kill a Mockingbird</em></td>
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<td>1960</td>
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<td>First issue of the journal <em>Tel Quel</em> is published</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Death of Camus</td>
<td>The birth control pill is made available to married women</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sartre, <em>Critique de la raison dialectique</em></td>
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<td>Bay of Pigs failed invasion of Cuba</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spiegelberg, <em>The Phenomenological Movement</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Death of Fanon and Merleau-Ponty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1961 | Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, with a preface by Sartre  
Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*  
Heidegger, *Nietzsche*  
Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* | France grants independence to Algeria  
Cuban Missile Crisis |
| 1962 | Death of Bachelard  
Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*  
Heidegger, *Being and Time* appears in English translation  
Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*  
Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage*  
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* appears in English translation  
First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois | | |
The first artificial heart is implanted | Assassination of John F. Kennedy  
Imprisonment of Nelson Mandela |
| 1964 | Barthes, *Eléments de sémiologie*  
Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*  
The Beatles appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show* | Gulf of Tonkin Incident  
US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin |
| 1965 | Death of Buber  
Althusser, *Pour Marx and, with Balibar, Lire “Le Capital”*  
Ricoeur, *De l’interprétation: Essai sur Freud*  
Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* appears in English translation | Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*  
| 1966 | Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*  
Deleuze, *Le Bergsonisme*  
Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*  
Lacan, *Écrits* | Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*  
Jacques-Alain Miller founds *Les Cahiers pour l’Analyse*  
*Star Trek* premiers on US television | (~1976) Chinese Cultural Revolution  
Foundation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Johns Hopkins Symposium “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” introduces French theory to the American academic community</td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em></td>
<td>Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall, first African-American Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Derrida, <em>De la grammatologie</em>, <em>La Voix et le phénomène</em>, and <em>L’Écriture et la différence</em></td>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition</em> and Spinoza et le problème de l’expression Habermas, <em>Erkenntnis und Interesse</em></td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition</em> and Spinoza et le problème de l’expression Habermas, <em>Erkenntnis und Interesse</em></td>
<td>Stanley Kubrick, <em>2001: A Space Odyssey</em> The Beatles release the White Album</td>
<td>Assassination of Martin Luther King Events of May ’68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike Prague Spring Tet Offensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Death of Carnap Adorno, <em>Ästhetische Theorie</em> Foucault, <em>The Order of Things</em> appears in English translation Husserl, <em>The Crisis of European Philosophy</em> appears in English translation Founding of the Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology Foucault elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France Ricoeur begins teaching at the University of Chicago</td>
<td>Millett, <em>Sexual Politics</em> Founding of <em>Diacritics</em> First Earth Day</td>
<td>Shootings at Kent State University Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Lyotard, <em>Discours, figure</em> Founding of Research in Phenomenology</td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>End of the gold standard for US dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Bourdieu, <em>Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Watergate break-in</td>
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<td>1973 Death of Horkheimer&lt;br&gt;Lacan publishes the first volume of his <em>Séminaire</em></td>
<td>Creation of the first doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Resignation of Nixon</td>
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<td>1975 Death of Arendt&lt;br&gt;Foucault, <em>Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison</em>&lt;br&gt;Irigaray, <em>Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un</em>&lt;br&gt;Foundation of GREPH, the Groupe de Recherches sur l’Enseignement Philosophique&lt;br&gt;Derrida begins teaching in the English Department at Yale&lt;br&gt;Foucault begins teaching at UC-Berkeley</td>
<td>Alex Haley, <em>Roots: The Saga of an American Family</em></td>
<td>Death of Mao Zedong&lt;br&gt;Uprising in Soweto</td>
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<td>1976 Death of Bultmann and Heidegger&lt;br&gt;Derrida, <em>Of Grammatology</em> appears in English translation&lt;br&gt;Foucault, <em>Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La Volonté de savoir</em>&lt;br&gt;Barthes is elected to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>The Centre Georges Pompidou, designed by architects Renzo Piano (1937– ) and Richard Rogers (1933– ), opens in Paris</td>
<td>Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel</td>
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<td>1977 Death of Ernst Bloch&lt;br&gt;Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Anti-Oedipus</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>Birmingham School: Centre for Contemporary Culture releases <em>Policing the Crisis</em></td>
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<td>Louise Brown becomes the first test-tube baby</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Death of Kurt Gödel</td>
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<td>Iranian Revolution</td>
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<td>Arendt, <em>Life of the Mind</em></td>
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<td>Iran Hostage Crisis begins</td>
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<td>Derrida, <em>La Vérité en peinture</em></td>
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<td>Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister of the UK (the first woman to be a European head of state)</td>
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<td>Nicaraguan Revolution</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Death of Marcuse</td>
<td>Francis Ford Coppola, <em>Apocalypse Now</em></td>
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<td>Bourdieu, <em>La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement</em></td>
<td>Edgar Morin, <em>La Vie de La Vie</em></td>
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<td>Lyotard, <em>La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir</em></td>
<td>The first cognitive sciences department is established at MIT</td>
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<td>Prigogine and Stengers, <em>La Nouvelle alliance</em></td>
<td>Jerry Falwell founds Moral Majority</td>
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<td>Rorty, <em>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</em></td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Death of Barthes and Sartre</td>
<td>Murder of John Lennon</td>
<td>Death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito</td>
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<td>Cable News Network (CNN) becomes the first television station to provide twenty-four-hour news coverage</td>
<td>Solidarity movement begins in Poland</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>Death of Lacan</td>
<td>First cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US</td>
<td>Release of American hostages in Iran</td>
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<td>Habermas, <em>Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em></td>
<td>Debut of MTV</td>
<td>François Mitterrand is elected first socialist president of France’s Fifth Republic</td>
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<td>Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
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<td>Confirmation of Sandra Day O’Connor, first woman Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
<td>Debut of the Weather Channel in the US</td>
<td>Falklands War</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>Death of Aron</td>
<td>Alice Walker, <em>The Color Purple</em></td>
<td>Assassination of Indira Gandhi</td>
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<td>Lyotard, <em>Le Differend</em></td>
<td>Founding of Hypatia</td>
<td>Year-long strike of the National Union of Mineworkers in the UK</td>
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<td>Sloterdijk, <em>Kritik der zynischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Habermas, <em>Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne</em>&lt;br&gt;First complete translation into French of Heidegger's <em>Sein und Zeit</em></td>
<td>Don Delillo, <em>White Noise</em>&lt;br&gt;Donna Haraway, <em>Cyborg Manifesto</em></td>
<td>Mikhail Gorbachev is named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>Death of Beauvoir&lt;br&gt;Establishment of the Archives Husserl de Paris at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Art Spiegelman, <em>Maus I: A Survivor's Tale</em></td>
<td>Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR&lt;br&gt;Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines</td>
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<td>1987</td>
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<td>Toni Morrison, <em>Beloved</em>&lt;br&gt;Discovery of Paul de Man's wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America</td>
<td>In June Gorbachev inaugurates the perestroika (restructuring) that led to the end of the USSR&lt;br&gt;The First Intifada begins in the Gaza Strip and West Bank</td>
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<td>1988</td>
<td>Badiou, <em>L'Être et l'événement</em></td>
<td>Salman Rushdie, <em>The Satanic Verses</em></td>
<td>Benazir Bhutto becomes the first woman to head an Islamic nation&lt;br&gt;Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)</em>&lt;br&gt;Žižek, <em>The Sublime Object of Ideology</em></td>
<td>Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska&lt;br&gt;Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web</td>
<td>Fall of the Berlin Wall&lt;br&gt;Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Death of Althusser&lt;br&gt;Butler, <em>Gender Trouble</em></td>
<td>The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases&lt;br&gt;Beginning of the Human Genome Project, headed by James D. Watson</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela is released from prison&lt;br&gt;Reunification of Germany&lt;br&gt;Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars&lt;br&gt;Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?</em></td>
<td>Fredric Jameson, <em>Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</em>&lt;br&gt;The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet</td>
<td>First Gulf War</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Death of Guattari&lt;br&gt;Guattari, <em>Chaosmose</em></td>
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<td>Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union&lt;br&gt;Dissolution of the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Death of Hans Jonas</td>
<td>The Channel Tunnel opens, connecting England and France</td>
<td>Dissolution of Czechoslovakia</td>
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<td>Gilroy, <em>Black Atlantic</em></td>
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<td>Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Publication of Foucault’s <em>Dits et écrits</em></td>
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<td>Genocide in Rwanda</td>
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<td>Grosz, <em>Volatile Bodies</em></td>
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<td>End of apartheid in South Africa; Nelson Mandela is sworn in as president</td>
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<td>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1992, goes into effect</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze and Levinas</td>
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<td>End of Bosnian War</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Cloning of Dolly the Sheep (died 2003)</td>
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<td>Death of Mitterrand</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Death of Lyotard</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Iris Murdoch</td>
<td>Introduction of the Euro</td>
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<td>Antiglobalization forces disrupt the WTO meeting in Seattle</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Death of Quine</td>
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<td>The Second Intifada</td>
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<td>Negri and Hardt, <em>Empire</em></td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Death of Gadamer and Bourdieu</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Death of Blanchot and Davidson</td>
<td>Completion of the Human Genome Project</td>
<td>Beginning of Second Gulf War</td>
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<td>Beginning of conflict in Darfur</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Death of Derrida</td>
<td>Asian tsunami</td>
<td>Madrid train bombings</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Death of Ricoeur</td>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>Bombings of the London public transport system</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Death of Jean Baudrillard and Rorty</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>Death of Robbe-Grillet</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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Major works of individual philosophers are collected at the end of the relevant essay in the text.


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Foucault, Michel. “Introduction.” In Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological,*


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THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition’s complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy's subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university...
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s On Bentham and Coleridge (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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The years separating 1920 and 1968 were cataclysmic for the world and for philosophy. The destruction wrought by two world wars could be seen as an indictment of Western civilization itself. Depending on one’s point of view, the upsurge of totalitarian and ideological fanaticism marked either the utter eclipse of reason (in the words of Max Horkheimer) or its apocalyptic apotheosis in nihilism. The Cold War that predictably restored faith in reason also witnessed its fetishization, as liberals and socialists accused each other of ideological blindness. The most important continental philosophy during this period was in fact openly left wing and Marxist. Resignation to the rational, bureaucratic order of the liberal welfare state would eventually give way to the revolutionary optimism of the 1960s, reflected in the rise of militant student and working-class movements whose countercultural visions of an alternative society would resonate in the aesthetic philosophies of an emerging poststructuralist sensibility. But in the days that followed the Paris Revolt of May 1968 and the brutal Soviet suppression of the liberal communist regime that had flourished in Czechoslovakia (the so-called “Prague Spring”), this challenge to the established order of reason collapsed with an astounding suddenness. The demise of a revolutionary Marxist humanism would prefigure the emergence of more sober forms of thought that would once again seek to rearticulate the rational meaning underlying modernity. Yet the new wave of critical social theorists was inclined to the view that the contradictions of the liberal welfare state – increasingly laid bare in the emergence of a new global economic order – were intransigent to rational resolution.

The figures, schools of thought, and themes represented in this volume can best be understood as responses to this chronic crisis of modernity and, more specifically, the liberal state. The dawning of twentieth-century Europe revealed
a stark contradiction between newly emergent mass democracies and the rationalist philosophies upholding the older liberal order. The older order had arisen during a time in the previous century when the bourgeoisie had maintained a virtual monopoly on political power. Despite its undemocratic nature, this order had ruled in the name of all citizens. Or, to put matters somewhat differently, its claim to legitimacy resided in upholding universal rights whose foundation was ostensibly identical to reason itself. With the rise of a new corporate phase of capitalism and its by-product – a socialist movement representing the interests of the working class – that pretension was called into question. The sanctified right to property and its corresponding vision of untrammeled individual liberty seemed increasingly anachronistic and even dangerous in a corporatist world that depended on the suppression of class conflict for the sake of maintaining productive social stability.

The liberal reason that natural law theorists, social contractarians, and utilitarians had formerly appealed to in various ways in underwriting the foundations of a stable legal order therefore seemed, in the opinion of many political theorists, incapable of responding to the divided nature of social reality. Thinkers on both the Right and the Left accordingly converged in rejecting Enlightenment rationalism and liberalism. These shibboleths of the previous century, they believed, had exhausted their vitality and, having never been the “neutral” force for universal progress that their proponents had once claimed for them, had finally been unmasked as the mere bourgeois ideologies they in fact were – hence the allure, on the Right, of fascist dictatorial regimes supported by nationalist sentiment and the attraction, on the Left, of communist workers’ associations supported by class interests. In both cases, the crisis of formal rationality and legal positivism opened the door for more substantive philosophies of collective identification, action, and order.

That the thinkers represented in this volume generally represent more nuanced attitudes toward rationalism and liberalism should not mislead us into underestimating their critique of sterile forms of formal rationality and liberal ideology. Indeed, some of them demonstrate less nuanced antirationalist tendencies; this is the case, for instance, with George Bataille and the Collège de Sociologie, the decisionism of Carl Schmitt, and the critical theory of Walter Benjamin. The situation is unquestionably more complicated when we turn to the major exponents of the Frankfurt School, to the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser, or even to the existential phenomenology that keenly informs the thought of Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre, and many currents of French Marxism and black intellectual thought. In general, these latter tendencies – like their more scientifically oriented counterparts in Austrian and Anglo-American philosophy (pragmatism and logical positivism) – take issue with certain aspects of rationalism or liberalism while retaining others.
The Frankfurt School, for instance, developed a sweeping criticism of formal (or instrumental) accounts of rationality that they, following Georg Lukács, identified with capitalism and its abstract individualism or, even more sweepingly and in keeping with their Nietzschean diagnosis, with the primal will to identify and dominate inherent within subjective consciousness as such. At the same time, however, they retained a healthy – albeit not uncritical – respect for notions of individual autonomy and critical reflection associated with the heroic phase of the bourgeois Enlightenment. Although existential phenomenology certainly rejected scientism for its failure to comprehend lived experience of reality, the philosophers influenced by existential phenomenology in this anthology did not embrace the sweeping dismissal of liberal individualism, freedom, and rationality so characteristic of Heidegger’s thought, for example.

I. PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN SCIENCE: APPROPRIATION AND REACTION

The critique of scientism undertaken by existential phenomenologists should not obscure the enormous attraction that the modern human sciences exerted on Marxist and structuralist philosophy during the twentieth century. The critique of sterile forms of philosophical rationalism that had provided so much of the ideological underpinnings of liberal ideology during the previous two centuries meant that philosophy, too, would have to abandon its claim as a self-sufficient source of pure reflective knowledge. Nineteenth-century philosophers like Bentham, Hegel, Marx, and Mill had incorporated the insights of political economy into their thinking. The philosophical amalgamation of anthropology, economics, and politics would proceed apace with the birth of the new social sciences and the transformation of the older humanistic disciplines – philology, anthropology, history, and psychology – into full-blown human sciences, modeled in some respects on the natural sciences.

Marxism, of course, was especially well situated to take advantage of this synthesis of philosophy and science, given its dialectical account of the laws of historical development and natural evolution. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the members of the newly founded Frankfurt Institute would enrich this interdisciplinary vocabulary further with additions from Freudian psychoanalysis and Weberian social science. These research programs, they noted, were less susceptible to assimilation to the natural science paradigm, and so were more or less immune to the accusation of “scientism” that plagued other less critical, “positivistic” social scientific programs (see Chapter 12).

In the meantime, the French developed their own schools of philosophical social science. Marx’s analysis of the deep economic structures determining
entire epochs had opened the way to examining the linguistic and cultural structures underlying all thought. Thinkers as radically diverse as Ferdinand de Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, and Althusser would embrace this scientific structuralism as a more rigorous basis on which to found the study of society.

In sum, the crisis of rationalism manifested both a rejection of liberalism, with its abstract individualism and divisive parliamentarian politics, and an embrace of critical social science as a great engine for revolutionary social and political transformation. Beginning as forms of progressive humanism, these social scientific philosophical movements would eventually lead, by the end of the 1960s, to a strange philosophical reversal: the radical questioning of humanity as a freely self-determining subject of its own making. But this ironic end of the human sciences – and the displacement of the individual as the center of social study and politics – was long in the making, and so we now turn to a brief recapitulation of the intellectual history that led up to it.

II. POST-FIRST WORLD WAR: REACTIONS TO LIBERALISM AS A RATIONALIST IDEOLOGY

Post-Second World War political philosophy evinced a renewed appreciation for liberal individualism and humanism that would belie the structuralist (and poststructuralist) scientific critique of “man” on which I concluded the previous section. But liberal humanism was seen very differently by social philosophers prior to and immediately following the First World War. The mass democracy that had empowered the European working class also raised serious questions about the so-called neutrality of the liberal state in representing the universal interests of all citizens, conceived as abstract holders of formal rights. The rising demand among the working class for a socialist state clearly contradicted the principles of private property and contractual exchange on which the liberal regime had been founded. Orthodox and revisionist forms of Marxism both predicted the demise of this regime, albeit according to somewhat different scenarios. For orthodox Marxism, the collapse of capitalism would follow of economic necessity, as foretold by a scientific understanding of its laws. For revisionist Marxism, the welfare state would gradually evolve into a socialist society as working-class parties gradually wrested political power away from their liberal counterparts. But neither variant of Marxism seemed coherent from the standpoint of practical politics. The revolutionary language of the orthodox camp belied its theoretical defense of economic determinism, which in turn reinforced political passivity; the reform language of the revisionist camp belied its radical aims, which could hardly be reconciled with liberal-democratic principles of compromise and
cyclical transfers of partisan rule. Neither the apolitical rationalism of scientific socialism (economic determinism) nor the political rationalism of lawful social democratic governance (compromise) sufficed to justify what seemed evident to many socialist thinkers influenced by the syndicalist wing of the French and Italian socialist movements: the need for an uncompromising general strike – in short, a revolutionary stoppage – of the capitalist system once and for all.

Georges Sorel’s very influential Réflexions sur la Violence (1908) can be taken as an early sign of what was to come later in the century. Sorel argued that what was needed to spur on the socialist cause was not a theory or politics of reason but a myth heralding the heroic overthrow of the capitalist system by the working class in one single stroke. Sorel’s romantic vision of the working class would later inspire both communists, such as Antonio Gramsci, and fascists, such as Benito Mussolini (himself a former socialist) into developing models of political organization that relied more on the mythic constitution of militant collective identity (proletarian or nationalist) than on any rational appeal to individual self-interest. Of course, Italian fascism was certainly more consistent than its communist counterpart in rejecting Enlightenment conceptions of individual freedom and equality in the name of heroic collectivism, even if it itself remained a movement divided between modernist and antimodernist factions.

Indeed, fascism’s elevation of will over reason would strike a deep chord with conservative jurists such as Schmitt (see Chapter 1). Schmitt was above all else a defender of the state as a bastion of order. His critique of liberal parliamentary democracy was firmly based on what he perceived to be the irrational, conflictual nature of a social reality riven by incompatible ideologies. In the midst of this Hobbesian friend versus foe conflict, only an absolutely sovereign will seemed to stand any chance of imposing order. Schmitt’s examination of the liberal social democracy that had been instituted in Germany in 1919 and that was ostensibly founded on the rationalist legal positivism defended by Hans Kelsen, Max Weber, and other neo-Kantian jurists seemed to confirm his diagnosis. The Weimar Republic’s short life was marked by a succession of “exceptional” states in which the president, as defender of the state, was forced to take advantage of the extraordinary dictatorial powers granted to him by the constitution to restore law and order. The illegitimacy of a parliamentary system in which each party sought to impose its will on the other could not but effect the statutory interpretation of the constitution itself. Ultimately, only the president could “decide the exception,” that is, finally decide what the law was and how it should be applied.

Much has been made of Schmitt’s influence on the later course of German legal history under the Third Reich, but he was no ally of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) prior to 1933, viewing it (correctly) as a grave threat to the state. Nor, despite his opposition to the liberal separation of powers, was Schmitt opposed to all forms of constitutional democracy. To be
Sure, Schmitt was opposed to the (in his opinion) vapid discourse of reasoned justification that supposedly played itself out in parliamentary sessions to no apparent effect. Free speech, he believed, was mainly offered as a show of civil harmony when in reality its effects were quite divisive. With its irrational propagandistic fervor, the full advent of mass “class” politics pitting irreconcilable ideological enemies laid bare the illusion of enlightened liberal debate oriented toward an all-inclusive consensus on universal (or rational) interests. With Rousseau in mind, Schmitt hoped that in place of this lawless state of anarchy a strong national identity might ground a unitary sovereign will that could dispense with discursive and representative forms of partisan-based parliamentary democracy in favor of forms based on direct, popular plebiscites. In this way, the people (discounting those whom the majority judged to be ideological or ethnic outsiders) could be directly identified with the supreme commander and chief, thereby legitimating his decisions as expressions of a general will.

Schmitt’s interest in what he called “political theology” and his Rousseauian belief in absolute sovereignty as a reflection of unitary will maintaining and reflecting community resonated with other strands of thought contained in this volume – some of them remarkably antagonistic to the conservatism of Schmitt’s own philosophy. One extreme example is the Collège de Sociologie (1937–39) and its most renowned member, Bataille (see Chapter 6). Although members of the Collège reflected a broad spectrum of political opinion – from Georges Bataille, Alexandre Kojève, André Breton, and Walter Benjamin (the last three fellow travelers who regularly attended meetings) on the Left to Pierre Libra on the Right – they all gravitated around a profound disinclination toward the enervating effects of liberal capitalism and its worship of rational efficiency and utility. The Collège was devoted to studying the prerational (or religious) unity underlying social community. This venerable theme had been the centerpiece of Émile Durkheim’s pioneering work on the collective consciousness underlying religious-based community over thirty years earlier, but in the hands of the Collège it was given a distinctly Nietzschean (or Dionysian) signification. For Bataille, especially, human existence truly comes into its own only during those moments of transgression and excess when it achieves an absolute sovereign freedom from action, exchange, utility, and morality (understood as a conformity to rules). Only during these rare moments does it experience itself as a kind of unity, and nowhere more so than in primitive rituals of sacrifice that form the life of secret communities (of which the Collège’s companion society, Acéphale, was one). Benjamin’s own singular synthesis of theological messianism and Marxism (see Chapter 4), as reflected in his posthumously published essay based on Paul Klee’s etching of Angelus Novus (the Angel of History), “On the Concept of History” (1940), and his “Critique of Violence” (1920–21), written as a synthesis of Schmitt and Sorel, also sought to defend the possibility of a violent
rupture with the status quo and the whole deterministic history leading up to it by appeal to an apocalyptic leap into the past as an explosive moment of (or secular illumination from within) the present. Not surprisingly, Benjamin’s fascination with surrealism and cinema as a method of propaganda would strike his more rationally inclined compatriots within the Frankfurt School (most notably Adorno) as a dangerously reactionary (and in the Freudian sense, regressive) attempt to dissolve the Apollonian limits of the autonomous individual vouchsafed by liberalism into the solvent of a Dionysian collective unconscious.

Despite Schmitt’s disdain for German revisionist Marxism, whose corporatist conceptions of the state he thought were corrosive of any unified polity, some of his most famous students were Marxists who shared his critique of the modern state. Franz Neumann and Benjamin both came under Schmitt’s spell. Otto Kirchheimer, who along with these thinkers would later associate himself with the Frankfurt School, argued in his dissertation (written under Schmitt’s direction) that parliamentary democracies instituted on a capitalist base inevitably lack legitimacy. In his opinion, the sphere of private law allows capitalist enterprises to contest the sovereignty of the state in asserting their own partial interests in the form of statutory protections. The solution to this problem, Kirchheimer argued, was the abolition of an autonomous sphere of private law immune from democratic regulation by the state. Thirty odd years later, Kirchheimer’s Schmittian diagnosis of capitalist democracy would resurface in Jürgen Habermas’s youthful masterpiece, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), which documented the decline of a liberal public sphere grounded in rational, open debate in the face of propagandistic class democracy. Habermas’s later masterpiece, *Legitimation Crisis* (1973), reframes this diagnosis in terms of a vaguely Schmittian conception of legitimacy, understood as a process of democratic will formation whose legal results reflect a unitary consensus on common interests, as distinct from a strategic compromise that balances plural interests according to their relative share in political power. This notion of legitimacy – which Habermas has since considerably qualified – was presented by him as starkly antagonistic to the principles underlying the liberal state: the separation of powers, the private law/public law distinction, and the grounding of legal policy in class compromise.

Two other Marxist thinkers whose ideas resonate with Schmitt’s are Lukács and Gramsci (see Chapter 1). In general these thinkers agreed with Schmitt that law is inherently political (not rationally neutral), that politics is essentially a partisan struggle to monopolize power in defining the law, and that in liberal democracy the most powerful economic interests (representing the capitalist class) will generally dominate this struggle. Like Sorel, Gramsci rejected the economic determinism of orthodox Marxism and emphasized the importance of voluntary syndicalist action and the crucial role of political parties in organically
shaping and founding hegemonic (sovereign) historical blocs (hence his tribute to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*). As Gramsci’s voluminous *Lettere di Carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*; 1929–35) attest, the state is not an instrument of rational economic management but rather the center of a vast cultural-ideological apparatus that infuses all of society. Hence, far from being a superstructure that more or less passively adapts itself to autonomous economic class structures, it is rather key in constituting these structures. The function of the Party is to unify various sectors of society – “the multiplicity of dispersed wills with heterogeneous aims” – in wresting control of the state’s ideological apparatus, thereby ensuring the continued dominance of the Party as sovereign.

Lukács developed these voluntarist themes in terms of a far-reaching critique of formal rationality, which he took to be the hallmark of reified, capitalist society. Written without knowledge of Marx’s then still-unpublished *Paris Manuscripts* (1844) and *Grundrisse* (1857–58), Lukács’s *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (*History and Class Consciousness*; 1923) adopted the Hegelian distinction between dialectical rational reflection (*Vernunft*) and analytical formal reason (*Verstand*) in arguing against Engel’s and Lenin’s assimilation of Marxism to natural scientific categories. According to Lukács, scientific analyses of reality view society no less than nature as an objectified ensemble of isolated phenomena externally and deterministically connected by formal causal laws. As a consequence of this abstraction, not only do such analyses conceal the dynamic, historical essence of society, but they themselves actually reflect the alienation and commodity fetishism (the principles of exchange and identity) of a capitalist system whose functioning seems at once anarchic and machine-like (that is fragmented and yet determined). By contrast, dialectical insight grasps the totality or mutual relatedness of all phenomena, as a function of conscious, historical praxis.

Lukács believed that only the proletariat, which comprises simultaneously active producers and passive consumers, can experience the contradictions embedded in the “natural” laws of capitalism. Hence, he concluded, only the proletariat can overcome the alienation of subject from object (and, thanks to the collective nature of organized production and organized resistance, individual from society), acquire dialectical insight into society’s unitary, practice-based essence as a whole, and thereby become the free and united conscious agent of history.

### III. THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

Perhaps the most significant school of humanistic Marxism (or rather neo-Marxism, since its interests were more philosophical than political) from the
1920s until the 1960s was that associated with the Institute for Social Research founded in Frankfurt in 1923. The institute’s first director, Carl Grünberg, had allied himself with the neo-Kantian revisionism associated with Austrian Marxism, whose main exponents included such notables as Max Adler, Otto Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding, Otto Neurath, and Karl Renner. These philosophers insisted on retaining a strict separation between scientific economic theory and morality-based political practice. Thanks to the influence of the Hegelian Marxism of Karl Korsch and Lukács, at least some members of the school (notably Kirchheimer) would take a more totalizing, revolutionary stance. But as the failure of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution to develop forms of workplace democracy became apparent, the members of the school became disillusioned with prospects for revolutionary practice. The authoritarianism implicit in the German Communist Party, the ability of the NSDAP to win over workers to its program (which initially promised to side with workers against the “Jewish capitalist class”), and the increasing “convergence” of communist, fascist, and social-democratic liberal states toward a kind of “state capitalism” (as Friedrich Pollock referred to it) led the school to retreat step by step into a shadow of pessimism from which it would never return.

Here, for the first time in the twentieth century, we witness a variety of non-revisionary Marxist thought that sought to preserve the ideas of the bourgeois Enlightenment in a reconciled form, free from the integuments of class domination. However, as against the moral idealism of neo-Kantian rationalism that formed the core of Austro-Marxism, we here find a materialist (or hedonist) appreciation for the satisfaction of basic instinctual drives and desires. Indeed, Horkheimer, who as a close childhood friend of Pollock was recommended to become Grünberg’s successor as director of the institute in 1931 (see Chapter 2), was receptive to the psychoanalytic research of Erich Fromm and Wilhelm Reich in articulating the sexual allure of fascist propaganda, authoritarianism, and mass culture.

One of his most telling appointments was an acquaintance of his from the early 1920s: Theodor Wiesengrund (who would later adopt his mother’s surname, Adorno). Benjamin, another important contributor to the institute’s Zeitschrift, had been influenced by the Jewish messianic Marxism of his mentor, Ernst Bloch (see e.g. the latter’s Prinzip Hoffnung), and this feature of Benjamin’s thought would also impact the younger Adorno. Benjamin wrote on literature, art, and culture (including theological reflections on language and history). His most influential essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), discusses how cinema, photography, and lithography alternatively destroy and refashion the sacral aura of the work of art that attaches to its original site. The reproduction disenchants the timeless authority of the work and makes it available for more secular uses while at the same time relying on vestigial traces.
of the aura to illuminate (in secular fashion) the present. So conceived, reproduced images can function as mass propaganda (as in Eisenstein’s movies or in the Nazi pageant’s echo of monumental art forms characteristic of the Roman Empire) or – as in the case of surrealism and Dadaism – as clashing images that shock and disrupt perception.

Although Adorno (see Chapter 3) was much less sanguine than Benjamin about the revolutionary potential of mass artistic reception and its secular destruction of the transcendent autonomy of art, he was, as noted above, more receptive to Benjamin’s theological reflections as contained in “On the Concept of History.” Adorno’s tribute to this essay in his lectures on history delivered in the 1960s was foreshadowed by the earlier masterpiece, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*; 1944), which Adorno coauthored with Horkheimer (with assistance from Leo Löwenthal). Written in exile during the height of the Second World War and filled with literary and theological allusions, this darkly pessimistic work initiated a decisive break with the Frankfurt School’s former mode of interdisciplinary social scientific research and, more radically, impugned the very possibility of scientific critique in its thesis that formal (instrumental) rationality, far from emancipating humanity, binds it all the more firmly to those natural forces it seeks to dominate and suppress. Largely neglected and misunderstood in this masterpiece and its companion volume (Horkheimer’s *Eclipse of Reason* [1944]) was the left-wing pragmatism of John Dewey that had come to define so much of the progressive philosophical landscape of their adopted country: a “scientism” that had managed to articulate a similar critique of positivism and abstract formal rationality, but without jettisoning experimental instrumentalism, which it interpreted phenomenologically as a form of radical, democratic praxis. Despite Adorno and Horkheimer’s missed opportunity to assimilate this American philosophical strand of thought whose critique of reification resonated so strongly with their own, their extension of Lukács’s equation of analytic rationality with the capitalist commodity form and its archaic prehistory in mythic thought still spared dialectical reason as a category of critical reflection, a category of rationality that neo-Hegelian pragmatism also deployed, albeit under the guise of a kind of naturalistic idealism. However, twenty years later, in Adorno’s *Negative Dialektik* (*Negative Dialectics*; 1963) and in the posthumously published *Ästhetische Theorie* (*Aesthetic Theory*; 1969), even this most hallowed of Marxian categories was subjected to withering critique, thereby foreclosing any possibility of reconciling subject and object, theory and practice, outside an aesthetic mode of communication.

This almost total retreat from political action (which Lukács derided as a retreat to “Hotel Abyss”) did not describe Herbert Marcuse (see Chapter 2), who gained considerable notoriety in the 1960s as the guru of the new left counterculture. Marcuse had been active in the German Social Democratic Party
(SPD) from 1917 until 1919 and attended rallies by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Their assassination in 1919 (which Marcuse blamed on the leaders of the SPD) and the failure of the Munich Council Republic in the spring of that year ended his revolutionary activism. Studying with Heidegger and Husserl, his first important theoretical efforts involved synthesizing Heideggerian existential conceptions of historicity and authenticity with Marxian categories of political praxis. The publication of Marx's *Paris Manuscripts* in 1932 drew him ever more closely to a philosophically (and later psychoanalytically) informed hedonism that relied heavily on the classics of German thought, most notably Schiller, Hegel, and Nietzsche. Although his most famous books, *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), develop a sustained criticism of modern technological society, they also entertain the possibility of an emancipated society based on an alternative, aesthetic rationality. It was this vision that the countercultural currents of the new left found so appealing in his thought. Not surprisingly, Marcuse's name could be seen right beside Marx's and Mao's on the placards carried by student demonstrators in Europe during the turbulent events of 1968.

**IV. CONTINENTAL SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY DURING THE COLD WAR**

The aftermath of the Second World War followed by the arrival of the Cold War elicited two responses from continental social philosophers. On one hand, there were those such as Arendt (see Chapter 5) who argued that the totalizing ideologies of Left and Right were both equally complicit in ushering in the totalitarian demise of political life that Europe had just witnessed. On the other hand, the defeat of fascism (and the popularity enjoyed by the Communist Party in light of the heroic role it played in the Resistance) as well as the birth of new independence movements in the third world – many students from the African and Caribbean colonies were now entering French universities – gave new hope to philosophers schooled in Marxist thought that their revolutionary hopes were not for naught.

Arendt's own condemnation of totalizing philosophies (ideologies) marked something of a reaffirmation of the liberal state. Like Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2 vols; 1945) (see Chapter 12), her major studies on totalitarianism and the human condition generally contain a strong indictment of the kind of totalizing philosophy from Plato through Marx that seeks to impose unity over plurality, closure over the unpredictable and open. Her hostility to political theory in the normal sense of that term as well as her dismissal of deterministic philosophies of history led her to embrace a kind of existential phenomenology of the political – or, more precisely, of political action – that
reflected her own highly idiosyncratic synthesis of the ancient Greek philosopher Isocrates, Augustine, Kant, and Heidegger (whose student and lover she had been). Key to Arendt’s phenomenology of the political is her distinction between labor, work, and action, a distinction, she thought, that had its justification in the most original form of political life: the ancient Greek *polis*. While laboring activity is oriented toward producing and consuming the necessities of life, cultural work is given over to producing relatively permanent artifacts that express meaning. Unlike these modes of activity, which can be subject to formal (instrumental) rational discipline, political action is always subject to the contingency of beginning and ending. Action undertaken before and in concert with others is always a response to a prior action and its own final meaning is essentially deferred and open with respect to others who interpret it and take it up. So construed, the essence of action is contingency, unpredictability, and plurality. Its *modus operandi* is expressive speech, not decision and its aim is not to rule but to disclose the individuality of the actor.

Given this understanding of political action, it is not surprising that Arendt would single out Marxism as a false doctrine of emancipation. In her opinion, the Marxist utopia of a stateless society of pure producers is not at all a free society, since freedom is essentially a political category that occurs within a contested public space that is free from both economic and administrative constraints. Although modern revolutions that found states are the purest forms of spontaneous action (subsequent generations of citizens being less free to initiate a new beginning), they contradict their own political intention if, like the French Revolution, they are conceived as affecting a total transformation of society in the name of a general will (the people) and especially if that transformation includes the top-down economic administration of life. For this reason, Arendt felt an especially strong kinship to the American founding fathers, who had the temporary luxury of ignoring the “social problem” (slavery) and who could thereby concentrate on the problem of dispersing power whose guarantee was so essential to the preservation of political action. That said, Arendt’s own political proclivities were neutral: her equal admiration of Luxemburg and John Adams, worker council democracy and New England town hall democracy, stand as monumental testimony to her nonideological commitment to action wherever it might occur.

Arendt’s writing reflects her years of living in exile, first in France, where she worked for Jewish relief organizations, and later in the United States. As noted above, social circumstances also explain the remarkable vitality of French Marxism (see Chapter 7) and the French Communist Party during the period from 1945 until 1968 (a vitality that led Sartre to declare that Marxism represented the “unsurpassable horizon of our time”). Before the war, during the short-lived Popular Front of 1936–38, the Party had joined with the Socialists.
in a coalition government (which collapsed with the conclusion of the Stalin–Hitler pact). During this time there were a number of humanistic currents of French Marxism that competed with the Party’s official “scientific” (dialectical) materialist line. One such current of French Marxism was inspired by Kojève’s introductory lectures at the École Pratique des Haute Études on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and especially his proto-Marxist interpretation of the famous passage beginning the section entitled “Self-Consciousness,” more familiarly known as the dialectic of “master and slave” or “lordship and bondage.” Those attending these lectures, which Kojève delivered in the 1930s, included Bataille, Lacan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and many others. Although some of those influenced by Kojève were members of the Communist Party – this was true of Henri Lefebvre, who translated Marx’s *Paris Manuscripts* into French – others of more independent streak, who were not beholden to the Party’s own conception of dialectical materialism (Diamat), were receptive to Kojève’s own proto-existentialist variety of Hegelian Marxism.

Although the Party frowned on the “bourgeois individualism” of the new existentialist philosophy that was all the rage in France after the war, existentialists – who included Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Simone de Beauvoir – were much taken with Marxism’s focus on concrete action. Their synthesis of Marxism and existentialism was not original (Marcuse had anticipated this development by almost twenty years), but it was certainly more volatile within the peculiar context of Sartre’s own Cartesian version of it, which postulated an ontological dualism between Being and nothingness (or consciousness). In any case, the founding of the journal *Les Temps modernes* in 1945 (named by its chief editors, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, after the famous Charlie Chaplin film), provided a lively forum for French existential Marxists to explore their differences with one another and with more orthodox Marxists, such as Roger Garaudy and Lefebvre.

The most important postwar book written by an existential Marxist was Merleau-Ponty’s *Humanism and Terror* (1947), which sought to rebut Arthur Koestler’s argument in his novel *Darkness at Noon* that the main fictional character (representing former top Soviet official Nicolai Bukharin) had dishonestly confessed to having committing treason during the infamous Moscow Purge Trials of 1937. Merleau-Ponty’s response was not intended as an apology for Stalin’s regime (although it was interpreted by many that way, including Albert Camus, who broke off relations with Merleau-Ponty following the book’s publication). Rather, it was offered as a philosophical discussion of the possibility of being objectively guilty of betraying a cause without having intended to do so.

Merleau-Ponty was to split from Sartre over the Korean War, which Merleau-Ponty blamed on North Korean aggression and Sartre blamed on American provocation. The result was Merleau-Ponty’s *The Adventures of the Dialectic* (1955), in which he accused Sartre of being an “ultra-Bolshevik” whose adherence to
Cartesian dualism led him to undialectically equate the spontaneous decisions of the Communist Party with correct understanding of history. According to Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of embodied existentialism, experience and perception are themselves intermediate between consciousness and being, so that political decisions are always ambiguous in meaning and agency is never transparent or absolute.

Merleau-Ponty’s claim in that book that “revolutions are true as movements but false as regimes” could have stood as the epigraph of Sartre’s own response to Merleau-Ponty. Written during the Algerian War, Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) represents a sustained attempt to reinterpret his dualistic existentialism within a Marxian framework. The “analytic” or *regressive* part of the book postulates an unsurpassable antagonism between freedom and material scarcity. Freedom can be realized authentically only within revolutionary groups that are consciously oriented toward “totalizing” revolutionary projects involving radical self-choice. However, the very scarcity that generates injustice and enables such “groups-in-fusion” spontaneously to coalesce in defining themselves in opposition to their oppressors also acts to dissolve them into mechanically regimented individuals (or serial groups). The “fraternity terror” that organically fused agents impose upon themselves in order to limit voluntary defections from the group eventually becomes crystallized in the form of a bureaucratic state that institutionalizes freedom and justice only by once again reducing its constituent members to passive appendages of the “practico-inert.”

As recounted in the historical (or *progressive*) part of the *Critique* contained in the second volume (whose unfinished text was published posthumously), this dialectic is exemplified in the history of Stalinist Russia in the 1930s. The lesson of this narrative seems clear enough. As in Arendt’s existential phenomenology, economic necessity comes to trump political freedom.

This is a starkly pessimistic diagnosis for any philosophy, let alone one that calls itself existentialist and Marxist. Given this paradox, it is not surprising that by the mid-1960s, existentialism was being seriously challenged by structuralism, the latter presenting itself as a more scientific mode of philosophizing. Lévi-Strauss (see Chapter 10), a friend of Sartre’s, had already become famous with the publication of his *Anthropologie structurale* (1958) in which he argued, against Sartre and with Kant, that the mind is structured by certain universal categories that find expression in dichotomous ways of classifying reality (e.g., culture versus nature). Consequent upon this shift we observe a new wave of structuralist Marxists whose chief exponent was Althusser (see Chapter 7). Althusser, who mentored several generations of students at the École Normale Supérieure, including such distinguished students as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Étienne Balibar, and Bernard-Henri Lévy, did not expressly identify himself as a structuralist for fear that his philosophy would be confused with
the kind of formalism associated with Lévi-Strauss. Yet his major works, *For Marx* (1965) and the two-volume *Reading Capital* (published in the same year and prepared with the help of Balibar and others), display strong structuralist features. In contrast to humanistic varieties of Marxism, Althusser’s structural Marxism insists on a sharp “epistemological break” (as Gaston Bachelard puts it) between objective science and truth, on one side, and subjective experience and ideological practice, on the other. In the Althusserian version of this break, science is one of four autonomous, irreducible spheres of production within society, the other three being identified with economics, politics, and ideology. True science – as distinct from bourgeois empiricism, historicism, and Hegelian essentialism – seeks to uncover society’s global structure that predominantly conditions but does not exhaustively determine the mutually interacting and autonomous structures governing the other spheres of production (the “law of overdetermination”). The “structure of dominance” is by no means necessarily economic; in feudal society it is dominated by the political sphere, in early capitalism it is dominated by the economic sphere, and in late capitalism – with the growing importance of governmentally regulated forms of economic activity requiring technical education, mass communication, and a variety of incentives related to work, consumption and investment, and loyalty – it is dominated by ideology.

In *For Marx*, Althusser dismissed Marx’s early Hegelian writings as unscientific while at the same time maintaining that the mature Marx of *Capital* had inaugurated a new epistemological break – equal in importance to the breaks initiated by Greek mathematics and Galilean physics – in his discovery of social and historical science. This theory, along with the theory of structural overdetermination, has exerted a strong influence on the anthropology of Maurice Godelier and the critical sociology of Nicos Poulantzas, as well as on the post-structuralist archeaology of knowledge of Foucault. Meanwhile Althusser’s emphasis on the dominance of ideological structures resonated with a whole school of semioticians on the Left who have sought to uncover the unconscious mythical codes that reinforce bourgeois culture and class hierarchy (the latter include Roland Barthes, Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Lacan, and others, many of whom were associated with the journal *Tel Quel*).

Finally, to conclude this chapter of existential Marxism, one should not neglect the important connection between African and African American varieties of existentialism and Marxism (see Chapter 8) and the French varieties discussed here. Marxism, of course, had been an attractive philosophy for leading African American intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright because of the American Communist Party’s active role in the early civil rights movement. After Wright permanently moved to Paris in 1946, he became a part of a circle of intellectuals that included such notable existentialists as
Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus. In 1956, he organized the Black Writers Congress of 1956, which featured such notable Afro-Caribbean existentialists as Aimé Césaire and his former student, Frantz Fanon.

Césaire’s *Discours sur le colonialisme* (*Discourse on Colonialism*; 1953) deepened the Marxist theory of class by postulating that class exploitation and racism were essentially linked to the extent that exploitation was directly proportional to the dehumanization of the exploited, a fact that explained the enslavement of Africans but not Europeans. Indeed, in true dialectical fashion he argued that dehumanization dehumanizes the dehumanizer as well. In keeping with his existentialism, Césaire insisted that the peculiar context of racial dehumanization in which blacks found themselves could be reversed, so that blackness and the unique aspects of the African personality could be positively affirmed.

Much of Césaire’s philosophy of *Négritude* was taken up by Fanon and the Senegalese social theorist Léopold Senghor. However, as Fanon observed, it was easier for this philosophy to get off the ground in an African country whose majority was overwhelmingly black than in a Caribbean context. So it was Fanon, a revolutionary psychoanalyst, who explored the psychological dynamics of racism in his memorable works, *Le Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*; 1960–61) and *Peau Noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*; 1952). Fanon had studied with Merleau-Ponty (he later successfully solicited Sartre to write the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*), but his postdoctoral work in hospitals in Tunisia and Algeria as well as his experience in treating both torturers and the tortured while secretly training forces for the Front de Libération Nationale gave him a unique perspective on the effects of colonial racism on the black psyche. Especially central to his Sartrean analysis is the phenomenon of black antiblack racism, in which blacks internalize the gaze of whites and wear this gaze as their own mask. Yet in another sense, blacks are never allowed by whites to wear these masks no matter how hard they try to “pass.” Hence, there is a sense in which blacks are not even allowed to enter into the “master–slave” dialectic of unequal (or failed) recognition that Hegel had in mind when speaking of European class society. Indeed, the task faced by blacks to find acceptance as reasonable and rational (and therefore as human) is impossible once reasonableness and rationality are stamped as white; the more they act like white people – and try to surpass white people in being reasonable – the less normal and reasonable black people appear.

V. CONTINENTAL SOCIAL THOUGHT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1960S

Anticolonial fervor reached its climax during the Vietnam War, just as existential Marxism was being eclipsed. Although Althusser had been a member of the
Communist Party, he was never among the inner circle, and his student Bernard-Henri Lévy followed many other students in leaving the Union des étudiants communistes (UEC) after the Party refused to support the students in their call for a general strike during the May Revolt of 1968. At first the revolt seemed to gain momentum (Sartre gave a short speech encouraging the students), but it was soon crushed by the government. The years following the revolt saw many philosophers, including Sartre and Foucault, drifting over to the ultra-left Maoist Gauche Prolétarienne. Also on the rise was a strong anti-Marxist reaction, which received impetus after revelations of the Stalinist gulags became public (Lévy was one who switched his allegiance from the Maoists to the Nouveaux Philosophes, as they were called). Former members of Socialisme ou Barbarie, Cornelius Castoriadis and Jean-François Lyotard, also moved away from their former radical positions. Among the major figures, only Alain Badiou, Étienne Balibar, and Jacques Rancière retained a strong Marxist identity.

With the eclipse of existentialism and Marxism, new philosophies of postmodern and poststructural bent came to the fore. These philosophies claimed a certain nonideological pedigree, as befit their structuralist lineage. Indeed, for all of his political activism, Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical studies were nothing but exercises in creative textual exegesis whose aim was to stir people to think about the historically changeable structures determining their own knowledge of self, society, and world rather than to call them to action (Foucault even went so far as to describe himself as a “happy positivist”). The same could be said of Derrida’s deconstructive efforts and Lyotard’s paradoxical ruminations on the “postmodern condition.” The linguistic turn, anticipated some years before by the structural linguistics that had been inaugurated by Saussure (see Chapter 9) seemed to have all but extinguished the speaking and acting subject, or dissolved it into a dynamic chain of signifiers. With the end of the subject came the end of all the humanistic categories associated with “metaphysics”: totality, history, community, individuality, rationality, and freedom. Of course, these poststructuralist studies – like the psychoanalytic course lectures presented by Lacan (see Chapter 11) and the ethnological interpretations elaborated by Lévi-Strauss – contained a critique of capitalist modernity and its liberal conceptions of abstract rationality and individuality. The critique of totalizing, reductive approaches indeed had the beneficial effect of pluralizing the field of political hierarchies beyond class to include hierarchies of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, age, species, and so on. A similar reaction could be found among second and third generation critical theorists, but under an entirely different influence. With its progressive synthesis of neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian idealism, on the one hand, and evolutionary naturalism, on the other, the American pragmatist tradition of John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Sanders Peirce (see Chapter 12) offered a critical
phenomenology that was close to Marx’s own early writings. By contrast, in French philosophical circles dominated by postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstructionism the aim was no longer to revolutionize the world apart from revolutionizing our understanding of the self, something that philosophers had always done more or less well since Socrates, thereby bringing to a close an era of radical social thought.
I. LIBERALISM AND MARXISM: SHARED ANTINOMIES

The transformation of liberalism

The first decades of the twentieth century were marked by a wide-ranging rejection of the body of theoretical concepts that had supported most ideas of state legitimacy through the nineteenth century: that is, liberalism. First, this period witnessed an increasing hostility towards positivism, which had been the dominant doctrine among liberal constitutional theorists of the European bourgeoisie. Second, this period also witnessed a growing opposition to the various outlooks associated with Kantianism, which, especially in Germany, had shaped the more progressive political theories of the liberal class.1

Positivism and Kantianism, although diametrically opposed in questions of normative deduction, shared much common ground. In particular, both outlooks can be viewed as theories promoting minimalist models of statehood and constitutional rule, and both converged around the view that states obtain legitimacy through formal and largely apolitical normative processes. That is to say, both outlooks claimed that states acquire legitimacy by ensuring that their actions comply with a thin set of norms (objectivized as constitutional rights) that are withdrawn from everyday politicization; both implied that in modern societies political systems demonstrate legitimacy through formal acts of rights-attribution, and they are not required to integrate members of society

1. For a discussion of the influence of both positivism and Kantianism in the early decades of the twentieth century, see the essays by Mike Gane and Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
as active participants or even specifically to respond to the definite relations of civil society; both thus defined constitutions as documents that legitimize the state by ensuring that the state does not become a battleground for rival social interests and by restricting the degree to which its foundations need to be explicitly contested. In principle, therefore, both positivism and Kantianism can be seen as liberal theories that deduced the form of political legitimacy from a principal antinomy between law and politics, and both presupposed that the law independently sets the preconditions for political legitimacy and political freedom, so that particular state actions and particular political volition always remain subsidiary elements in the constitution of political legitimacy. In both views, in fact, this antinomy was rooted in a wider set of antinomies, between norms and facts, ethics and action, reason and will, and theory and praxis, which together gave rise to the distinctive liberal claim that the sources of political freedom and legitimacy are essentially external to the state itself, and the state plays little factual, active, volitional, or practical role in securing the conditions of its legitimacy.

Viewed from a historical point of view, it can be observed that the liberal visions of positivism and Kantianism reflected the reality of European constitutional states that had not fully entered the condition of mass democracy, and in which the social interests that could be legally represented were restricted. With the increasing demands for substantial franchise reform in most European states after 1900, however, liberal theories began to modify their formalistic constructions of legality and legitimacy. The reorientation of liberal theory became particularly intense during the First World War, by which time it had become clear in most states that the political apparatus would shortly be forced to integrate materially divided and intensely nationalized civil constituencies. It is in the context of this precarious shift to mass-democracy, most importantly, that the political writings of Max Weber are best appreciated. Weber’s writings might be seen as emblematic for the redirection of liberal theory at this time. Weber argued for a reconstruction of liberalism as a doctrine that, although accepting the need for a parliamentary system and the formal rule of law, was able to integrate diverse social sectors by promoting techniques of elite leadership and personalistic legitimation not widespread in standard liberal theories. Underlying this new brand of liberalism was the quasi-Nietzschean

*2. For further discussion of Weber, see the essay by Alan Sica in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.

3. It is notable, however, that Weber’s position was not conceived in a liberal vacuum, and it had a clear analogy to Vilfredo Pareto’s account of modern society as shaped by the conflictual circulation of elites, each of which seeks to preserve the monopoly of material and ideological control. See his Sociological Writings, S. E. Finer (ed.), D. Mirfin (trans.) (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966), 315. For background to Weber in this respect, see Walter Struve, Elites
assumption that classical liberal ideas had too easily assumed that all society could be pacified under law. They had failed to reflect on the ineluctable aspect of conflict in all politics, and they had omitted to observe that modern democratic polities could be unified – and legitimized – only through encompassing political experiences, which integrate citizens in the formal-legal, the active, and the emotive-experiential dimensions of their lives. For Weber, therefore, the stability of democracy depended on the extent to which it was informed by the direct personal appeal of its leaders.

The transformation of Marxism

Similarly, the early twentieth century was also marked by an increasingly hostile critique of the orthodoxies upholding the other main ideology of the nineteenth century: Marxism. As is well documented, in the later nineteenth century Marxist orthodoxy consolidated itself around deterministic and quasi-scientific ideas, and Marxist theorists tended to endorse a brand of socialism that construed the progression toward a socialist economy as a quasi-natural process and used categories of political economy for providing formal analysis of class relations at different junctures in this process. Although clearly separated from liberal principles on questions of material ethics, therefore, the main lineages of socialist orthodoxy before 1900 had important points of overlap with mainstream liberal theory. Most particularly, Marxist orthodoxy shared with liberalism the positivistic conviction that society could be interpreted as a body of rule-bound and rationally constructible social facts, and that the evolution of society was largely independent of human volition and required little transformative intervention. In its political dimensions, moreover, Marxist determinism also followed liberal outlooks in accounting for human improvement and liberation as an essentially apolitical process, in which positive laws of progress pre-determined functions and limits of political action, and in interpreting the political apparatus of society as a deterministically produced element of superstructure, possessing neither directive nor integrative force for society as a whole. In this respect, the orthodox Marxism of the late nineteenth century might be seen to have partly replicated the formal-antinomical structure of liberalism, and it too ordered its account of social reality around underlying antinomies between reason and action, freedom and history, and law and politics.

In consequence, the reaction against orthodox Marxism after 1900 showed similarities with the reaction against liberalism, and it brought a dramatic expansion of the political-actionistic content of Marxist theory. This was manifest in the works of Rosa Luxemburg, who developed a theory that emphasized the role of spontaneous industrial action as a “political weapon” in class struggle.6 This was also visible in the works of Lenin, who proclaimed that the political party was the vanguard of the proletariat engaged in class struggle, and assigned to the party the central role in coordinating the revolutionary process.7 At the same time, different strands of French and Italian syndicalism began to accentuate local political action as the central source of political transformation and so fully to reject the rule of law and the rationalized state bureaucracy as forces for social change.8 This syndicalist tradition culminated in the works of Georges Sorel, who sought to eradicate the positivist and formalist dimensions from Marxist theory, and argued that radical social upheaval could be induced only by unreflected collective voluntarism, which was to be concentrated in the general strike.9 During the First World War, moreover, this actionistic reconstruction of Marxism also migrated across the political spectrum, and it was reflected in the ideas of Benito Mussolini and other early Italian fascists.10 Mussolini’s doctrine, after he had abdicated his position on the actionist wing of the Italian socialist movement, was designed to overcome the perceived actionistic weakness in Marxism by identifying the nation as a focus of political identity, which could unify human action far more potently than any sense of class affiliation.11 He thus championed, not the class, but the mythical nation as a unit of political

action capable of overthrowing liberalism and so also of building a robustly integrated state.\(^\text{12}\)

The early twentieth century, in sum, brought about a theoretical realignment at all points in the political landscape, through which political action came to act as a term for correcting the formalistic dimensions of the main pre-1914 ideologies. Indeed, by the end of the First World War the self-critique of liberalism was showing clear signs of coalescing with the self-critique of Marxism, so that antiliberal and anti-Marxist political attitudes were manifestly beginning to run together. In both theoretical lineages, it was argued that liberalism and Marxism had failed to support their ideas of government and progress with anything more than highly abstracted and quasi-metaphysical accounts of natural order, and that only a more substantial concept of political existence could overcome the conceptual antinomies responsible for this. Politics, thus, was configured as a unifying category of social voluntarism, which superseded the abstraction of human society and human experience under liberalism and Marxism, and which was posited as decisively implicated in all social transformation and as decisively constitutive of all human freedom.

II. CARL SCHMITT AND LIBERALISM

It is in this context that the intellectual origins of the works of Carl Schmitt\(^\text{13}\) can be located. Schmitt, a Roman Catholic born in the (strongly Catholic) Rhineland area of Germany, was the preeminent constitutional lawyer in Germany during the interwar era, and he was a fierce conservative critic of the Weimar Republic. He gained particular notoriety for his endorsement of the use of prerogative legislation in the early years of the Republic, for his advocacy of executive rule and authoritarian governance after 1930, and for his substantial part in the constitutional suspension of the democratic Prussian parliament in 1932. Although originally associated with the Roman Catholic party (the Zentrum), after 1933 Schmitt (to the surprise of his associates) became one of the leading spokesmen of the regime established by the NSDAP. He fell out of favor with the regime in


\(^{13}\) Carl Schmitt (July 11, 1888–April 7, 1985; born and died in Plettenberg, Germany) was educated at the Universities of Berlin, Munich, and Strasbourg (1907–10). His influences included Hegel, Hobbes, Jellinek, Kierkegaard, Pareto, and Weber, and he held appointments at Universität Greifswald (1921), Universität Bonn (1922), Handelshochschule Berlin (1926), Universität Köln (1932), and Universität Berlin (1933).
the mid-1930s, but he was incarcerated during the period of de-Nazification after 1945 and was barred from holding positions at universities in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Schmitt's entire work might be viewed as a critique of the antinomies of liberalism (and, to a lesser extent, of Marxism), and it has the particular characteristic that it defined constitutional law as the theoretical discipline in which a political corrective to these antinomies was most urgently required and could be most persuasively administered. Schmitt, therefore, was a constitutional lawyer, who pursued analysis of particular constitutional problems in Germany in order to examine the legitimatory predicaments of modern mass-democratic states, to explain how the legitimacy of these states could be reinforced, and to counteract the destabilizing loss of political content and political will, which he saw as the result of both liberalism and Marxism.

Schmitt's work had its theoretical center in a critique of the liberal constitutional theories associated with legal positivism, and especially of Hans Kelsen's pure theory of law. In this regard, Schmitt reserved particular antipathy for Kelsen's assumption that law is a neutral medium of social organization, whose normative or value-rational content is not politically determined, and he denounced the Kelsenian assumption that state legitimacy is produced by neutral legal norms, enshrined in a formal constitution, to which the state is perennially obligated and over the terms of its obligation to which the state cannot exercise decisive influence. Central to Schmitt's work through the 1920s was the conviction that the legal neutralism of positivism had created a tradition of weak statehood in Germany. This tradition, culminating in the constitution of the Weimar Republic (ratified in 1919), had produced a succession of states that were fraught with internal divisions, that lacked cohesive foundations, and that were inclined to extreme indecisiveness and instability, thus imperiling the national freedom of all Germans. In consequence, he concluded that a legitimate political order could not be founded in neutral or external legal norms: it must be founded in the one uniform and sovereign will of a constituent power, and this will must provide totally decisive and fundamentally political preconditions for all acts and laws of the state. At the center of Schmitt’s political outlook was thus the Hobbesian claim that the liberal-constitutional Rechtsstaat is based in falsely idealized assumptions about the ethical standards and the principles

14. The sections on Schmitt below contain condensed versions of arguments I have set out elsewhere, notably in German Political Philosophy: The Metaphysics of Law. However, both the thrust and the context of the argument here are rather different from the earlier work.
of sociality governing human life, and that real human order depends on the constant exercise of inalienable and indivisible sovereign power.

Throughout his career, in consequence, Schmitt devoted himself to isolating the corrosive elements of liberal theory, to identifying the concrete reasons why liberalism undermined the integrity of particular states, and – as a matter of day-to-day political engagement – to elaborating principles to counteract the dissolution of statehood enacted by liberal arguments and liberal principles of institutional design. Schmitt’s analyses of liberal theory converged around the following critiques.

**Liberalism and private law**

First, Schmitt claimed that liberal constitutional ideas had weakened the state because they had led to the construction of state power around principles of *private law*. Central to the liberal doctrines and early parliamentary-democratic regimes of the nineteenth century was the belief that political power should recognize and represent private interests, and that positive law, neutrally formulated in legal codes, could ensure that private-legal interests delineated the form and limits of state power. One result of early liberalism, in consequence, was that it created political regimes in which the state resigned structural primacy in society, and it became increasingly accountable to “organizations” of “individual freedom,” whose power was sanctioned, within the state, under the system of private law. Liberalism thus instilled a “pluralism of concepts of legality” at the center of the state, and in so doing it established a state whose ability to define conditions of political order for society was debilitating. This problem remained relatively imperceptible during the period of high liberalism, in which states were only expected to integrate small and relatively uniform constituencies. However, through the later institution of mass-democracies and welfare-democracies after 1918, states were compelled to represent and even to internalize an amalgam of acutely antagonistic private prerogatives, all of which were equally and neutrally protected under private law. The outcome of this, then, was that in most societies the state was transformed into a legal battlefield in which organized groups of private interests vied with each other for the power to influence legislation and to use the state as a clearing house for advancing particular private ambitions: the state became an “instrument of social and political technology,” which could only presume legitimacy by responding, however fitfully, to the demands of the

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pluralized private associations that it incorporated.\textsuperscript{19} The norms of private-legal positivism thus acted as masks for the destructive self-interest of powerful social groups, and the chimerical neutrality of liberal legal thought allowed these groups to destroy the state. In consequence of this, Schmitt concluded, modern states could never be sovereign, legitimate, or integrally political: their attempts to demonstrate legitimacy through sovereign will-formation were always offset by their need to uphold a precarious balance of private material interests, they could only sustain their sovereignty as an unselective and inherently unstable system of command, and society as a whole was no longer able to rely on the protective functions that states had conventionally performed.

\textit{Liberalism and political parties}

Second, Schmitt argued that the principle of legal neutrality in liberalism had a particularly corrosive impact on states that defined themselves and their legitimacy as democratic, and he thus claimed that liberalism and democracy necessarily existed in an uneasy relation to each other. Under the principle of positive-legal neutrality, Schmitt argued, the modern form of the democratic state had evolved as a regime that was in principle indifferent to the actual persons exercising a share of its political power, and it was widely (and neutrally) assumed that the state would retain a persistent integrity against the singular decisions of the governments that it incorporated. This principle, then, had permitted the modern state to evolve, not as a true democracy, but as a parliamentary democracy, which, Schmitt suggested, was a governmental form that both contradicted the inner legitimatory spirit of real democracy and eroded the structure of the state. Schmitt in fact argued that the original democratic belief that the will of the people is the sole constituent foundation for both state and government was a principle that, under certain sociological conditions, was surely capable of founding legitimate sovereign states. This principle, however, had been abandoned through the fateful fusion of liberalism and democracy. It had been replaced by the idea of a state apparatus in which constitutional law sanctioned and supported the fragmentation of the political will between different organs (i.e. executive, legislature, and judiciary) within the state, and in which the positive laws regulating parliament ensured that power was substantially placed in the hands, not of the constitutional demos, but of its appointed representatives in political parties. These parties commonly originated in and represented particular milieux within society, and they were consequently

incapable of acting together to articulate one decisive voice that could be transmitted through society as the foundation for legitimate laws. Indeed, Schmitt asserted, it is particular to parties that they obstruct the formation of one sovereign or constituent political will, they allow the political will to fragment in “compromises and coalitions” and so remain at a level of extremely unresolved particularity,\(^{20}\) and they ensure that the day-to-day running of government is internally focused on the details of inter-party bargaining in order to manage and prevent the erosion of these compromises and coalitions. Once placed at the center of government, the compromises underlying party-parliamentary government might temporarily be glossed over or incompletely mediated by the technical principles of positive law. Yet it is impossible for a government founded in inter-party compromises to generate unitary principles that give integrity and legitimacy to its laws, and it is impossible for such government to act in a legitimately sovereign or legitimately democratic fashion. Government conducted through parties in parliament, in short, is always an external adjunct to the state, and it cannot derive legitimacy from or reciprocally consolidate the legitimacy of the state. Over long periods of time, parliamentary government must necessarily weaken the power of the state, and it must frivolously give state power to social groups outside the state, who wish to overthrow it or use its power for democratically nonmandated ends. Indeed, for Schmitt, the fact that modern mass-democracies normally permit any party to gain access to power, regardless of whether this party supports or opposes the principles of democratic rule, underlined the weakness of party democracies and their creed of legal neutrality, and it demonstrated in symbolic simplicity that parliamentary states were wholly unable to express clear principles of sovereign – or democratic – order. The positivist ideals of liberal law, in sum, had fed a mirage of legal neutrality and neutrally brokered legitimacy within the parliamentary-democratic state. In so doing, they had created conditions in which real democracy was impossible, and in which the state could be easily dismantled and the fiction of its legitimacy revealed.

\textit{Liberalism and peace}

Also of central importance in Schmitt’s theory was the claim that liberal theories erroneously assume that \textit{peace} is the natural condition of human coexistence, and liberal governments naively presuppose that positive law could sustain itself by referring to simply moderated compromises between all members of society. For Schmitt, however, the opposite is true: he saw the liberal belief in “social harmony” as a metaphysical belief, which jeopardized the most reliable factual

precondition of social peace – that is, the will of the sovereign state itself. He argued in particular that mass-democratic polities are characterized by extreme antagonism between social groups, and the state of a mass democracy cannot rely on any conditions of ordered coexistence that it does not produce for itself through its own acts of volition. Indeed, Schmitt concluded that the legitimacy of any state, in the final analysis, depends on its ability to withstand the total absence of natural peace and natural norms and to exert a sovereign will in exceptional conditions of normative suspension. In other words, Schmitt claimed that it is only in those moments where a state assumes for itself the final responsibility for underwriting social order and for autonomously generating its own sovereign political ethic that the state fully obtains and demonstrates legitimacy. It is only in the “state of exception,” Schmitt thus declared, that “the core of the state” is revealed “in its concrete character.” It is against this conceptual background, then, that Schmitt outlined the most famous aspect of his political theory: namely, the claim that the exercise of legitimate power presupposes the existence of a political will that is able to make a concrete decision between friend and foe. In this claim, Schmitt concluded that a state that cannot differentiate between those that support it and those that threaten to undermine it cannot stand the acid test of exceptionalist pressure, and it cannot produce a will likely to facilitate its survival: it is not sovereign. At this juncture, Schmitt argued that to be legitimate the state must be founded, not in neutral or natural norms, but in concrete decisions, which form the basis of political order as they are sustained and enforced by a constant and sovereign political will. Schmitt did not insist that the decision upholding legal/political order must be an expression of violent or dictatorial sovereignty. This decision might be a decision of a historically united and sovereign people. Or, equally, it might be the decision of a president or a commissarial dictator. Whatever its source, however, the decision that founds state legitimacy must be a manifestation of unity and integrity, which, where required, is able to assert itself, exceptionally and totally, to the exclusion of other wills and other decisions. Radical acceptance of underlying social antagonism, therefore, must remain the primary indicator of a state’s capacity for obtaining and conserving legitimacy.

In consequence of these criticisms, throughout his career Schmitt concluded that state legitimacy is sustained only where the constitution of a state renounces

22. Schmitt, Der Hüter der Verfassung, 131.
the liberal commitment to *polycracy*, and where its content is declared as the expression of one constituent will. Schmitt accounted for the uniform will embodied in a legitimate constitution in different ways at different times. In his writings of the early-Weimar era, he argued that, at least in periods of crisis, commissarial dictatorship might be the governmental form that can most effectively “protect” the constitutional will of the state. He concluded at this point that dictatorship itself might under some circumstances be more democratic and more legitimate than parliamentary governance. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, then, he defended government by presidential prerogative, and he argued for the concentration of political power around a presidial executive elite. He claimed at different points that a president, partly freed from parliamentary accountability, was the most effective custodian of the principles embodied in a constitution, and he insisted that a president could secure sufficient legitimacy for his tenure on power by garnering popular *acclamation* in one-issue plebiscites. This argument was especially relevant for the regime in Germany in the last years of the Weimar Republic (1930–33), when Germany was governed by a succession of increasingly authoritarian chancellors, to whom Schmitt provided extensive consultative service, who relied for their legitimacy on presidential nomination and had little or no parliamentary mandate. However, in *Constitutional Theory* (1928), Schmitt also endorsed a more broad-based system of constitutional rule for Germany. He claimed here that the democratic constitution of the Weimar Republic could be viewed as founded in the unified will of the German people, and it could be seen to obtain a degree of legitimacy as an expression of the historical existence of the united national community. At this point, he attempted to explain how the legitimatory status of the Weimar constitution might be reinforced, and he sought to clarify the measures required to ensure that it was not eroded by the technical provisions for legal pluralism more generally characteristic of liberal constitutions. He concluded that all traces of liberal legalism – that is, the guarantees for a separation of legislature, executive, and judiciary, and the catalogue of basic rights – should be removed from the constitution, so that all acts of state could be traced to one undisrupted and unifocal constituent will. At this juncture, Schmitt’s ideas might be placed on a certain continuum with strong-state republicanism, and his thought contained

26. Ibid., 22.
27. Schmitt, *Der Hüter der Verfassung*, 159.
a partial justification of democratic statism. The hallmark of a legitimate constitution, he claimed at this point, is that it guarantees the integrity of a strong central state, capable of ensuring that emphatic principles of order are reflected in every act of state power – and he saw no reason why this could not also be a feature of a strongly centralized and constitutionally concentrated democracy. Indeed, even at the end of the Weimar era, Schmitt was reluctant to lend assistance to those groups agitating for a complete overthrow of the republic, and (to no practical effect) he urged that the state should be reinforced so that parties intending to dismantle the republic (especially the NSDAP) should be prevented from entering government.31

Throughout all changes in his more practical commentaries, however, Schmitt's defining claim was that legitimate order must embody one set of constituent and fully sovereign principles. These principles must – if necessary – override all pluralistic aspects of the polity. Underlying this view was the conviction that all political wills have a total dimension: that is, each will seeks to impose principles through the state that determine social life in all its dimensions. Politics, thus, is always, residually, a conflict between total acts of volition. The neutralism at the heart of liberalism meant that liberal regimes could not recognize this fact, and they could, over longer periods of time, not produce principles to sustain reliably legitimized states.

III. SCHMITT AND MARXISM

Schmitt was emphatically hostile to Marxist political theory and, as discussed, he offered service to a number of authoritarian rightist cabinets in Germany. Schmitt's deep hostility to Marxism is seen in a number of different ways. Most obviously, he viewed the quasi-corporate regime of the Weimar Republic as an irresponsible outgrowth of the revisionist Marxism of the German Social Democratic movement. Throughout his work, he campaigned against the principle that political order could be reliably organized around inter-party deals

31. At one point, for instance, Schmitt denounced the total “parties” or the “activist parties” seeking to “dominate the state” in late-Weimar politics (Schmitt, “Weiterentwicklung des totalen Staats in Deutschland,” in Verfassungsrechtliche Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1924–1954: Materialien zu einer Verfassungslehre [Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1958], 359–71, esp. 362–3). More famously, he also went to great pains to show that the supposed neutrality of law under the parliamentary systems made it easy for parties to hold “legal power in their hands” in order entirely to destroy the constitution. In this analysis, he implicitly suggested that the president should use decisive powers to prevent the assumption of power, by legal means, by the NSDAP (Carl Schmitt, Legalität und Legitimität [Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1932], 37; Legality and Legitimacy, Jeffrey Seitzer [trans.] [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004], 36).
concerning material provision or welfare, and he derided the corporatist revision of Marxism in the German labor movement as a particularly debilitating political pluralism. More generally, then, he also indicated that in espousing a final vision of a naturally evolving society without scarcity, Marxism reflected the weaker aspects of liberalism in pledging itself to an antipolitical utopia, and in so doing it deeply depleted the capacities for conflict and decision that every successful movement requires; indeed, it negated the constitutive structure of politics itself. Despite this, however, Schmitt’s arguments against liberalism also contain a series of points that both intersected with and supported Marxist analysis of modern democracies.

First, Schmitt’s critique of the positivist rule of law replicated elements of more common Marxist analyses of the concept of legality in parliamentary democracies. Above all, Schmitt dismissed as a fiction the belief that law can be extracted from political struggle and used as a medium that can independently or neutrally prescribe or manufacture preconditions for political legitimacy. For Schmitt, law is always political, and as such it is always an object of the total struggle for power between rival ideological visions and rival political movements, which forms the irreducible structure of all politics. In close analogy to Marxist principles, therefore, he argued that the law has no functional autonomy, it cannot produce legitimacy through palliative administrative acts, and its content must always be observed as asserting an underlying and potentially hegemonic political will. Indeed, Schmitt came close to suggesting that the liberal/positivist belief in the neutrality of law is simply ideology. Certainly, the Kelsenian idea that there can be pure norms in a society must appear both to a Schmittian and to a Marxist perspective as a deeply absurd and in fact evidently ideological fallacy.

Second, Schmitt indicated that in democratic states sanctioning the neutral rule of law and guaranteeing equal opportunity to all political and economic actors, there is always a high probability that economically advantaged social groups will exploit the parliamentary apparatus for their own ends, and they will monopolize the law to consolidate their own authority over the state and through society more generally. The tension between liberalism and democratic legitimacy, therefore, is always flanked by a tension between capitalism and democratic legitimacy, or between capitalism and democracy tout court. In this aspect of his theory, Schmitt evidently had much in common with radical left-leaning critiques of the parliamentary system, and he even cleared the terrain for a specific critique of democracy under conditions of late capitalism. In particular, he claimed that under the system of neutrally protected private law in modern democracies it is inevitably the case that the boundary between polity and economy becomes blurred, and this allows private economic agents to use the power attached to their social positions outside parliament to secure
a dominant stake in the parliamentary apparatus of the state. This has the result that the state forfeits the ability to consolidate its legitimacy above or against the plural associations of civil society, and, under certain conditions, the state is forced to fuse with private prerogatives receiving only minimal political sanction and support. Where this is the case, the state can easily be transformed into an instrument of economic control.

In addition to this, third, it can also be observed that Schmitt’s thought overlapped with some of the more radical-voluntarist stances at the political fringe of Marxist theory in the early twentieth century. Specifically, Schmitt shared with left-oriented political voluntarism the conviction that the main ideologies arising from the nineteenth century were deficient because they examined social existence in antinomical, dualist/metaphysical and politically depleted terms. Like other voluntarists, Schmitt argued that these ideologies catastrophically undermined their own programs by failing to understand that the political dimension of society could not be separated out from other (perhaps economic or legal) aspects of society, and by omitting to recognize that in modern societies, and especially in mass democracies, all political organs (both states and parties) are incessantly engaged in a conflict for the monopoly of political power. Schmitt’s claim that political organs are called on to legitimize themselves through a fundamental exercise of the will, that they must recognize all social acts as relevant for and even formative of political power, and that the consolidation of political power requires the presence of an integral political bloc, might thus have appeared particularly accurate and helpful to theorists on the voluntarist Left, who were necessarily committed to ideas such as mass-mobilization and uniform solidarity, and who were deeply skeptical about pluralism and the rule of law. In any case, the emphasis that Schmitt placed on the decisive sovereign will as the unitary basis for political ethics fused clearly with theories on the political Left, and it was correlated both with the radical-Left critique of liberalism and the radical-Left critique of deterministic Marxism. In particular, Schmitt’s thought intersected closely with views of those on the Left who also suspected that the formal rule of law and the sharing of power between classes in a parliamentary apparatus could not place the state-founding sector of society (in this instance, the revolutionary class) in an enduring position of advantage, and that consequently concluded that legitimate (i.e. sovereign) government always presupposes an aspect of totalism.

32. I found helpful commentary on this in Renato Cristi and Pablo Ruiz-Tagle, La República en Chile: Teoría y Práctica del Constitucionalismo Republicano (Santiago: LOM, 2006), 66.
33. Hence also Schmitt’s closeness to some aspects of Austro-Marxism, especially to Max Adler’s argument that a socialist state presupposes unified solidarity; see Max Adler, Die Staatsauflösung des Marxismus: Ein Beitrag zur Unterscheidung von soziologischer und juristischer Methoden (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 49.
IV. SCHMITT AND EARLY WESTERN MARXISM

The Frankfurt School

The utility of Schmitt’s concepts for neo-Marxist political analysis was not lost on his contemporaries. For instance, some theorists peripherally attached to the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt made productive use of Schmitt’s work. Most importantly, Otto Kirchheimer, whose doctorate was supervised by Schmitt, elaborated a critique of liberal parliamentarism, in which he tied Schmitt’s critique of legal pluralism to a political-Marxist account of the legitimatory processes and the role of modern law in modern democracies. Kirchheimer argued that in societies combining capitalism and parliamentary democracy states invariably suffer from a lack of legitimacy, and fundamental – that is, sovereign – decisions regarding the constitutional form of the state are dissolved by principles that are protected under liberal private law, which in fact asserts a surreptitious primacy over all other law. Kirchheimer thus extended the implicit critique of late-capitalism in Schmitt’s theory by arguing that states secure legitimacy only if they possess a unitary constitution containing a mandatory decision concerning all the areas of society that can be legally regulated – including, expressly, the private economy – and if this decision can be enforced in order to subordinate to the state all elements of legal pluralism – including, most particularly, private law. Kirchheimer’s programmatic constitutional voluntarism clearly repudiated many of Schmitt’s principal stances. However, his theoretical approach was strongly influenced by Schmitt, and it clearly marked an attempt to translate Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty into a model of decisive government under a decisively class-based constitution.

At a later stage in the formation of critical theory, then, Jürgen Habermas also transfigured some of Schmitt’s arguments, and he harnessed these views to a radical-democratic conception of legitimate political order. Most obviously,


*37. Habermas’s work is discussed in more detail in the essay by Christopher F. Zurn in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas joined Kirchheimer in asserting that modern capitalist democracies are marked by a suppressed tension between the sociofactual conditions of legal validity and the normative democratic decisions that are enshrined in the constitution as principles of state legitimacy. In political systems commonly viewed as democratic, he claimed, the unitary political will of the people is undermined by compromises between political parties, and by organs of corporate interest and economic management that disrupt and parcelle the sovereign public will.\(^{38}\) As a result of this, in modern (capitalist) democracies, laws do not reflect commonly formed interests or agreements, and they cannot represent a clearly legitimizing political will: they are technical institutions that are utilized primarily for administering material goods in order to maintain basic conditions of social harmony, and their essential function is to palliate social conflicts, to obscure the legitimationary weaknesses that underlie the polity, and to pursue emollient strategies of regulation. Only a democratic polity that is constitutionally based in universal agreements, obtained in communicative political interaction in a free public sphere, can, for Habermas, be authentically legitimate.\(^{39}\) Even Habermas’s later argument, outlined in *Legitimation Crisis of Late Capitalism* (1973), that late-capitalist polities are invariably hamstrung by insoluble weaknesses arising from the fact that they *materialize* their reserves of political legitimacy, cannot quite obscure its origins in Schmitt’s critique of liberal pluralism.\(^{40}\)

**Georg Lukács**

If Kirchheimer and Habermas undertook the most literal reception of Schmitt on the political Left, however, it can also be observed that, because of the conceptual horizons in which they worked, the concerns motivating Schmitt’s thought were quite generally reflected among radical theorists. For this reason, even theorists on the Left who vehemently opposed, or in fact had no first-hand knowledge of Schmitt’s work also developed theoretical structures that showed a marked similarity with elements of Schmitt’s approach.

Similarities with Schmitt’s critique of liberalism as political metaphysics and his attempt to found a sovereign politics beyond the antinomies of liberalism can

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be seen, for example, in the works of Georg Lukács. Lukács was in many ways the leading Marxist intellectual of interwar Europe. His works assumed seminal importance in the formation of the theoretical canon of Western Marxism. Born in Hungary, he studied in Germany, where he was deeply influenced by Weberian sociology, neo-Kantian epistemology, and Kierkegaardian existentialism, and he wrote many of his major works in German. He was a member of Béla Kun’s government during the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, after the collapse of which and the assumption of power by Miklós Horthy’s counter-revolutionary regime he went into exile, first in Berlin and then in Moscow. He later held office in Imre Nagy’s anti-Stalinist government in Budapest in 1956. After the dissolution of this government, he was interned in Romania, and he remained on very uneasy footing with the Soviet authorities.

Although he referred to Schmitt only in tones marked by intense invective, Lukács’s work moved close to Schmitt in a number of ways. In particular, Lukács’s work mirrored Schmitt in that he too claimed that liberal thinking is prevented by its inner antinomies from envisaging the sources of integral social life, and that, because of this, it cannot produce principles to institute or even imagine a fully legitimate system of public order. Moreover, he also moved in parallel to Schmitt in arguing, against the antinomical constructions of liberalism, that each mode of social order reflects an absolutely integral condition of society, that there can be no enduring coexistence between elements of rival systems of social order, and that the political aspects of society must be analyzed as sustained by a highly pervasive and effectively total set of underlying forces.

At a primary level, Lukács argued that liberalism was not only a series of theoretical stances or political dispositions, but also a socioepistemological reality that needed to be analyzed both in its economic and in its cognitive/theoretical dimensions, and that could only be superseded if its cognitive foundations were both adequately comprehended and dismantled. Liberal society, Lukács claimed, had its formative substrate in a formal-subjectivist or quasi-monadic conceptual apparatus, which he termed false consciousness, and which he saw as concentrated in exemplary fashion in the ideologies of liberalism: positivism and Kantianism. Lukács viewed false consciousness, most especially, as consciousness that is unable accurately to reflect its formative relation to objective reality: that is, it is a mode of consciousness that constructs itself within a duality between subject and object, between rational truth and material history.

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41. Georg Lukács (György Szegedy von Lukács; April 13, 1885–June 4, 1971; born and died in Budapest, Hungary) was educated at the Universities of Budapest and Berlin. His influences included Hegel, Kierkegaard, Lask, Marx, and Rickert, and he held appointments as: Commissar for Culture and Education, Budapest (1919); Member of Parliament, Budapest (1949–56); Professor of Aesthetics and Cultural Philosophy, Budapest University (1945–56); and Minister of Culture, Budapest (1956).
between ethical norms and social facticity, and that supports its claims to knowledge by positing the forms of its knowledge as antinomically or metaphysically independent of the objectively determinant reality of material history. False consciousness, Lukács then explained, is causally enmeshed with the economic base of capitalism, and, in imagining human rationality as dislocated from and indifferent towards historical objects and historical processes, it also reflects the capitalist social order as an invariable or even quasi-natural external order of society. As a result, however unwittingly, it helps ideologically to solidify and perpetuate the relations of economic exchange characterizing capitalism. False consciousness, in sum, is the foundation for the liberal-capitalist condition of society in its totality.

For this reason, Lukács also claimed that the objective or institutional forms typical of bourgeois society also result from and reflect false consciousness, and they are preserved by distinct patterns of rationality and concept-formation. His attack on liberal bourgeois reason thus also contained an attack on the ethical and the juridical/political foundations of liberal thinking. In particular, he claimed, in ascribing to human reason a primary capacity for static norm-production and in assuming that the institutions of society could be prescribed by statically deduced norms, the false consciousness of liberal reason directly impedes insight into the concrete/material determinacy of society’s laws, and it again constructs its truth claims in categorical forms that reflected the outer reality of the capitalist order in metaphysically apologetic terms. The tendency in Kantianism and in positivism to provide entirely formalized accounts of legal validity was thus, for Lukács, an example of a mental attitude that reproduced and reinforced the “intellectual forms of bourgeois society,” and so served ideologically to legitimize both inner and outer reality as perennial and unshakably natural. For Lukács, therefore, the legal ideas of liberal consciousness might once have purported to promise ethical integrity and political freedom for modern society. In fact, however, they obstructed any meaningful objective analysis of the conditions of freedom, and they deeply consolidated the overarching condition of social heteronomy that they sought to supplant.

In setting out these analyses, Lukács concluded that liberalism could be grasped only if it was approached as the total form of a society, incorporating the material base, the legal-political superstructure, and the principles of human cognition in one highly alienated and coercive social bloc. This society, then, could be overcome only through a total transformation, impelled formatively by

43. Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein, 207; History and Class Consciousness, 109.
a change in the structure of reason: that is, it could be overcome only if human consciousness evolved from the state of false or bourgeois consciousness to a state of proletarian consciousness. A proletarian consciousness, he suggested, is consciousness that has the following features: it recognizes its objects as materially produced and determined by underlying social (economic) process; it reflects itself as mediated through the totality of objective (economic) historical conditions in society; it comprehends the ways in which changes in material process determine subjective consciousness and in which changes in subjective consciousness alter material processes; it overcomes its antinomical reification towards material contents and processes by examining both itself and its objects as socially produced; it obtains, as a result of these facts, a degree of constitutive freedom and historically formative autonomy in its relation both to itself and its objects.\footnote{44} Postbourgeois consciousness, in short, must necessarily take the form of revolutionary consciousness, and as soon as consciousness has acquired unitary knowledge of itself and the objective conditions of its formation, it must express this knowledge in a single revolutionary moment. That is, it must – in the “free act of the proletariat” – liberate itself from the conditions of its objective determinacy and recreate the objective reality of society as a condition of objectively realized collective freedom.\footnote{45} Lukács thus saw the revolutionary act, coordinated by a political party embodying “proletarian class-consciousness,”\footnote{46} as an act that removes the material causes of false liberal consciousness (that is, it removes capitalism), that institutes a sociopolitical order that is no longer dominated by the cognitive fictions of liberal reason, and that creates a collective order in which the legal apparatus is fully unified with the needs of human beings as these arise from their objectively determined societal position. Proletarian consciousness, Lukács thus concluded, is consciousness that finally leads to a genuinely human political society, in which consciousness, reflected through the totality of its objective conditions, provides a unifying cognitive foundation for all society.\footnote{47}

In this respect, Lukács’s critique of liberalism and liberal consciousness can be seen as the most far-reaching attempt to envisage a political condition resulting from the end of liberal antinomism. That is to say, it imagined a condition in which human cognitive/ethical and active/practical life were unified in a social order that integrated human life in its totality: that is, that no longer separated human existence into the false antinomies of theory/praxis, law/politics, norms/action, reason/will, and so on. At the same time, Lukács’s work also embodied

\footnote{44} Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein, 282; History and Class Consciousness, 159.\footnote{45} Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein, 355; History and Class Consciousness, 209.\footnote{46} Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein, 455; History and Class Consciousness, 299.\footnote{47} Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein, 328; History and Class Consciousness, 190.
the most radical attempt to overcome the scientific determinism in Marxism. Lukács argued that a socialist society can develop only under specific cognitive preconditions, and he claimed that the material transformation of society has its precondition in a total cognitive and a total active transformation of society. Although far removed from Schmitt’s express concerns, therefore, Lukács’s thought clearly circled on the same antinomies that preoccupied Schmitt, and his idea of legitimate order as a total condition of society reflected aspects of Schmitt’s thought. Like Schmitt, in particular, his attempted resolution of these concerns critically traversed the ideological divide between liberalism and Marxism, and it proposed a concept of social totality that aimed, at once, to resolve the antinomies in both these theoretical stances.

**Antonio Gramsci**

After Lukács, Antonio Gramsci can also be named as a Marxist theorist whose thought showed a distinct, although also only very partial, parallel to Schmittian ideas. Gramsci was the main Marxist theorist of twentieth-century Italy. He was a founding member of the Italian Communist Party, whose effective leader he had become by 1924. With Palmiro Togliatti and others, he ran the journal *L’Ordine nuovo*, which played a highly influential role during the years of industrial unrest in Italy after 1918. He was imprisoned under Mussolini’s emergency laws of 1926, and was very roughly treated in prison, often being kept in isolation. He died shortly after his release on grounds of ill health.

Naturally, it might appear rather absurd to mention Schmitt and Gramsci in the same breath. There is no strong evidence to suggest that Gramsci knew or was sympathetic to Schmitt’s thought. However, at the level of theory-construction, Gramsci’s work revolved around the same conceptual problems as Schmitt’s ideas, and it can also be viewed as a theory that sought to imagine legitimate political order by moving at once beyond the antinomies of liberalism and the antinomies of classical Marxism.

The first point requiring analysis in this respect is Gramsci’s critique of the prevalent *economism* in Marxist theory. For Gramsci, the assumption in orthodox Marxism that social transformation follows a deterministic path,

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48. Antonio Gramsci (January 22, 1891–April 27, 1937; born Ales, Sardinia, Italy; died in Rome) was educated at the University of Turin (1911–15). His influences included Croce, Lenin, Marx, and Pareto, and he held appointments as: editor of the journal *Grillo del popolo* (1917); founder of the newspaper *L’Ordine nuovo* (1919); Leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and Communist Deputy in Parliament for Veneto (1924).

49. See the treatment of this relation in Andreas Kalyvas, “Hegemonic Sovereignty: Carl Schmitt, Antonio Gramsci and the Constituent Prince,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5(3) (2000). This is an excellent essay, but it does not substantially inform my discussion here.
and that scientific economic analysis provides sufficient utensils to understand
the course of social change, was deeply misguided, and it failed to identify the
elements of concrete conflict and selective strategy by which social change
is caused. Marxist economism, Gramsci concluded, was an outlook directly
derived from liberalism, and it replicated many of the antinomies of liberal-
ism.\(^50\) On this basis, he argued that it was essential to rescue Marxism from
economism, and to ensure that the Marxist theory of social revolution incorpo-
rated an adequate account of political action and an adequate knowledge of the
specific historical constellations in which political action was to be conducted.
Gramsci therefore followed Sorel in introducing a strongly voluntaristic dimen-
sion into Marxist doctrine, and he focused his work on the need to examine the
specific modes of political organization required to effect and consolidate social
revolution.

This emphasis on the necessity of political analysis, political action, and polit-
ical consciousness had a number of implications for Gramsci's thought as a
whole. In his early work during the \textit{biennio rosso},\(^51\) for instance, he ascribed
singular importance to the political activities of workers' councils, which he
specifically differentiated from the particularistic interests pursued by syndicates
and trade unions,\(^52\) and which he defined as cells promoting a general ethic of
political self-organization and quasi-Tayloristic "self-discipline" among the revo-
lutionary class.\(^53\) The organization of workers in councils, he argued, brought
the primary benefit that it allowed workers to assume political responsibilities
close to those assumed by states and political institutions in society more widely,
and it enabled them to gain educational experiences of self-administration and
to propagate a political and ideological culture likely to support eventual prole-
tarian autonomy. He consequently defined the council as the "model of the
proletarian state," in which members of the proletariat received the opportunity
to test out practices likely to consolidate a pattern of statehood adequate to revo-
lutionary interests and revolutionary consciousness.\(^54\)

Throughout the course of his work, moreover, Gramsci also defined the
political party as a crucial center of political organization, and he ascribed to

\(^{50}\) Antonio Gramsci, \textit{Quaderni del carcere}, Sergio Capriglio and Elsa Fubini (eds) (Turin:
Einaudi, 1975), vol. III, 1589; \textit{Prison Notebooks}, Joseph A. Buttigieg (trans.) (New York:

\(^{51}\) This term describes the two years of widespread and often violent industrial agitation in
northern Italy after the end of the First World War.

\(^{52}\) See Gwyn A. Williams, \textit{Proletarian Order: Antonio Gramsci, Factory Councils and the Origins

\(^{53}\) On Gramsci's enthusiasm for US-style Taylorism, see Gramsci, \textit{Quaderni del carcere}, vol. III,

the party a distinctive function in creating conditions likely to facilitate and solidify social transformation. In his notes on Machiavelli, contained in his *Prison Notebooks*, he claimed that in modern societies political parties have a position analogous to that of the state-founding or sovereign activities of the prince in a classical republic, and the revolutionary party acts as an “organism” that forms and articulates the “collective will” required to found and stabilize new political institutions.\(^5\) In addition to this, Gramsci also accorded crucial significance to the political function and status of the intellectuals in the political party, and he argued that, admittedly with certain “distinctions of degree,” all members of political parties perform intellectual functions for society. That is, all party members operate as “agents of general activities,” and they provide educational and ideological support to underscore the hegemony of dominant social groups.\(^6\)

In each of these respects, Gramsci clearly indicated that human society contains irreducibly political elements, and that the formation of a political – that is, relatively generalized – consciousness is constitutive for all effective social transformation. In addition to this, however, Gramsci’s critique of Marxist economism also brought forth a further and more encompassing political argument, which gradually, through the course of his theoretical career, became the central and most distinctive pillar of his thinking. This dimension arose from the fact that he saw economist analysis as pursuing a deeply reductive approach to the political superstructure of modern society, and that he increasingly perceived the formal-instrumental conception of the state in Marxism as incapable of explaining either the sources of political stability and compliance in society or the mechanisms required for restructuring society through revolutionary action. Even in his early work, therefore, Gramsci envisioned the state, even under the domination of capital, as performing distinctively generalized functions in society, and he refused to accept the economist claim that the state could be analyzed as a technical element of the superstructure: that is, as an institution that possessed no directive or legitimatory primacy for a society as a whole. Whatever its role in regulating exchange and securing conditions for the production of excess capital,\(^7\) he argued, a state always relies on and generates some degree of general legitimacy or social consent, it cannot be accounted for in narrowly coercive terms, and it even performs educational and rationalizing responsibilities for society as a whole.\(^8\) It is on this basis, then, that Gramsci introduced the concept for which he is most renowned: hegemony.

\(^{5}\) Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. III, 1558; *Prison Notebooks*, Notebook 13, §1.

\(^{6}\) Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, vol. III, 1518, 1522; *Prison Notebooks*, Notebook 12, §1.

\(^{7}\) Gramsci freely admits that states have these primary roles; see Gramsci, *L’Ordine nuovo 1919–1920*, 4.

developed this concept in an attempt to propose a multilayered analysis of the conditions of domination and stratification in a society, and he used it to argue that the primacy of one class at one social juncture must be understood as the expression, not only of its monopolization of the means of production, but of its own pervasive political ideology – or even its own political culture – which is both concentrated around and in turn underpins and strengthens the apparatus of the state. He saw class dominance, in other words, as a total political condition of society, in which the status of one social class is “stabilized on a universal level” (i.e. it forms the historical bloc around which society as a whole is organized), and in which this class ensures that its interests, its underlying mental dispositions, and its social values transfuse the entirety of society and create overarching (or total) conditions through which its dominance will be reinforced and perpetuated. The state, thus, is the aggregate of institutions that both stabilize the hegemony of one class and promote a wider generalized culture that makes the ongoing dominance of this class probable. For this reason, Gramsci indicated that social analysis had to be primarily focused on the superstructure, and that it was only through adequate interpretation of hegemonic relations in the superstructure that the conditions for effective social transformation could be ascertained.

On each of these counts, in consequence, Gramsci replaced the thin and technical Marxist account of the political apparatus of society with a culturally and ideologically embedded concept of the political. In this approach Gramsci developed the claim that the assertion of a political will is the precondition of all social transformation, and, like both Sorel and Vilfredo Pareto, he examined the consolidation of political power as the accomplishment of a class combining both material supremacy and the capacity for producing pervasive cultural motivations. This ascription of relatively autonomous formative power to the political system also led him to conclude that any transformation of society had to be preceded by a transformation in the superstructure, and this could only be effected through a concerted and far-reaching cultural, ideological, and educational endeavor, in which new intellectual or cultural conditions for sustaining governmental power were established throughout society in its totality. Radical social transformation, in other words, was necessarily tied both to political revolution and to cultural/intellectual revolution. Conditions of material equality in the economy could not be instituted without the strategic construction of a new hegemonic bloc, able to establish and maintain an ideological force likely to stabilize these conditions. It is for this reason that Gramsci imputed to the political party such a crucial role in effecting social transformation. Unlike Lenin, who viewed the party as the relatively autonomous source of leadership for the

Gramsci argued that the party must act as a mediating link between the revolutionary class and the means of governmental coercion, and it must act to found and consolidate not only a public apparatus supporting the material interests of the revolutionary class, but also a broad culture likely to sustain the ultimate political hegemony of the working class. He thus viewed the success or otherwise of any workers’ party as determined by the degree to which it was able to “possess its own proper notion of the state” and its own “program of revolutionary government.” Indeed, although he occasionally acceded to Engels’s dictum that after a successful social revolution the state would finally disappear and be replaced by a “regulated society,” Gramsci suggested that each stage of history necessarily produced its own hegemonic structures and that each socioeconomic condition was articulated with a particular mode of hegemony or with a particular mode of statehood. A proletarian society, in consequence, would not exist without a political system. A proletarian state would be a state of proletarian hegemony, founded by a quasi-sovereign political party.

On balance, therefore, it can be concluded that Gramsci imputed three distinctive meanings to politics, and in each of these he saw politics as a distinct realm of human praxis and as formative for society as a whole. First, he argued that the state is a quasi-universal dimension of human society, which disseminates increasingly generalized principles through society, and whose power cannot be construed exclusively in instrumental terms. Second, he argued that any moment of social transformation must be analyzed, prepared, and conducted, not merely at the level of economic relations, but also at the level of superstructure, and that societal analysis that formally detaches politics from society cannot grasp the composition of society as a whole. Third, he argued (albeit more implicitly) that, even after the transition towards a socialist society, some kind of hegemonic apparatus would remain, as socialist societies retain a requirement for the universalizing and rationalizing resources contained in and enforced by state power. In each of these respects, Gramsci’s work can be seen as an internal correction of the antinomies of classical Marxism: it relocated the

60. Lenin, *What Is to be Done?*, 185.
5. For commentary see Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci’s Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 17.
64. See the link between sovereignty and hegemony as posited in Kalyvas, “Hegemonic Sovereignty,” 362. See also Gramsci, *Socialismo e fascismo*, 61.
impetus of societal transformation onto the terrain of resolute political action, and it stated that societies lose consistency if they are not held together – or even legitimized – by an overarching political or sovereign will and by a total political culture. In each of these respects, Gramsci’s reconfiguration of Marxism was also intended to move Marxist analysis conclusively away from the residues of liberal doctrine. Indeed, as discussed, from Gramsci’s perspective classical Marxist economism and formal-democratic liberalism were often coterminous. In each of these respects, moreover, Gramsci’s argument also turned on the quasi-Schmittian insistence that legitimate order was not thinkable without a highly pervasive will, capable of transmitting principles of political form through all levels of society.

V. CONCLUSION

Schmitt’s ideas, it can be concluded, had a central exemplary status in the theoretical history of early-twentieth-century Europe. First, they proposed a concept of the political that was designed to overcome the theoretical antinomies of liberalism. In this, second, they at once overlapped with the Marxist critique of liberalism and contributed to the self-critique of Marxism by proposing a theory of volitional conflict and sovereign will-formation as the only means of securing order in highly unstable and deeply contested societies. In such societies, Schmitt argued, principles of order always possess a totalizing character, and the political apparatus sustained by such principles could not be understood as a mere neutral adjunct to the formative processes in society. Political Marxists tended to differ from Schmitt’s view in that, unlike Schmitt, they saw, not the state, but the political party as the organ of political will-construction. However, Schmitt’s broader claim that no aspect of social exchange can be immediately excluded from politics, and that the sovereign will must constantly work to reinforce its hold on all society and to preserve itself against rival and equally total ideological positions, moved him close to much political Marxism. Simultaneously, third, Schmitt’s ideas also reflected the wider sense that pervaded (often in a half-reflected manner) many theories in the early decades of the twentieth century that the political ideals of the nineteenth century had allowed human life to fragment into false oppositions between theory and praxis, ethics and action, process and transformation, law and politics, legality and legitimacy. They had consequently dismembered human society and crucially undermined its resources for self-preservation, freedom, legitimacy, and abiding stability. The diagnosis that this malaise could be surmounted only through the end of political antinomies – or of political metaphysics – and through a restatement of politics as an integral category of generalized action was a diagnosis that moved
between perspectives formally attached to the political Right and perspectives formally attached to the political Left, and that could be sympathetically received by much thinking that imagined conditions of enduring order outside the classical conventions of liberalism and Marxism.

MAJOR WORKS

Carl Schmitt


Georg Lukács


**Antonio Gramsci**


2
THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MODEL OF EARLY CRITICAL THEORY IN THE
WORK OF MAX HORKHEIMER, ERICH FROMM,
AND HERBERT MARCUSE

John Abromeit

At the risk of being overly schematic, one could say that three main currents went into the formation of the critical theory of the so-called first generation of the Frankfurt School. The first and most important current was developed by Max Horkheimer\(^1\) in collaboration with Erich Fromm in the late 1920s and early 1930s.\(^2\) The second, significantly weaker, but nonetheless important current was introduced by Herbert Marcuse,\(^3\) when he joined Horkheimer’s

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1. Max Horkheimer (February 14, 1895–July 7, 1973; born in Stuttgart, Germany; died in Montagnola, Switzerland) was educated at Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (1919–25), and took his habilitation there in 1925. His influences included Freud, Hegel, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer, and he held appointments at Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (1925–33, 1950–58), including Rector (1951–53), and was Director of the Institute for Social Research (1930–58).

2. Erich Fromm (1900–1980) was born to an upper-middle-class, orthodox Jewish family in Frankfurt. While completing his training as a psychoanalyst Fromm became involved in the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute and he also helped found the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute in 1929. Horkheimer offered Fromm a lifetime membership in the institute in 1930 and placed him in charge of a psychoanalytically informed empirical study of the German working class. Fromm published a number of pioneering articles in the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung in the early 1930s, which helped lay the foundations for the institute’s innovative theoretical synthesis of Marx and Freud. But in the mid-1930s, Fromm began to question orthodox Freudianism. His critique of Freudian drive theory, in particular, pushed him away from Horkheimer. Fromm’s membership in the institute was officially terminated in 1939. His social-psychological study of the roots of fascism, Escape from Freedom, was published in 1941 and still bore the marks of the institute’s theoretical positions. For an overview of Fromm’s life and work, see Rainer Funk, Erich Fromm: His Life and Ideas (London: Continuum, 2000).

3. Herbert Marcuse (July 19, 1898–July 29, 1979; born in Berlin; died in Starnberg, Germany) was educated at Humboldt University (1919–20) and the University of Freiburg (1920–22, 1928–33). His influences included Dilthey, Freud, Hegel, Heidegger, Horkheimer, Lukács, Marx,
Institute for Social Research in 1933. Finally, with the growing estrangement between Horkheimer and Fromm in the late 1930s, the path was cleared for a closer working relationship between Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, which initiated the beginning of a new phase in the development of critical theory. Although Horkheimer and Adorno became acquainted in the early 1920s, the development of their thought followed different trajectories in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Adorno's greater interest in aesthetic issues and the significant influence of Walter Benjamin on his thought during this time are just two examples of this divergence. Adorno and Benjamin's work is treated elsewhere in this volume, so I shall limit myself in this essay to an examination of the first two of the three main currents that led to the formation in the 1930s of the distinctive and highly influential school of thought known as critical theory. In the late 1930s and early 1940s Horkheimer and Fromm abandoned some of the key assumptions of this early model of critical theory, but it continued to inform Herbert Marcuse's work. For this reason and also owing to Marcuse's key role in introducing critical theory to a much broader audience in the 1960s, I shall also provide a brief overview of his later writings.

I. MAX HORKHEIMER

Max Horkheimer was born in 1895 in Zuffenhausen, a suburb of Stuttgart, Germany. His parents were members of Stuttgart's Jewish community, which had grown steadily in the course of the nineteenth century and had succeeded in establishing itself as an integral part of the city's economic, political, and cultural life. His father was of modest origins, but took advantage of the economic boom in Wilhelmine Germany and established himself as a successful textile manufacturer. His father hoped that Horkheimer would take over his factory, but Horkheimer demonstrated little interest in the life of an industrialist. In 1911,
Horkheimer met Friedrich Pollock, whose father was also a wealthy industrialist. The two of them soon became inseparable friends—a bond that would prove decisive for the development of critical theory over the next half century. Horkheimer and Pollock's parents sent them to Paris, Brussels, and London to learn French and English and to study the most advanced techniques in textile production. While living abroad, Horkheimer and Pollock devoted most of their time to their burgeoning interests in literature and philosophy and to pursuing a bohemian lifestyle. With the outbreak of the First World War, they were forced to return to Stuttgart and Horkheimer took a position working in his father's factory. Having already lived abroad and realizing that other Europeans were no better or worse than the Germans, Horkheimer was immune to the nationalist hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of the war. As the war and his labors in his father's factory dragged on, Horkheimer's already significant disaffection with the bourgeois world of his parents and the career path his father had chosen for him grew to a fevered pitch. Horkheimer expressed his radical rejection of the war and the society that had produced it in a series of novellas, short plays, and diary entries. After serving briefly as a noncombatant in the war, Horkheimer was sent to a sanatorium near Munich to recover from a debilitating illness. While there Horkheimer made contact with Germaine Krull, an avant-garde photographer and a leading figure in the radical leftist, bohemian circles that

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6. Friedrich Pollock (1894–1970) was born to a wealthy, highly assimilated Jewish family in Freiburg, Germany. Soon after moving to Stuttgart around 1910, he met Horkheimer and formed a friendship that would last for the rest of their lives. In 1923, Pollock completed his PhD in economics with a dissertation on Marx's theory of money. At about the same time he, Horkheimer and Felix Weil—who was also the son of a wealthy industrialist—hatched the idea for an Institute for Social Research, which would be financed by Weil's father Hermann. The following year the institute was officially opened, with Carl Grünberg as its first director. Unlike Horkheimer, Pollock worked directly for the institute during the 1920s. His first full-length study, *Experiments in Economic Planning in the Soviet Union*, was sponsored and published by the institute. After Horkheimer assumed Grünberg's position as the director of the institute, Pollock's role became increasingly administrative, although he did contribute a series of articles on the topic of “state capitalism,” which contributed to a substantial shift in Horkheimer's theoretical position in the late 1930s. Pollock accompanied Horkheimer and Adorno from New York to Los Angeles in 1941. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the product of Horkheimer and Adorno's theoretical collaboration during this time, was dedicated to Pollock on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. Pollock returned to Frankfurt with Horkheimer after the war and worked in the re-established institute.

would spearhead the Munich council republic in 1919. Horkheimer became close friends with Krull and presented his novellas and plays at social gatherings in her atelier, which were attended by prominent members of Munich's bohemia and literati, such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Ernst Toller, and Stefan Zweig. After the brutal suppression of the Munich council republic by the Freikorps in May 1919, Horkheimer decided that the possibility for a mass-based social revolution was foreclosed for the time being. Horkheimer's explorations of bohemia and his self-understanding as an artist were brought to an end by his decision to move to Frankfurt with Pollock in order to get a rigorous theoretical education, which he now viewed as the prerequisite for any serious social critique.

Although his first genuine philosophical interest was Schopenhauer, Horkheimer became interested in Marxist theory toward the end of the war. While he chose psychology and philosophy as his major fields of study at the newly founded J. W. Goethe University in Frankfurt, he continued to study Marx on the side with Pollock, who in 1923 would complete a dissertation on Marx's theory of money. In the fall of 1919, Horkheimer and Pollock met Felix Weil, with whom they shared the unlikely combination of a bourgeois family background and interest in socialist theory and politics. The sustained discussions between the three of them, along with the generous financial support of Weil's father Hermann, led to the formation of the Institute for Social Research in 1923. Although Horkheimer – unlike Pollock – was not involved directly with the institute during its early years, he did play an important role in conceiving the idea of the institute. Horkheimer's critical theory developed independently in the mid- and late 1920s and would not become the guiding force of the institute until 1931, when he became its director. In the early 1920s Horkheimer became acquainted with several of the other figures who would play an important role in the institute's later endeavors, such as Leo Löwenthal and Adorno.


9. Leo Löwenthal (1900–1993) was born in Frankfurt and he became friends with Fromm and Adorno during the First World War. In addition to contributing numerous articles on the sociology of literature to the institute's journal, Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, Löwenthal also served as its copy-editor from 1932–42. During the Second World War, Löwenthal took a position at the Voice of America, while at the same time working on a study of authoritarian propaganda techniques – Prophets of Deceit – which was part of the institute's larger research project, Studies in Prejudice. Löwenthal went on to teach at the Stanford Center for the Advanced Study of Behavioral Sciences, before accepting a position in 1956 in the Sociology Department at the University of California, Berkeley, where he would remain for the rest of his life. For a fascinating and very readable account of Löwenthal's life and his relations to the other members of the institute, see Leo Löwenthal, An Unmastered Past: The Autobiographical Reflections of Leo Löwenthal, Martin Jay (ed.) (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).
But neither played an important role in the development of Horkheimer’s critical theory at this time. The most important figure in Horkheimer’s academic studies at the University of Frankfurt in the early 1920s was Hans Cornelius, an idiosyncratic and polymathic professor of philosophy, whose primary interest was neo-Kantian epistemology. Horkheimer had impressed Cornelius early on with his thorough knowledge of Schopenhauer and Kant, which led Cornelius to take him under his wing, both academically and personally. In 1923 Cornelius sent Horkheimer and Pollock to Freiburg to study with his friend and interlocutor Edmund Husserl. While in Freiburg Horkheimer and Pollock also attended lectures by Martin Heidegger, but they were unimpressed. Horkheimer wrote both his dissertation and Habilitationsschrift under Cornelius’s guidance. Both works addressed Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* and both criticized Kant—and implicitly German academic neo-Kantianism as well—from a standpoint that reflected Cornelius’s philosophical arguments. Although Horkheimer learned some important lessons from these academic writings, they remained within the horizon of Cornelius’s philosophy of consciousness. Horkheimer’s critical theory took shape in the period between 1925 and 1930 as an explicit critique, not only of Cornelius, but of consciousness philosophy as a whole. Horkheimer’s move beyond consciousness philosophy proceeded along two different axes: the historical and the social.

In a remarkable series of lectures and unpublished essays from the late 1920s, Horkheimer developed a sophisticated materialist interpretation of the history of modern philosophy, from Bacon and Descartes all the way up to contempo-

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10. In one of his later interviews, Friedrich Pollock relates a story that sheds light on his and Horkheimer’s impression of Heidegger at this time. They attended Heidegger’s lectures on “Introduction to Metaphysics.” When, after the first three weeks of the course, Heidegger was still lecturing on the concept of “Introduction,” Pollock and Horkheimer left a derogatory note on his lectern to express their dissatisfaction (Max Horkheimer Archiv [J. W. Goethe Universitätsbibliothek, Frankfurt], Document X 183a, 51).

11. A Habilitationsschrift is a second dissertation that one had to write in order to become a professor in the German university system.

12. For a summary of the arguments in Horkheimer’s first and second dissertations, see my “The Dialectic of Bourgeois Society,” 100–110.

13. “Consciousness philosophy” refers here to the modern tradition of rationalist epistemology, which was inaugurated by Descartes, and continued through the work of Leibniz, Kant, the neo-Kantians, Husserl, and Horkheimer’s academic mentor Cornelius. Consciousness philosophy attempts to provide a foundation for knowledge from within a reflective examination of the mental contents and/or necessary conditions of consciousness, mental experience, or cognition. [^] For detailed discussions of Husserl and neo-Kantianism, see the essays by Thomas Nenon and Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*. 
rary schools such as neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, and vitalism.\textsuperscript{14} Implicitly following Marx, Horkheimer demonstrated how modern European philosophy represented a mediated expression of the uneven development of bourgeois society. For example, Horkheimer argues that the Enlightenment achieved its paradigmatic form in France rather than Britain or (what would become) Germany, owing to the particular constellation of social, economic, and political forces there. Whereas Britain had already carried out a bourgeois political revolution in 1688, and was well on the way to establishing a modern market society during the eighteenth century, the development of bourgeois political and economic institutions lagged behind in France and even more so in the Holy Roman Empire. Horkheimer interprets the basically affirmative character of British political economy and the resigned skepticism of David Hume as mediated expressions of a triumphant bourgeois society. Horkheimer views the lingering importance of theology and metaphysics (e.g. Kant’s efforts to rescue a metaphysics of morality) in the German Enlightenment as an expression of the still relatively weak state of bourgeois society there. Only in France, where the spread of market relations – including the massive sale of offices and titles of nobility – in the eighteenth century testified to the growing strength of a bourgeois class eager to emancipate itself from the remaining constraints of the ancien régime, did Enlightenment ideals attain a self-consciously political form. Horkheimer believed that the critical and predominantly materialist principles of the philosophes – the right of all men and women to freedom, equality, and happiness in this life – were truly universal ideals, which were an expression of ascendant bourgeois society, but which also pointed beyond it. Horkheimer’s lectures demonstrate that a critical concept of Enlightenment was crucial to his thought from early on. But perhaps even more importantly, Horkheimer placed the Enlightenment, along within the rest of modern European philosophy, within the larger context of the uneven development and subsequent transformation of bourgeois society. In so doing, he insisted that ideas could not be understood purely from the standpoint of consciousness, but were always historically mediated.

If Horkheimer’s lectures represented a decisive step beyond consciousness philosophy along a historical or diachronic axis, then the theory of contemporary society, which he developed during the same period, represented its synchronic counterpart. Horkheimer forged a critical theory of contemporary society out of three main components: Marx’s critique of political economy and ideology, empirical social research, and psychoanalysis. Horkheimer explored the continuing relevance of Marx’s ideas in \textit{Dämmerung: Notizen in}

\textsuperscript{14} These schools are discussed in several essays in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}.
Deutschland, a collection of aphorisms that use micrological observations of the inequities of everyday life to demonstrate the concrete ways in which people experienced and unconsciously reproduced abstract social domination. The collection was published under the pseudonym Heinrich Regius in 1934, after Horkheimer had already fled Germany, but – as the subtitle suggests – it was written between 1926 and 1931 and many of the aphorisms address the social situation in the final years of the Weimar Republic. For example, in “The Impotence of the German Working Class,” Horkheimer analyzes the ways in which technological developments in production have altered the composition of the German working class. He shows, in particular, how a political and ideological divide had emerged between workers with stable jobs, who tended to support the Social Democratic Party, and the mass of unemployed, who tended toward the German Communist Party. Although his unflinching diagnosis of the deep divisions among German workers seemed to refute Marx’s predictions about the increasing pauperization, homogenization, and unification of the proletariat, Horkheimer did not as a result take leave of Marx’s theory altogether. Instead he recalled Marx’s argument that “there is a tendency in the capitalist economic process for the number of workers to decrease as more machinery is introduced,” in order to explain the rise of a large unemployed underclass and the resulting schism in workers’ social conditions and consciousness. He also took issue with the widespread belief that Marx had advocated a progressive, or even deterministic, philosophy of history. Horkheimer’s early study of Schopenhauer and the traumatic experience of the First World War had immunized him to the idea that progress toward a better society was inscribed in the very logic of modern capitalism itself, as many revisionists and Social Democrats had interpreted Marx. So he recognized that the rational tendencies introduced by capitalism had long since been eclipsed by the irrational tendencies identified by Marx, such as periodic crises and commodity fetishism. Progressive historical change could be brought about only through conscious intervention, not passive reliance on the “logic” of history or capital. As he would put it later, “as long as world history follows its logical course, it fails to fulfill its human

15. One possible translation of the title would be “Dawn and Decline: Notes in Germany.” “Dämmerung” means both “dawn” and “decline” (or “dusk”) in German, and while the latter, darker meaning of the term definitely dominates the aphorisms, the former meaning is also intended.

16. Regius (1598–1679) was a professor of medicine in Utrecht and a materialist student and critic of Descartes.


18. Ibid., 61.
Horkheimer’s rejection of progressive philosophies of history was one example of his efforts to revitalize Marx’s ideology critique. But, as his penetrating observations of the discordant state of the German working class made clear, he insisted that ideology critique and all of Marx’s other concepts be tested and reformulated, if necessary, in light of changed historical conditions.

This insistence on the importance of thorough knowledge of present social conditions explains Horkheimer’s early interest in empirical social research. Horkheimer’s interest in empirical scientific research was sparked during his university studies in the early 1920s and was soon extended to empirical social research in the late 1920s. In his lectures on the history of philosophy Horkheimer displayed more sympathy for the empiricist than the rationalist tradition. Furthermore, he believed that an empirical deficit existed in the young discipline of sociology in Germany, so he looked instead to the work of American sociologists, such as Robert and Helen Lynd’s *Middletown: A Study in American Culture*, as models for the integration of empirical social research into his own incipient critical theory. In 1929 – at a time when it was already apparent that he would become the next director of the Institute for Social Research – Horkheimer was able to put his ideas about empirical social research to the test for the first time. He and Fromm planned and carried out an empirical study designed to provide insight into the conscious and unconscious political attitudes of the German working class. Horkheimer and Fromm’s interest in psychoanalysis informed their conceptualization of the study. Like many Marxists in the 1920s, Horkheimer wondered why large sections of the German working class had initially supported the First World War and had proved to be such reluctant revolutionaries in 1918/19. With the rising threat of National Socialism, Horkheimer also wondered how the German working class would react if the Nazis attempted to seize power. With these concerns in mind, Horkheimer and Fromm used psychoanalytic techniques in their design of the questionnaires and their interpretation of the responses. Over 3000 questionnaires were distributed in 1929, and by 1931 over 1000 had been returned. Based on the preliminary results of study – which was never completed

20. Horkheimer had strong reservations about publishing the study in the US in the 1930s, allegedly because many of the questionnaires had been lost in transition to New York; in reality, the still rather unrefined methods of the survey and the explicitly Marxist political assumptions that guided it were probably of greater concern to Horkheimer, who was careful not to expose the institute’s politics in a way that could danger their fragile status as exiles in the US. Horkheimer’s unwillingness to publish the study contributed to growing tensions between him and Fromm, which would eventually lead to Fromm’s departure from the institute in 1939 (see below). The preliminary results of the study were published in 1980 by Wolfgang Bonß.
Horkheimer and Fromm discovered a divergence between workers’ professed political views and their unconscious attitudes, which, in many cases, were deeply authoritarian. Horkheimer and Fromm’s conclusion that the German working class would not offer substantial resistance if the National Socialists attempted to seize power was soon borne out by historical events.

Psychoanalysis was the third component of Horkheimer’s theory of contemporary society. His interest in psychoanalysis was already apparent in 1927, when he underwent analysis with Karl Landauer (1887–1945), a Frankfurt-based psychoanalyst who had studied with Freud and become a member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1913. Horkheimer’s analysis was motivated primarily by intellectual, rather than therapeutic, reasons. At about the same time, Horkheimer established a working relationship with Fromm, which would prove decisive for the further development of critical theory. After undergoing analysis in 1924 with his future wife, Frieda Reichmann, Fromm decided to become a psychoanalyst. He completed his training in Frankfurt with Karl Landauer. Soon afterwards he became an active participant in the Berlin Psychoanalytic Association, which was conducting pathbreaking discussions of the social and political implications of psychoanalysis. Horkheimer was drawn to Fromm intellectually not only because of his knowledge of psychoanalysis, but also because he had completed a PhD in sociology and was thus in a position to help Horkheimer integrate psychoanalysis into his critical theory of society. Fromm’s later split with the institute and the subsequent acrimonious debates he had with Adorno and Marcuse have tended to obscure Fromm’s crucial role in the early formation of critical theory. Horkheimer appointed Fromm as director of the empirical study on the attitudes of German workers and would soon offer him a permanent position at the institute. Furthermore, in the spring of 1929 Horkheimer and Fromm – along with Landauer and Frieda Fromm-Reichmann – founded the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute, which was located in the same building as the Institute for Social Research. As Freud himself confirmed with gratitude in a letter to Horkheimer at the time, the founding of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute represented the first time that a German university had recognized psychoanalysis as a legitimate scientific discipline.

By the time Horkheimer was officially installed as the new director of the Institute for Social Research in January 1931, the basic components of his critical theory were already in place: a materialist interpretation of the history of modern philosophy as the mediated expression of the uneven development

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of bourgeois society and a theory of contemporary society based on a critical synthesis of Marx, empirical social research, and psychoanalysis. The further development of Horkheimer’s critical theory in the 1930s can be seen as an attempt to carry out, test, and refine these basic ideas. In his inaugural address as the new director of the institute, Horkheimer outlined “The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research” very much in these terms. Horkheimer argues that Hegel laid the groundwork for modern social philosophy with his critique of Kant’s consciousness philosophy. Nevertheless, Hegel remained beholden to a metaphysical philosophy of history, which justified the newly emergent bourgeois society as part of a preordained process of the historical realization of reason. Since the emancipatory ideals of the bourgeoisie had given way to the reality of class conflict, economic crisis, imperialism, and social catastrophes, such as the First World War, Hegel’s faith in the inherent rationality of history was no longer tenable – if it ever was – according to Horkheimer. But he also objected to the two main contemporary philosophical responses to this situation: a rejection of social philosophy in the name of “rigorous” positivist social research or a rejection of science in the name of metaphysics. As an alternative, Horkheimer insisted that social philosophy grasp bourgeois society as a totality, but not assume that this totality was rational. To this end, Horkheimer proposed an interdisciplinary research program that would rely on the “continuous, dialectical penetration and development of philosophical theory and specialized scientific praxis.”22 Of particular interest for the institute’s future work would be “the question of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychical development of individuals and the changes in the realm of culture.”23 By this time the study of the attitudes of German workers was already well underway; Horkheimer would soon initiate a second major empirical research project on the relationship between authority and family structure in Europe and the United States, which would be published in 1936.24 In addition to these projects, Horkheimer would edit the institute’s now famous journal, the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung (1931–41), which published essays by the remarkable group of scholars directly and indirectly affiliated with the institute, as well as a truly extensive array of reviews of recent publications in the social sciences and humanities.

In addition to directing these collective projects of the institute, Horkheimer continued to develop the philosophical and historical foundations of critical

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23. Ibid., 11. Horkheimer’s emphasis here on the “relative autonomy” of the culture and psychic character structures illustrates the important difference between his critical theory and the mechanistic “base-superstructure” model advocated by many Marxists (if not Marx himself).
theory in a series of remarkable essays he published over the course of the 1930s. The main themes of Horkheimer’s essays from this time were materialism, the anthropology of the bourgeois epoch, and dialectical logic. Let us examine materialism first before turning to the latter two. In the essays “Materialism and Metaphysics” and “Materialism and Morality,” which were both published in the second volume of the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* in 1933, Horkheimer develops a thoroughly historical concept of materialism, in order to elucidate the philosophical foundations of critical theory. Horkheimer recognizes that materialism has usually been a pariah in the history of philosophy, a seemingly easily refuted metaphysical dogma that higher mental processes can be derived from “matter.” Horkheimer argues that this definition contradicts the basic antimetaphysical tendency of materialism to locate reason within history and society and to see it as a means to improving the quality of human life, not an end in itself. Philosophical materialism is less concerned with absolute truths – such as the primacy of “matter” over “mind” – than with the possibilities of augmenting human freedom and happiness at a particular time and place. Materialism has practical, political implications and has often been associated with concrete freedom movements. Its aim and content are derived from the barriers to human freedom and happiness that exist at any given time and its efforts to comprehend and overcome them.

Horkheimer’s 1936 essay “Egoism and Freedom Movements: On the Anthropology of the Bourgeois Epoch” contained the first comprehensive formulation of the theoretical results of his collaboration with Fromm in the early 1930s. Although Horkheimer had already applied psychoanalysis to empirical studies of contemporary society, by this time he had integrated psychoanalysis into his theory of history as well. He had moved from the “history of bourgeois society” – which served as the foundation for his lectures on modern philosophy in the late 1920s – to the “anthropology of the bourgeois epoch.” Horkheimer’s use of the concept of anthropology must be distinguished from the tradition of philosophical anthropology, which maintains the possibility of determining fundamental characteristics of human beings outside history. Horkheimer, in contrast, analyzes the origins and function of the characteristics of man that have become dominant during the bourgeois epoch. Drawing on Fromm’s efforts in the late 1920s and early 1930s to synthesize psychoanalysis and historical materialism, Horkheimer demonstrates how common historical experiences can create similar psychic structures among members of the same social group. Since these psychic

25. For a more detailed discussion of the theoretical premises that informed this essay, see also his 1932 essay, “History and Psychology,” in *Between Philosophy and Social Science*, 111–29.
structures are relatively autonomous from the dynamic economic base of society, they can play a crucial role in either advancing or – as is more frequently the case – retarding historical progress. Insofar as Marx’s theory of history presupposed a relatively straightforward interest psychology, it needed to be supplemented by the more sophisticated insights of psychoanalysis, which could account for the relative autonomy of psychic structures and the frequent willingness of the lower classes to act in ways that ran contrary to their own best interests.

Through a close historical examination of several typical “bourgeois freedom movements” in the early modern period – ranging from Cola de Rienzo and Savanarola to the Reformation and French Revolution – Horkheimer demonstrates how the bourgeoisie mobilized the masses as allies in their struggle against feudalism and absolutism, while at the same time never allowing their demands to progress to a point that would call into question bourgeois hegemony. The dominant character structures of both the bourgeoisie and the lower classes were formed in this historical process. Following Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, and others, Horkheimer recognized that both the bourgeoisie and the lower classes were subjected to historically unprecedented levels of socially mediated repression. But the function of this repression differed for the two groups, insofar as the self-repression of the bourgeoisie was at the same time its self-assertion, whereas the repression of the lower classes was sacrifice. Horkheimer illustrates various ways in which the lower classes were compensated for their sacrifices, from the reward of membership in the imagined community of virtuous citizens, to the tacitly sanctioned permission to persecute internal or external “enemies” who refuse – or merely appear to refuse – to make the sacrifices demanded of them. Horkheimer drew heavily on Freud’s notions of the mutability of libidinal drives and the baleful consequences of repression to make this last argument. He was particularly interested in overcoming Freud’s naturalization of aggression in a “death drive” by grasping the historically specific forms of cruelty in the bourgeois epoch.

The third key concept in Horkheimer’s critical theory at this time was dialectical logic. It represented a much richer reformulation of his reflections on materialism from the early 1930s and a continuing effort to flesh out the philosophical foundations of a critical theory adequate to twentieth-century societies. In letters from the 1930s Horkheimer speaks repeatedly of his “long-planned work on dialectics,” and makes it clear that he viewed the essays he was

27. Horkheimer’s concept of “dialectical logic” takes as its point of departure Hegel’s efforts to develop an alternative to strictly formal (i.e. analytic and deductive) modes of thinking, which take seriously the unavoidable complementarity of what otherwise appear to be opposed and self-contained categories or aspects of reality.
writing at this time as “in truth merely preliminary studies for a larger work on a critical theory of the social sciences.” Horkheimer’s seminal conceptualization of critical theory in his most familiar and influential essay from this period, “Traditional and Critical Theory” (1937), should be seen as the culmination of the first stage of this larger project, which would eventually become – in a much different form – *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This larger project can be understood only by examining the other substantial essays Horkheimer wrote during this period, including “Bergson’s Metaphysics of Time” (1934), “The Rationalism Debate in Contemporary Philosophy” (1934), “On the Problem of Truth” (1935), “The Latest Attack on Metaphysics” (1937), and “Montaigne and the Function of Skepticism” (1938). When one re-examines these essays together, the contours of Horkheimer’s larger project on dialectical logic emerge. Horkheimer develops further his criticism of consciousness philosophy, with its reified notion of the ego, which exists outside history and society, and its static and dualistic concept of knowledge, which is unable to conceptualize qualitative change or the relationship of knowledge to society. Horkheimer also puts forth the argument that the philosophy of the bourgeois epoch as a whole is characterized by a recurring dichotomy between science and metaphysics. Horkheimer shows how this antinomy attains its most consequential formulation in Kant's philosophy: for example, in his efforts to limit the natural sciences’ claims to absolute knowledge while at the same time preserving certain key metaphysical principles in the sphere of practical reason. According to Horkheimer, this antinomy appears in different forms throughout the history of modern philosophy: from Montaigne all the way up to vitalism and logical positivism. Although Hegel's philosophy moved decisively beyond the static and dualistic character of traditional logic, he too ultimately reproduced the antimony of science and metaphysics, with his notion of history as the preordained self-realization of Absolute Spirit. Only with Marx’s materialist critique and appropriation of Hegel’s idealistic social theory, was the groundwork for a genuinely empirical and historical understanding of the contradictions of modern capitalist society laid. Horkheimer stresses, in particular, the way in which Marx integrated the findings of the most advanced bourgeois theories of society (Hegel and classical political economy), while at the same time developing a critical conceptual apparatus that also pointed beyond the existing social totality. Horkheimer’s dialectical logic project was an attempt to flesh out the philosophical foundations of Marx’s critical theory and, where necessary, to reformulate it in light of changed historical conditions.


Whereas the concepts of the anthropology of the bourgeois epoch and dialectical logic marked the culmination of his early thought, the period 1938 to 1941 witnessed a significant shift in some of his most basic philosophical positions and set the stage for a new phase in the development of critical theory. This important theoretical shift cannot be fully understood without first examining certain crucial changes in Horkheimer’s life during this time. Foremost among these changes was Horkheimer’s split with Fromm and his increasingly intimate working relationship with Adorno. Fromm had been Horkheimer’s most important theoretical interlocutor from their collaboration on the empirical study of German workers in 1929 through the publication of the *Studies on Authority and Family* in 1936. During this time Horkheimer remained distant from Adorno and, to a surprising extent, critical of his work. But when Fromm began to move away from his earlier, more or less orthodox psychoanalytic position in the mid-1930s, serious tensions began to develop between him and Horkheimer. As was already apparent in his 1935 essay “The Social Determinants of Psychoanalytic Theory,” Fromm had become increasingly critical of Freudian drive theory and Freud’s insistence that the analyst maintain a neutral and distant relationship with his or her patients. Fromm began increasingly to privilege social over sexual factors in the formation of character and the etiology of neuroses; he also followed George Groddeck and Sandor Ferenczi in favoring a more caring relationship between patient and analyst. Adorno, who was living in exile in Oxford at the time, attacked Fromm’s revisions of Freud in a letter to Horkheimer in March 1936, claiming that they represented a “genuine threat to the line of the *Zeitschrift*.” The final break between Horkheimer and Fromm was precipitated by a financial crisis at the institute in the late 1930s. Since Fromm had his own psychoanalytic praxis and was able to earn an independent living, Horkheimer and Pollock asked him in early 1939 to forego his monthly stipend. When Fromm

31. As a member of the Faculty of Philosophy of Frankfurt University, Horkheimer had read and evaluated Adorno’s *Habilitationsschrift* on Kierkegaard in 1931. While praising Adorno’s unconventional method of interpretation and his remarkable grasp of the history of modern philosophy, Horkheimer was skeptical of the strong theological moment in Adorno’s work, which he had appropriated from Benjamin and which Horkheimer believed demonstrated “a philosophical intention that is radically different from my own” (Max Horkheimer, “Bemerkung in Sachen der Habilitation Dr. Wiesengrund,” Archiv des Dekanats der Philosophischen Fakultät der J. W. Goethe Universität, Frankfurt a.M. [Section 134, Number 4], 5). As a result of his debate with Benjamin, an enthusiastic reception of Horkheimer’s writings and a renewed study of Hegel in the mid-1930s, Adorno moved somewhat closer to Horkheimer. After his arrival in New York in February 1938 and the beginning of their intense collaboration – which would culminate in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – Horkheimer also abandoned many of his positions in the 1930s and moved closer to Adorno.


insisted on his pay, Horkheimer and Pollock offered him a lump sum of $20,000 as a settlement for the termination of his contract as a lifetime member of the institute. In the meantime, Horkheimer had patched up his relationship with Adorno, who left Oxford in February 1938 and finally became an official member of the institute on his arrival soon thereafter in New York. Horkheimer’s theoretical collaboration with Adorno in the following years would lead to a reconfiguration of his own thought of the tradition of critical theory as a whole, which found its first full expression in 1944 with the publication of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.34

Horkheimer’s theoretical shift in the late 1930s and early 1940s has been variously described as a “pessimistic turn,”35 a “rephilosophization of Critical Theory,”36 and a shift from “the critique of political economy to the critique of instrumental reason.”37 The most important overall factor in this shift was Horkheimer’s adoption of a modified version of the “state capitalism” thesis, which had been worked out over the course of the previous decade by his longtime friend and institute colleague Friedrich Pollock. Pollock and Horkheimer viewed state capitalism as the logical conclusion of a process that had begun with the rise of liberal capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continued with the transition to monopoly capitalism around the turn of the century. Whereas liberal capitalism had been defined by a large number of small and medium-sized privately owned firms, which competed with each other in both domestic and international markets and whose relations were regulated by formal law, under monopoly capitalism increasingly large corporations and cartels came to dominate domestic markets and compete with each other at the international level. State capitalism reinforced and completed these tendencies by bringing the large corporations and cartels under state control, for the purposes of more efficient, planned domestic production and distribution and more effective international competition. Horkheimer identified the “integral statism” of the Soviet Union as the purest form of state capitalism, but he viewed fascism and the new state-interventionist economies of Western Europe and the United States as different versions of the same basic form. What characterized state capitalism everywhere, according to Horkheimer, was the tendential elimination of the economic, social, and cultural forms of mediation peculiar to bourgeois society in its liberal phase. These included not only the market, the rule of law and

34. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was republished in a larger, revised edition in 1947. For a discussion of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, see Deborah Cook’s essay in this volume.
replacement of individual owners by shareholders or the state, but also relatively autonomous spheres of bourgeois cultural life, such as art, the family, and even the individual him or herself. Social domination had, in other words, become much more direct under state capitalism. The independent economic dynamism of capitalism had been replaced by the primacy of politics. The operations of politics came increasingly to resemble a common “racket”; survival and protection were secured through obedience to the most powerful groups. Capital and large labor unions collaborated in the planning of the economy and divided up the spoils between them. Insofar as surplus value continued to be produced and appropriated by a dominant social class, capitalism still existed, but the political and ideological integration of the working class eliminated the possibility of any serious opposition emerging in the future.

Horkheimer’s acceptance of the state capitalism thesis reflected the changed historical realities of state-interventionist economic models that arose in the mid twentieth century. From our contemporary post-Soviet, post-Fordist perspective, it is clear that “state capitalism” was not the “end of history” – as Horkheimer and Adorno feared at the time – but rather a new phase in global capitalist development that would begin to unravel in the early 1970s. But Horkheimer’s adoption of the state capitalist thesis brought with it a fundamental rethinking of many of the basic assumptions that had informed his critical theory in the 1930s. First, the focus of critical theory shifted from a historically specific critique of social domination within modern capitalism to a transhistorical critique of instrumental reason and the domination of nature. Second, this shift was reflected in the increasing prominence of a negative philosophy of history, which Adorno had adopted from Benjamin in the late 1920s. Third, Horkheimer became increasingly skeptical about the emancipatory character of the Enlightenment ideals that had guided his earlier work. While working on his project on dialectical logic, Horkheimer still believed in the possibility of a materialist reinterpretation and realization of basic Enlightenment principles. Dialectic of Enlightenment demonstrated clearly his new conviction that only a radical critique of these principles could create a new, self-reflexive concept of Enlightenment that could transcend its inherent limitations. Fourth, Horkheimer’s new-found pessimism about the Enlightenment also translated into a radical critique of science in its traditional forms. Whereas Horkheimer’s model of critical theory in the 1930s rested heavily on a critical integration of research from a wide variety of scientific and scholarly disciplines, in Dialectic

38. For a detailed examination of this important shift of emphasis, see Gerd-Walters Küsters, Der Kritikbegriff in der Kritischen Theorie Max Horkheimers (Frankfurt: Campus, 1980).
The principal tenets of critical theory, as it was practiced by the institute in the 1930s, were developed by Horkheimer, although he also benefited greatly from his collaboration with Fromm. The other members of the “inner circle” of the institute in the 1930s – Pollock, Löwenthal, and Marcuse – all made crucial practical and theoretical contributions to the institute’s work. We have already discussed Pollock’s ideas on state capitalism, which became so important for Horkheimer in the late 1930s. Pollock also served as the main financial administrator for the institute. Löwenthal published several key essays on the sociology of literature in the *Zeitschrift*, which reflected the institute’s Marxist principles and its concern with authoritarian ideology. Löwenthal also served as the principal copy-editor of the *Zeitschrift* throughout its ten-year existence. Nonetheless, in terms of their contributions to critical theory in the 1930s, one can say that Herbert Marcuse played a more significant theoretical role than did Pollock or Löwenthal. Marcuse’s contribution to the development of critical theory during this time is also worth examining more closely insofar as he remained loyal to this model of critical theory for the remainder of his life. Marcuse’s popularity as an exponent of critical theory in the 1960s and 1970s also justifies a more detailed analysis of his early trajectory and his contributions to critical theory in the 1930s.

II. MARCUSE AND EARLY CRITICAL THEORY

Herbert Marcuse was born in 1898 to a wealthy, assimilated Jewish family in Berlin. Just after finishing his final examination for the *Gymnasium* in 1916, Marcuse was drafted into the army where he served until the end of war, without ever facing active combat. As with so many others, Marcuse was radicalized politically by the war. He joined the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1917, but

40. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Edmund Jephcott (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), xiv. The fact that Horkheimer and Adorno continued to carry out empirical research projects in the 1940s (most notably, the five-volume *Studies in Prejudice*) and that empirical research remained a crucial aspect of the institute’s work after its re-establishment in Frankfurt after the war, demonstrated that Horkheimer never completely abandoned his early model of “interdisciplinary materialism.” Nonetheless, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does represent a substantial break from Horkheimer’s position in the 1930s and a model of critical theory that is more consonant with Adorno’s overall philosophical trajectory.

41. See, for example, Leo Löwenthal, “Knut Hamsun,” in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Arato and Gebhardt (eds).

42. A *Gymnasium* is an elite German high school guided by the principles of classical humanism.
after the German defeat and outbreak of revolution in November 1918, he served in a revolutionary soldiers’ council in Berlin. During this time Marcuse began to study seriously the writings of Marx and Engels; he also attended speeches and rallies led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. When they were murdered in January 1919, Marcuse cancelled his membership in the SPD, whose leaders he held responsible for their death. Although Marcuse admired the ill-fated attempt of the Munich Council Republic in the spring of 1919 to synthesize utopian aesthetic ideals with radical political principles, after his departure from the SPD he would not become directly involved in politics again until the 1960s.43 He began his university studies in 1919 at the Humboldt University in Berlin and then transferred the following year to the Albert-Ludwig University in Freiburg. In Berlin Marcuse studied German literature for four semesters and also participated in discussions in a leftist literary group, which was attended by Benjamin and – less frequently – Georg Lukács. In Freiburg Marcuse continued his studies in German literature and supplemented them by attending lectures in philosophy and national economy.

Marcuse’s dissertation, for which he was awarded a PhD *summa cum laude* in 1922, examined the German *Künstlerroman*, or artist-novel (a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of development), from the theoretical standpoint of Hegel’s aesthetics and Lukács’ *Theory of the Novel*. According to Marcuse these artist-novels – such as Karl Phillip Moritz’s *Anton Reiser*, Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, and Gottfried Keller’s *Green Henry* – illustrated the fate of the individual and art in a society being transformed by capitalist modernization. Following Lukács, Marcuse argued that in a society characterized by “transcendental homelessness,” the novel assumes the role of preserving the ideal of a less alienated existence.44 The marginal social position of the antiheroes of the artist-novel embody the fate of art in a world that has become prosaic, and their mostly unsuccessful attempts to overcome their alienation highlights the “problematic” nature of society as a whole. Marcuse’s dissertation introduces several themes that would figure prominently in his later work, such as the importance of the aesthetic dimension as a source of transcendent social critique, or the search for new forms of critical subjectivity among marginal social groups.

After a five-year interlude in Berlin, during which time he worked on an extensive bibliography of Schiller and immersed himself in the Weimar cultural

43. Unless one counts as “political” his intelligence work for the Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War. For this chapter of Marcuse’s life see Barry Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation* (London: Verso, 1982), 111–35.
44. “The novel is the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem yet which still thinks in terms of totality” (Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, Anna Bostock [trans.] [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971], 56).
scene, Marcuse returned to Freiburg to study philosophy with Heidegger, who had just published his magnum opus, *Being and Time*. Like many others of his generation, Marcuse was deeply impressed with *Being and Time*, which he saw as a breakthrough beyond the sterile positivism and neo-Kantianism that had dominated philosophical debates in German universities for several decades. Marcuse viewed Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein as the most advanced attempt to bring the individual subject, in its full concreteness, back to the center of philosophical debate. He was also fascinated by Heidegger’s stress on the historicity of Dasein, and his argument that Dasein could be authentic only if its actions were guided by a full awareness of its historical possibilities. But Marcuse never became a Heideggerian himself; his purpose from the beginning was to use the most advanced aspects of Heidegger’s project to revitalize the reified Marxist theory of his day. Frustrated with the economist orthodoxy of the Second International, which provided ideological justification for the Social Democratic reformism, and no less satisfied with the vanguardism of the Bolsheviks, Marcuse wrote a series of essays while studying with Heidegger that sought to re-establish the importance of subjectivity and historicity in Marxist theory. His efforts eventually led him down the same path Lukács had followed a few years before in *History and Class Consciousness*, namely to a re-examination of the philosophical origins of Marx’s theory, particularly in the work of Hegel. Marcuse’s *Habilitationsschrift*, which he wrote under Heidegger’s guidance, was an attempt to recover the concepts from Hegel’s work that he believed were necessary to put Marxist theory back on the right track. In this, his first full-length study of Hegel, and in his essays from this period, Marcuse developed a highly original, and often trenchant interpretation not only of several of Marx’s and Hegel’s central concepts—such as labor, alienation and the dialectical method—but also of *Being and Time*.

Heidegger’s own political reading of *Being and Time*, which led him temporarily to pin his hopes on the National Socialists as the potential saviors of “fallen” German Dasein, came as a shock to Marcuse and forced him to rethink his

45. For Marcuse’s essays from this period see *Heideggerian Marxism*, Richard Wolin and John Abromeit (eds), John Abromeit et al. (trans.) (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
47. Heidegger’s concept of “Dasein,” which he develops most fully in *Being and Time*, represents an attempt to overcome the tradition of subject–object dualism characteristic of modern consciousness philosophy (see note 13, above). Heidegger argues that human beings are always already located within the broader contexts or “worlds” of “involvement” and “meaning.” The traditional concepts of “subjectivity” or “individuality” are false insofar as they presuppose the possibility of the abstracting of human “Dasein” from the “worlds” in which it is ontologically embedded.
relationship to Heidegger’s philosophy, Marcuse had the good fortune of being able to pursue this self-critical re-evaluation of Heidegger, and to contribute more broadly to the development of critical theory, through his collaborative work with Max Horkheimer’s Institute for Social Research in the 1930s. After a brief stint at the institute’s branch office in Geneva, Marcuse immigrated to New York to join Horkheimer and the other members of the relocated institute, whose former headquarters in Frankfurt had been confiscated by the Nazis. Marcuse’s theoretical production in the 1930s converged with Horkheimer’s on three main issues: the dialectic of bourgeois society, and the critique of positivism, and authoritarianism.

Marcuse adopted Horkheimer’s model of a dialectic of bourgeois society, which can be summarized in the following way. With the historical transformation of the bourgeoisie from a revolutionary social force in the early modern period to the new ruling class in the nineteenth century, the progressive concepts and ideals, which it had used to justify its struggle against feudalism and absolutism, often assumed a repressive or ideological function. For both Horkheimer and Marcuse this historical dialectic posed critical theory with several tasks: the critique of the new, ideological function of these concepts and ideals, the recovery of their original, progressive content, and their transformation into a new, critical form adequate to the changed historical conditions. Two examples of the dialectic of bourgeois society, as it appeared in Marcuse’s work at this time, can be found in his discussion of the concepts of natural law and essence. In his 1934 essay “The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State,” Marcuse shows how the historical transformation of bourgeois society brought with it a transformation of the basic understandings of nature and natural law.48 Whereas natural law had provided bourgeois philosophers in the early modern period with an immutable transcendent standard, to which they could appeal in order to criticize the fixed hierarchies and inherited privileges of the feudal order, under fascism the “laws of nature” were used to justify irrational mythologies of blood and soil and to prevent any transcendent critique of the status quo. Whereas the new market economy had been justified as a natural and harmonious order, under fascism existing inequalities were concealed and justified by the pseudo-scientific theories of social Darwinism and inherent racial inequality. Similarly, in his 1936 essay “The Concept of Essence,” Marcuse demonstrates how, at the beginning of the modern epoch, philosophers attributed the power to separate essence from appearance to the free and rational individual. With the help of their rational faculties and/or their

48. These two and the rest of Marcuse’s main essays from the 1930s are available in Herbert Marcuse, Negations: Essays in Critical Theory, Jeremy J. Shapiro (ed. and trans.) (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968).
senses, each person had the ability to establish the truth on their own. But by the end of the epoch – signaled by the triumph of fascism – the concept of essence was used to bind unfree individuals to the status quo and to undermine their belief in the critical power of reason. In philosophy, the autonomous spontaneity of the concept was replaced by the heteronomous receptivity of the “intuition of essences.” In the new authoritarian ideology, essentialist concepts of gender and race were used to justify exploitative social relations.

But Horkheimer’s understanding of the dialectic of bourgeois society also implied recovering the progressive content of the philosophical ideals of the bourgeoisie during its “heroic” phase. In contrast to some of his later, more pessimistic positions – *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, for example – in the 1930s Horkheimer still believed that Enlightenment ideals were essentially critical and ultimately pointed beyond bourgeois society. At a time when the Enlightenment and the ideals of 1789 were being subjected to virulent criticism by theorists sympathetic to fascism, such as Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944) and Carl Schmitt, the defense and recovery of their progressive content became more urgent than ever. In contrast to Horkheimer, who became wary early on of the dangerous political implications of the widespread revolt against science, the Enlightenment, and rationality more generally in Weimar Germany, Marcuse’s work in the 1920s and early 1930s was still heavily influenced by phenomenological and vitalist critiques of reason. It was not until after Marcuse joined the institute in 1933 that he re-evaluated his earlier antirationalist positions and developed an explicit critique of the “political existentialism” of Heidegger and Schmitt. Marcuse’s new-found respect for the critical potential of rationalism came through clearly, for example, in the following passage on Descartes:

> It is often asserted today that Descartes, by beginning with the *ego cogito*, committed the original sin of modern philosophy, that he placed a completely abstract concept of the individual at the basis of theory. But his abstract concept of the individual is animated by concern with human freedom: measuring the truth of all conditions of life against the standard of rational thought.⁴⁹

Marcuse’s continued re-evaluation of the critical potential of the rationalist tradition culminated in his 1941 study *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. His earlier study *Hegel’s Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* was written under the guidance of Heidegger and developed an antiepistemological interpretation of Hegel by reconstructing the concept of “life” in his early thought: that is, the same concept that vitalism philosophers such

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as Nietzsche and Bergson had mobilized in their critiques of rationalism and positivism. *Reason and Revolution*, in contrast, emphasized Hegel’s critical and dialectical rationalism in order to dispel the widespread Anglo-American view that his philosophy had somehow inspired the authoritarian ideology of the National Socialists.

Marcuse’s first book written in English, *Reason and Revolution*, was intended to introduce the theoretical premises of the institute to a broader audience. It can still be read profitably today by anyone interested in nineteenth-century social theory or the intellectual historical foundations of critical theory. At the core of *Reason and Revolution* was a critique of positivism, which provided the historical background for arguments set forth by Horkheimer in the mid-1930s. As with the key philosophical concepts of natural law and essence, the concept of reason had also undergone a decisive historical shift as a result of the dialectic of bourgeois society. The critical, transcendent, and dialectical notion of reason, which Marcuse had identified in the philosophy of Descartes and – to a much greater extent – Hegel, had devolved into an affirmative subordination of reason to the natural sciences, which denied the very distinction between essence and appearance. Whereas Horkheimer had been deeply concerned by the irrational reactions to positivism in Weimar Germany, after fleeing to the United States and being confronted with the increasing dominance of positivism in Anglo-American intellectual life – which was reinforced by the arrival of exiles from Austria and Germany who were sympathetic to positivism, such as the members of the Vienna Circle – the focus of his arguments began to shift. Horkheimer refused to accept the reduction of reason to the methods of “logical empiricism,” as Rudolf Carnap, Bertrand Russell, and others would have it. In his 1937 essay “Philosophy and Critical Theory,” which Marcuse wrote as a companion piece to Horkheimer’s “Traditional and Critical Theory,” he extrapolates on Horkheimer’s critique of positivism and defends both the role of speculative philosophy and the imagination in the determination of the truth against the restrictive limitations placed on reason by the logical positivists.

One last way in which Marcuse’s theoretical work in the 1930s converged with Horkheimer’s vision of critical theory was his critique of authoritarianism. We have already briefly examined Marcuse’s analysis of authoritarian ideology in his essay “The Struggle Against Liberalism,” but Marcuse also contributed


52. *Ibid.* [*] See also the essay by Michael Friedman and Thomas Ryckman in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*. 

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a lengthy and substantial intellectual historical introduction to the institute's *Studies on Authority and Family*, which was published alongside Fromm's social-psychological and Horkheimer's general introductory essays.\(^{53}\) In his essay, Marcuse applies once again Horkheimer's model of the dialectic of bourgeois society, with a focus this time on the historical transformation of the concept of freedom. Beginning with a discussion of Luther and Calvin, Marcuse shows how the bourgeois concept of freedom was contradictory from the very beginning. Luther and Calvin's theology contained strong anti-authoritarian impulses, whose historical role was to emancipate the individual from his or her dependence on the centralized power of the papacy and the Church, and the feudal institutions they legitimized. But this emancipation remained partial and actually prepared the way for the uncritical acceptance of new forms of secular authority. Marcuse stresses, in particular, the *internalization* of freedom implied in Luther's writings and the compatibility of this pure, internal notion of freedom with external authority of almost any kind. Continuing with a discussion of Kant and Hegel, Marcuse argued that both men placed freedom at the center of their philosophies, albeit in an idealistic form, which led all too quickly and easily to accommodation with the unfree political conditions of the time. Marx's critique of the internalized, idealist concept of freedom represented a decisive step forward, insofar as he identified its social origins and linked the expansion of freedom to the transformation of existing social relations. Marcuse also examines the explicitly authoritarian doctrines of the counter-revolutionary theorists Edmund Burke, Louis de Bonald, and Joseph de Maistre. He attempts to demonstrate how their doctrines, which were originally a defense of feudal and/or absolutist institutions against the most progressive elements of the bourgeoisie, were in many cases adopted by the bourgeoisie as it consolidated its power in the course of the nineteenth century and was forced to meet the challenge of a militant workers' movement. Finally, Marcuse demonstrates how Georges Sorel and Vilfredo Pareto – despite their political differences – marked the transition to the new authoritarian doctrines of the twentieth century with their celebration of irrationality, discipline, and the necessity of ruling elites.

While there is no question that Marcuse eagerly adopted Horkheimer's model of critical theory and found it congenial to his own philosophical interests, he also continued to develop ideas of his own in the 1930s. Most important in this regard were Marcuse's abiding interests in concrete subjectivity and aesthetics. Although Horkheimer was also very much interested in developing a sophisticated theory of subjectivity – to supplement Marx's theory – he approached this problem by way of psychoanalysis. Like Horkheimer, Marcuse believed that

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Marx’s theory needed to be supplemented by a more sophisticated theory of subjectivity and his initial attraction to Heidegger was based in large part on his belief that his existential analysis of Dasein in Being and Time might be useful for this purpose. While Marcuse’s philosophical reliance on Heidegger diminished greatly after the publication of Marx’s Paris Manuscripts in 1932 and Heidegger’s political debacle in 1933, he did not integrate psychoanalysis into his own thought until the 1950s.

In his 1938 essay “On Hedonism,” Marcuse approached the problem of subjectivity instead from a historical and philosophical standpoint. After examining the philosophical doctrines of Cyrenaic and Epicurean hedonism and their ancient (Plato) and modern (Hegel) critics, Marcuse identified the critical moment in hedonism – and its affinity with critical theory – in its defense of individual happiness and pleasure against their internalization, spiritualization, and subordination to “higher” faculties or the demands of the community. Marcuse was not defending an anarchist or libertarian free for all; in fact, he praised both Plato and Hegel’s critiques of hedonism for demonstrating that happiness has an essential objective moment and cannot ever be truly realized outside a well-ordered and just society. But insofar as the particular interests of everyone are not adequately contained in the social totality of modern capitalist societies, the hedonist demand for individual gratification retains critical truth-value. Marcuse demonstrates how the subordination of individuals’ sensuous needs and desires in the society dominated by abstract labor is reflected in idealist concepts of rationality, morality, and freedom. He writes: “Insofar as the individual partakes of universality only as a rational being and not with empirical manifold of his needs, wants, and capacities, this idea of reason implicitly contains the sacrifice of individual.”

Marcuse also points out how hedonism provides an important antidote to the debilitating effects of repressive forms of socialization. Hedonism counteracts the formation of authoritarian character structures, because a “man educated to internalization will not be easily induced, even under extreme wretchedness and injustice, to struggle against the established order.”

Marcuse’s first dissertation on the German artist-novel testified to an early interest in aesthetics that would remain a crucial aspect of his thought for the rest of his life. His 1937 essay “The Affirmative Character of Culture” demonstrated that aesthetic issues continued to play a crucial role in his thinking. Marcuse argued that in modern, bourgeois society art had two primary and contradictory

54. Marcuse, Negations, 159.
55. Ibid., 181.
56. For an interpretation that stresses the centrality of aesthetics for Marcuse’s critical theory as a whole, see Katz, Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation.
functions, both of which resulted from its separation from the material sphere of the production and reproduction of the necessities of life. On the one hand, the artistic expression of the deepest needs and highest ideals of humanity played an affirmative, ideological role, insofar as it concealed the social mechanisms that prevented their realization. On the other hand, by articulating and preserving these needs and ideals art provided a transcendent critique of the status quo, a promesse du bonheur of the possibility of better society. Marcuse also demonstrated how the relative importance of these two roles shifted during the historical transformation of bourgeois society. During its early, revolutionary phase, the critical, utopian function of art was more important, while in the later, more repressive phase the affirmative character of art began to gain the upper hand. With the triumph of authoritarianism in the twentieth century, the transcendent, “aesthetic dimension” was completely eliminated, as art was forced into direct service of oppressive political regimes.

III. MARCUSE’S LATER WRITINGS

The primary purpose of this essay has been to provide a comprehensive overview of two of the three main currents that went into the formation of the “first-generation” Frankfurt School critical theory in the 1920s and 1930s. But since Marcuse went on to play an important role in the dissemination of critical theory, particularly in the Anglo-American world, and since he retained and developed many of the assumptions developed by Horkheimer and Fromm in the 1930s – even after they had abandoned them themselves – I shall also offer a brief overview of his later work. Although Horkheimer played a crucial role in the re-establishment of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt in 1951, his theoretical production after the war was quite limited compared to that of Adorno and Marcuse. Since Horkheimer carried out his most important work in the 1930s and 1940s, an examination of his writings in the postwar period is not essential to understanding the main currents of critical theory.

57. Marcuse borrowed this expression (“promise of happiness”) from Nietzsche (On the Genealogy of Morals, Third Essay, §6), who had adopted it, in turn, from Stendahl.
The early 1940s were an important transitional period for the critical theorists. During this time the operations of the New York office of the institute were drastically reduced, the last issue of the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung was published, and Horkheimer moved to Los Angeles to dedicate himself to completing his project on dialectical logic. While he had originally intended to collaborate with Marcuse on this project, Horkheimer had in the meantime developed a higher estimation of Adorno’s theoretical ability and had chosen him as his primary collaborator. The shift in Horkheimer’s position in the late 1930s had pushed him away from Marcuse and brought him closer to Adorno theoretically. This shift, combined with Adorno’s new role as a full partner in the project, explains why Dialectic of Enlightenment represented something qualitatively new vis-à-vis Horkheimer’s original plans for a dialectical logic. Marcuse remained committed to the theoretical position developed at the institute in the 1930s, but due to Horkheimer’s increasing proximity to Adorno and the financial crisis of the institute, Marcuse chose to accept a job working for the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS) in Washington in the fall of 1942. The newly created OSS was dedicated to gathering intelligence for the war and the postwar reconstruction of Germany. Marcuse worked there for nearly a decade and was joined at various times by several other influential émigré scholars, including his former institute colleagues Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer. Although not a particularly productive period for Marcuse theoretically, it was not a period of intellectual dormancy either. Marcuse produced several important studies of National Socialist Germany, which have been published only recently, and


60. On the OSS and the role foreign scholars such as Marcuse played in it during the war, see Barry Katz, Foreign Intelligence: Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services, 1942–5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

61. Franz Neumann (1900–1954) and Otto Kirchheimer (1905–65) both trained as legal scholars and both were actively involved in politics in Weimar on the left wing of the Social Democratic Party. After fleeing from the Nazis, both became associates of the Institute for Social Research. Kirchheimer joined the Paris branch of the institute in 1934 and continued working for the New York office after his emigration to the US in 1937. Neumann retrained himself as a political scientist at the London School of Economics, completing a PhD under the direction of Harold Laski in 1936. In 1942 Neumann published his massive study of National Socialism, Behemoth, which differed in important respects from the institute’s core members’ analysis of Nazism, but was nonetheless recognized by Horkheimer and others as a remarkable achievement. For an overview of Kirchheimer and Neumann’s work and their relationship to the other members of the institute, see William E. Scheuermann, Between the Norm and the Exception: The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).
worked through a massive amount of empirical data on fascism, which would inform his later work.\(^{62}\)

Since his critical appropriation of Heidegger’s existential analysis of Dasein in the late 1920s, Marcuse had been attempting to move beyond the abstract theories of subjectivity that had dominated Western philosophy. But in contrast to Horkheimer and Adorno, who both became interested in psychoanalysis in the 1920s, Marcuse did not seriously engage with Freud’s writings until after the Second World War. The result was *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, which Jürgen Habermas has aptly described as Marcuse’s “most characteristic” work.\(^{63}\) In *Civilization and its Discontents* and elsewhere, Freud had argued that the levels of instinctual repression necessary to maintain civilization were more or less constant throughout history. But, following the path blazed by Fromm and Horkheimer in the 1930s, Marcuse sought to recover a hidden, emancipatory trend in psychoanalysis, through a historicization of Freud’s categories. Although he does not mention Marx’s name explicitly a single time in the text, Marcuse’s main argument rests heavily on his dialectical analysis of modern capitalist societies. With his analysis of abstract labor and the ascetic character of the bourgeoisie, Marx had demonstrated that modern capitalism brought with it historically unprecedented levels of socially mediated repression. But, at the same time, by forcing the development of science and technology and increasing the material wealth of society as a whole, capitalism also created the possibility for a society in which levels of alienated labor – which Marcuse translates into Freudian terms as repressive sublimation – could be greatly reduced. The dominant place formerly occupied by wage labor would give way to new forms of nonrepressive sublimation, which would more closely resemble artistic creation or play. In a crucial theoretical supplement Marx’s focus on objective historical factors, which draws on Horkheimer and Fromm’s social-psychological investigations, Marcuse argues that the objective emancipatory tendencies in capitalism are thwarted subjectively by the internalization of repressive character structures. Marcuse draws, in particular, on Freud’s speculative theory of the origins of society as a revolt against patriarchal authority followed by a restoration of even stricter fraternal law, in order to demonstrate how the “archaic heritage” of “repression – revolt – restoration of repression at a higher level” is still at work in modern capitalist societies.\(^{64}\)

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levels of repression attenuate the inherent tendency of Eros to form lasting social bonds and keep the destructive impulses of Thanatos in check, then this historical cycle becomes more ominous in modern societies. Auschwitz and the atom bomb leave no doubt about the catastrophic potential for the “scientific extermination of men” that modern technology has brought with it. Thus, far from defending an optimistic social or technological determinism, *Eros and Civilization* draws attention to the subjective factors necessary to realize the objective possibilities of a “nonrepressive civilization” and a “pacification of existence” created by modern capitalism.

Although his next two books seem very different on the surface, *Soviet Marxism* (1958) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) have much in common. Both proceed from an analysis of technological rationality that, according to Marcuse, plays a dominant role in the organization of both Soviet state socialism and Western capitalist democracies. As always, Marcuse stresses the contradictory character of technological rationality. On the one hand, its development creates the possibility of overcoming the “primacy of industrialization over emancipation” in the Soviet Union and the “comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom” in the West. On the other hand, technological rationality also conceals and perpetuates social domination in both contexts: that of the state and party bureaucracy over the rest of society in the Soviet Union and that of the ruling class and the “conservative popular base” over the “outcasts and outsiders, the unemployed and the unemployable” in the West. What Marcuse says here of the Soviet Union, also holds true in the capitalist West:

> The technological perfection of the productive apparatus dominates the rulers and the ruled while sustaining the distinction between them. Autonomy and spontaneity are confined to the level of efficiency and performance within the established pattern … Dissent is not only a political crime but also a technical stupidity, sabotage, mistreatment of the machine.

In addition to analyzing the peculiar social forms of the state-centric forms of Fordist capitalism, which emerged around the globe in the mid twentieth century, Marcuse also devotes substantial attention in both works to the forms

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of ideology that accompanied them. Through an “immanent critique” of Soviet ideology, Marcuse shows how Marx’s critical and historically specific categories were transformed into the affirmative, metaphysical doctrine of “dialectical materialism.” Through an analysis of the “closing of the universe of discourse” in the spheres of politics, philosophy, and art, Marcuse demonstrates how any critical tendencies, which point beyond capitalist social relations in the West, are also stifled or recuperated. The concept of one-dimensionality refers precisely to this elimination of transcendent impulses, which results in a society “without opposition.”

Despite the deeply pessimistic character of its analysis, One-Dimensional Man would soon become one the most important theoretical texts for the New Left and the burgeoning protest movements of the 1960s. Selling over 100,000 copies in the late 1960s, One-Dimensional Man catapulted Marcuse out of his role as a relatively unknown philosopher and social theorist, to one of the most widely debated public intellectuals of the day. This changed role was also reflected in Marcuse’s writings from the time.69 In 1965 he published what is certainly his most controversial essay: “Repressive Tolerance.” At a time when the liberal establishment was escalating the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement was becoming increasingly militant owing to the violent backlash against its efforts to secure basic constitutional rights for African Americans, Marcuse’s essay was an explicit endorsement of the necessity of an “extra-parliamentary” opposition in the US. Echoing Horkheimer’s model of a dialectic of bourgeois society, Marcuse argued that tolerance had originally been a revolutionary value, intended to undermine the monopoly of the Church and absolutist state on the means of legitimate expression.70 But after the historical triumph of the bourgeoisie, the concept of tolerance lost its critical and transcendent character, insofar as the informed and the uninformed, the progressive and the reactionary, the humane and the cynical were now all “tolerated” equally. On this basis, Marcuse proceeded to the following problematic conclusion:

Withdrawal of tolerance from regressive movements before they can become active; intolerance even toward thought, opinion and word, and finally, intolerance in the opposite direction, that is, toward the political Right – these anti-democratic notions respond to the actual development of the democratic society which has destroyed the basis for universal tolerance.71

69. For a sampling of Marcuse’s writings from this period, see Herbert Marcuse, The New Left and the 1960s, Douglas Kellner (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2005).
70. Horkheimer made a very similar argument about tolerance in the essay, “Montaigne and the Function of Skepticism,” in Between Philosophy and Social Science.
71. Ibid., 110–11.
Marcuse's tendency here to see democratic rights primarily as a form of ideology used to mask social domination, and not as a historical achievement that would need to be preserved in any future socialist society, points to a democratic deficit in his thought, which was also apparent in his tendency to place more emphasis on the similarities rather than the differences between Soviet and Western societies. In this respect, too, Marcuse continued the legacy of Horkheimer's critical theory in the 1930s, which had since been abandoned by Horkheimer himself.\textsuperscript{72}

Marcuse's next two works, \textit{Essay on Liberation} (1969) and \textit{Counter-Revolution and Revolt} (1973), were also products of the highly charged political conditions of the time. True to Marx's and Horkheimer's determinations of materialism and his own earlier insistence that philosophy play an active role in changing society, Marcuse saw no contradiction between theoretical reflection and political engagement.\textsuperscript{73} Marcuse participated actively in many different political events in the late 1960s, including numerous teach-ins and marches against the war in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{74} Marcuse was in France when the massive wave of student protests and workers' strikes erupted in May 1968 and he participated actively in political debates and actions. The strong sensual and aesthetic moment expressed in the utopian posters and slogans that appeared on the walls during the May “events” – such as “all power to the imagination” and “the restraints imposed on pleasure excite the pleasure of living without restraints” – resonated deeply with Marcuse's vision of an emancipated society.\textsuperscript{75} In fact, Marcuse dedicated \textit{Essay on Liberation} to the “young militants” and “rebels” of May 1968.

The most important concept Marcuse introduced in \textit{Essay} was the notion of a “new sensibility,” which expressed once again his theoretical interest in the subjective conditions of social transformation in advanced capitalist societies. Marcuse argued that the strong erotic and aesthetic moment in the May events, and the 1960s counter-culture more generally, may anticipate the development

\textsuperscript{72}. This is not to say that Horkheimer's trend toward an unreflective Cold War liberalism was unproblematic; instead, it points to the necessity for a re-examination and reintegration of the best aspects of the liberal-democratic political tradition into critical theory. This was a project that was already begun by Neumann in the 1930s and which was continued – in a much different way – by Habermas.


\textsuperscript{74}. For a humorous account of Marcuse's participation in an anti-war march in Oakland in 1965, see Carl Schorske, “Encountering Marcuse,” in \textit{Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader}, Abromeit and Cobb (eds), 256.

of new character structures, which pointed beyond what Horkheimer had earlier identified as the “anthropology of the bourgeois epoch.” Soon chastened by the ferocious backlash against the protest movements and the dissolution of the counter-culture into regressive and escapist forms, Marcuse was forced to admit in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* that his hopeful analysis had been premature. The sado-masochistic character structure, which had originally taken shape among the bourgeoisie in the early modern period, had since become dominant among the majority of the working class in the most advanced industrialized countries, which explained the *retour à la normale* in France and the reassertion of the “silent majority” in the US. While Marcuse warmly greeted what he considered the two most important outgrowths of the 1960s protest movements, namely a revival of feminism and the birth of a substantial environmental movement, the prognosis for the present was on the whole rather bleak.

He called, in particular, for a re-examination of the link between capitalism and authoritarianism, as analyzed in the social-psychological and empirical studies of Horkheimer, Fromm, Löwenthal, and Adorno.

In his final work, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1979), Marcuse completed a full circle that brought him back to his earliest concerns with aesthetics. As we have seen, in his earlier work on aesthetics, such as “The Affirmative Character of Culture,” Marcuse had placed more emphasis on the ideological character of bourgeois art than on its critical and transcendent qualities. Marcuse’s much less qualified defense of the autonomy of aesthetic form in *The Aesthetic Dimension* not only testified to the failed attempts in the 1960s to revive the program of the historical avant-garde of merging art and life, but also represented a gesture to Adorno’s posthumously published magnum opus, *Aesthetic Theory*, which reiterated his longstanding criticisms of such attempts. The change of emphasis

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80. For a clear articulation of Adorno’s reservations about this aspect of the historical avant-garde, see his exchange with Benjamin in *Aesthetics and Politics: The Key Texts of the Classic Debate within German Marxism*, Ronald Taylor (ed. and trans.) (London: Verso, 1977), 110–33.
in Marcuse’s position and his greater proximity to Adorno come through clearly in the following passages:

In contrast to orthodox Marxist aesthetics I see the political potential of art in art itself, in the aesthetic form as such. Furthermore, I argue that by virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous vis à vis the given social relations. In its autonomy art both protests these relations, and at the same time transcends them. Thereby art subverts the dominant consciousness, the ordinary experience.81

The more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change. In this sense, there may be more subversive potential in the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud than in the didactic plays of Brecht.82

Marcuse’s defense of aesthetic form and autonomy was also accompanied by a reconsideration of other “bourgeois” concepts, such as the individual and interiority.83 Returning once again to Horkheimer’s 1930s’ model of a dialectic of bourgeois society, Marcuse argued that although these concepts had developed historically in modern bourgeois society, they were not merely ideological; they also pointed beyond this society. Marcuse had always defended the claims of the concrete individual to happiness against the ideological demands of abstract collectivities, but he emphatically reaffirmed this position at the end of his life. Recalling one of Marx’s central categories from the Grundrisse, Marcuse wrote: “That is orthodox Marxism: the ‘universal individual’ as the goal of socialism.”84

82. Ibid., xii–xiii.
83. Marcuse writes, for example: “Marxist literary criticism often displays scorn for inwardness [Innerlichkeit] … But this attitude is not too remote from the scorn of the capitalists for an unprofitable dimension of life. If subjectivity is an ‘achievement’ of the bourgeois era, it is at least an antagonistic force in capitalist society. … I have pointed out that the same applies to the critique of the individualism of bourgeois literature offered by Marxist aesthetics. To be sure, the concept of the bourgeois individual has become the ideological counterpoint to the competitive economic subject and the authoritarian head of the family. To be sure, the concept of the individual as developing freely in solidarity with others can become a reality only in a socialist society. But the fascist period and monopoly capitalism have decisively changed the political value of these concepts … Today, the rejection of the individual as a ‘bourgeois’ concept recalls and presages fascist undertakings” (Ibid., 37–8).
Of the original critical theorists, survived only by Löwenthal and Fromm, Marcuse passed away in Starnberg, Germany in 1979.

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Max Horkheimer**


“Montaigne und die Funktion der Skepsis.” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 7 (1938): 1–52. Published

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85. Since much of Horkheimer’s best theoretical work was published in essays, rather than books, I have mentioned several of his “minor” works as well.
in English as “Montaigne and the Function of Skepticism,” in *Between Philosophy and Social Science*, 265–312.


**Herbert Marcuse**


When the Institute for Social Research opened in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1924, its benefactor Felix Weil could hardly have imagined that its diverse members would contribute significantly to the development of disciplines such as sociology, influence the methodology of empirical social research, reshape Marxist theory and Freudian psychoanalysis, and act as a powerful stimulus for political activism during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the first years of its existence, the institute promoted interdisciplinary studies devoted to the theory and history of socialism and the labor movement. But after its first director, Carl Grünberg, resigned owing to illness, Max Horkheimer took his place in 1930 and gave the institute a decisively new orientation. Work funded by the institute under Horkheimer’s leadership would analyze prevailing social tendencies with a view to developing a theory of contemporary society.¹ The institute would treat society as a complex totality comprising a variety of distinct but interacting factors. As Horkheimer explained in his inaugural address, institute members should examine

the connection between the economic life of society, the psychical development of individuals, and the changes in the realm of culture

… (to which belong not only the so-called intellectual elements, such as science, art, and religion, but also law, customs, fashion, public opinion, sports, leisure activities, lifestyle, etc.).

To explore the connections between these aspects of social life amounted to rethinking “the connection of particular existence and universal Reason, of reality and Idea, of life and Spirit.”

Horkheimer’s political radicalization began when he met Friedrich Pollock in 1911. Pollock helped Horkheimer to free himself from his conservative background, and became his lifelong friend and close associate at the institute. After the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the two young men studied in Munich where they came into contact with the socialism of Erich Mühsam, Ernst Töller, Gustav Landauer, and others. However, Horkheimer and Pollock eventually turned to Marx because he offered a historically grounded model for radical social transformation. Both Horkheimer and Pollock are communists, wrote their new acquaintance, twenty-one-year-old Theodor W. Adorno, in a letter to Walter Benjamin dated July 1924. After spending ten days with the two men in a house they shared in Kronberg, Adorno reported that they had had long and passionate debates about materialist conceptions of history, the relationship between philosophy and the modern sciences, and philosophy’s response to the growing evils of society. These politically engaged and philosophically informed discussions would continue for more than half a century.

Although Adorno was not associated officially with the institute until 1935, he and Horkheimer had initiated the productive philosophical partnership, and jealously guarded friendship, that would end only with Adorno’s death in 1969.

3. Ibid., 12.
6. Theodor W. Adorno (September 11, 1903–August 6, 1969; born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany; died in Zermatt, Switzerland) was educated at Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (1921–24; 1926–27; 1929–31) and the University of Oxford (1934–37) and took his habilitation at Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (1931). His influences included Benjamin, Freud, Hegel, Kant, Kierkegaard, Kracauer, Lukács, Marx, and Nietzsche. He held appointments at Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (1931–33), Princeton University (1938–40), and Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität (1949–69), and was Associate at the Institute for Social Research (1935–38) and Director of the Institute for Social Research (1958–69).
In the early 1930s, they both contributed to the institute’s journal, the Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung (later renamed Studies in Philosophy and Social Science). However, with the victory of Hitler’s National Socialist Party in 1930, the institute, nicknamed Café Marx, was closed and its property confiscated by the Gestapo on March 13, 1933, on the grounds of its communist leanings. Having taken the precaution of placing the institute’s funds in the Netherlands in 1931, in 1934 Horkheimer had the resources needed to establish a branch of the institute at Columbia University, where he was soon joined by Pollock, Herbert Marcuse, and Leo Löwenthal. In its New York office, the institute initiated a number of empirical research projects, the most important of which examined the effects of unemployment on the authority structure of the American family. This project, which was supervised by Paul Lazarsfeld and involved the collaboration of Marcuse and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, would culminate in Studien über Autorität und Familie, which was edited by Horkheimer and published in Paris in 1936.

As the institute settled in the United States, Adorno was studying at Oxford with the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, who agreed to supervise a thesis he proposed to write on Edmund Husserl. It was not until 1938 that Adorno decided to emigrate to New York with his new wife Gretel. Having studied composition with Alban Berg in the mid-1920s in Vienna, Adorno had already published a number of essays on music. Upon his arrival, Horkheimer arranged for him to work with Lazarsfeld in New Jersey as head of the music section of the Princeton Radio Research Project, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, where until 1940 Adorno was responsible for overseeing empirical research into the psychological value of radio music for listeners.

8. Ibid., 177.
10. Ibid., 110.
11. Ibid., 168. As Wiggershaus also notes on the next page, parallel projects were initiated in the institute’s European branches.
By 1940, however, it was glaringly apparent to the émigrés, some of whose family and friends were suffering horribly under the Nazi regime, that anti-Semitism was virulent in many European countries. In the early 1940s, Adorno began to study anti-Semitism, following the lead of Horkheimer in “The Jews and Europe,” an essay published in the Zeitschrift in 1939. In 1941, the institute also published a series of articles on National Socialism in the newly renamed Studies in Philosophy and Social Science; this special volume included articles by Marcuse and Pollock as well as Adorno’s essay “Veblen’s Attack on Culture,” and an article by Horkheimer entitled “The End of Reason.”

Horkheimer declared that all his work in the 1930s was a prelude to a book he planned to write on dialectical logic. He considered Adorno the ideal collaborator for this project as early as 1935. By 1938, the project had become more concrete. In a letter to Benjamin, Adorno wrote that Horkheimer had spoken to him about “his eagerness to begin work on a book on the dialectic of the Enlightenment.” However, this work only started after the institute moved most of its resources from New York to Los Angeles in 1941. Some of its central ideas were outlined in Horkheimer’s Eclipse of Reason. Dedicated to Pollock to mark his fiftieth birthday, Adorno and Horkheimer finished the book in the spring of 1944; it first appeared in 1947 in the Netherlands under the title Dialektik der Aufklärung.

Dialectic of Enlightenment opens with a strident warning. If the modern deployment of reason was supposed to emancipate humanity, it is now the case that the “fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.” Drawing on Max Weber’s idea of the disenchantment of the world through rationalization, as well as on the dialectic of faith and enlightenment in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, the first chapter of Dialectic of Enlightenment purports to show that, for all its claims to supersede the mythic worldview, enlightenment is actually an outgrowth of myth and ends by reverting to myth. Manipulating and controlling objects in the interest of preserving the self against a nature that is perceived as hostile, enlightened reason confuses “the animate with the inanimate, just as myth compounds the inanimate with the animate.” Enlightenment and myth share a fear of nature – a fear that has reached such a pitch in enlight-

18. Ibid., 160.
ened thought that nothing is allowed to remain outside its conceptual purview. Compulsively forcing natural objects into explanatory schema in order to dominate them, reason continues to be driven by nature. Enlightened reason merely makes nature “audible in its estrangement” because the very attempt to master nature only enslaves reason all the more thoroughly to nature.

This theme, which is central to the later work of Adorno as well, is elaborated in subsequent chapters of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. For example, in the excursus on the *Odyssey* that follows the first chapter, Horkheimer and Adorno trace enlightened thought to the dawn of human history, when reason developed as a means to the end of thwarting the powers of nature, as exemplified in the cunning of Odysseus. They argue that control over nature was finally achieved only by delaying the gratification of instincts and needs, or by repressing them altogether. Driven by survival instincts, human beings denied nature in themselves in order to preserve themselves in the face of nature. Mastery over nature practically always involves the annihilation of the subject in whose service that mastery is maintained, because the substance which is mastered, suppressed, and disintegrated by self-preservation is nothing other than the living entity, of which the achievements of self-preservation can only be defined as functions – in other words, self-preservation destroys the very thing which is to be preserved.

The idea that the instinct for self-preservation propels much of Western history helps to explain a remark at the end of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the effect that the official history of Europe conceals a subterranean history. Europe’s underground history “consists in the fate of the human instincts and passions repressed and distorted by civilization.” Although it is only implicit in this passage, this reference to Sigmund Freud (*Civilization and its Discontents*) is a distinguishing feature of first generation critical theory as a whole. Based on Marxism, the theory’s materialist account of capitalism encompasses not just economic factors but psychological ones as well.

Martin Jay explains that “the unexpected rise of an irrationalist mass politics in fascism, which was unforeseen by orthodox Marxists,” made it necessary to incorporate psychology into a critical account of society. Yet, even after the defeat of National Socialism, “psychological impediments to emancipation” remained in “the manipulated society of mass consumption that followed in its

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Concern about these impediments is forcefully expressed in a chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* called “Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” where the psychology underlying fascist propaganda is compared to the psychotechnology of the Hollywood-based culture industry; extensive use is also made of psychoanalysis in the following chapter on anti-Semitism.

However, it was not just the relevance of psychoanalytic theory for understanding fascism and the culture industry that made Freud indispensable. What particularly recommended Freud to Adorno was his recognition that nature and history have always been dialectically entwined. Originally attributing this idea to Georg Lukács in a 1932 lecture called “The Idea of Natural History” (which was presented to the Kant Society in Frankfurt), Adorno would later cite *The German Ideology* in support of this claim. In “Die Revidierte Psychoanalyse” – a lecture given to the Psychoanalytic Society in San Francisco in 1946 – Adorno also defended Freud against revisionists such as Karen Horney, arguing that Freud is “not content to leave reason and socially determined behavior unexplained but attempts to derive even complex mental behaviors from the drive for self-preservation and pleasure.” Equally importantly, Freud did not deny that nature is historically conditioned; he never precluded the possibility that “the concrete manifestation of instincts might undergo the most sweeping variations and modifications” throughout history. What Adorno draws from Freudian theory, then, enables him not only to explain phenomena such as Nazi Germany and the culture industry, but to elaborate in psychological terms on Marx’s speculative claims about the relationship between nature and human history.

Adorno also developed a psychological perspective on labor, observing that our participation in both production and consumption has historically been impelled by survival instincts. If Marx criticized capitalism for disrupting the metabolism between labor and nature, as well as for alienating individuals...
from the products of their labor and the productive activity that characterizes their species life, Adorno not only adopted this view but gave it a Freudian spin. In *Minima Moralia*, dedicated to Horkheimer on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday, he remarked that individuals are both biological and social beings. Under capitalism, however, human beings increasingly become mere means to the end of production as human labor and its products are transformed into commodities. We can now survive only by subordinating ourselves completely to exchange relations. In this situation, the “will to live finds itself dependent on the denial of the will to live: self-preservation annuls all life in subjectivity.”

Although he was neither an orthodox Marxist nor an orthodox Freudian, and he never fully addressed the problems connected with reconciling Marx and Freud, Adorno examined the impact of the capitalist system on the psychological development of individuals in most of his work, claiming that capitalism fosters widespread social and psychological pathologies such as authoritarianism, narcissism, and paranoia. However, Adorno had argued as early as 1927 (in his first *Habilitationsschrift* which he was forced to withdraw), that psychopathologies can be overcome, not by psychoanalysis, but only by completely transforming economic and social conditions. He also criticized Freud in *Minima Moralia*, charging that psychoanalysis encourages adaptation to prevailing conditions, and that it vacillates between “negating the renunciation of instinct as repression contrary to reality, and applauding it as sublimation beneficial to culture.” Still, Adorno was certainly not persuaded to jettison Freudian theory altogether. Even as he advanced these criticisms, he was discussing the psychology of anti-Semitism with Freudian social psychologists, and he wrote two pieces substantially influenced by Freudian theory. He elaborated on his ideas in *The Authoritarian Personality* which involved an extensive, empirically based, psychological account of fascist tendencies in the United States.

It was not simply his supplementation of Marxism by psychoanalysis that made Adorno a less than orthodox Marxist. For, in “Reflexionen zur Klassenheorie” (composed as a working document comprising nine theses in 1942), Adorno measured his distance from both Marx and the orthodox Marxism of the Soviet Union. Since Marx’s prediction about the concentration and centralization of

capital had been realized, the nature of capitalism changed, particularly with respect to the composition of classes. Consisting of relatively independent entrepreneurs during the earlier phase of liberal capital, the bourgeoisie lost much of its economic power as monopoly conditions developed. Today, the economically disenfranchised bourgeoisie and the proletariat form a new mass class that confronts the few remaining owners of the means of production.36

In a Hegelian remark about the Aufhebung – the preservation and sublation – of classes under monopoly capital, Adorno writes that the concept of class must be preserved because “the division of society into exploiters and exploited not only continues to exist but gains in force and strength.” Yet the concept must also be sublated “because the oppressed who, as the theory predicted, are the vast majority of people today, cannot experience themselves as a class.”37 So, while class stratification persists, classes themselves have changed, and the subjective awareness of belonging to a class has evaporated. Marx’s theory is no longer straightforwardly applicable to existing conditions precisely because he was right about the emergence of monopoly conditions.

In this essay, Adorno also takes issue with Marx’s theory of impoverishment, arguing that this theory can be confirmed only in a metaphorical sense because workers today have far more to lose than their chains. Compared to the situation of workers in nineteenth-century England that Marx analyzed, the standard of living of workers in the West has actually improved. The establishment of the welfare state, which Marx could not have foreseen, is partially responsible for this improvement. The work day is now shorter, and workers enjoy “better food, housing and clothing, protection of dependents and the aged, and, on average, a higher life expectancy.” It is now unlikely that “hunger would force them into an unconditional alliance and into revolution.”38

Borrowing a phrase from The Communist Manifesto, Adorno argues that, with the welfare state, the “ruling class” effectively secures “for ‘slaves their existence within slavery’ in order to ensure its own.” In this new context, impoverishment refers to the “political and social impotence” of individuals who have become “pure objects of administration for monopolies” and their political allies.39 Survival now depends on adaptation to a constantly changing and unstable economic system. Adaptation is reinforced by sophisticated psychotechnologies and the prevailing ideology that glorifies existing states of affairs. By these means, the needs of the new mass class are forced to harmonize with commodified offers of satisfaction. Conformity to socially approved models of behavior

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37. Ibid., 377.
38. Ibid., 384.
39. Ibid., 386.
now appears more rational than solidarity. This is another reason why prospects for revolutionary change have faded.

Adorno also observes that political power has increased in the West. However, he does not adopt Pollock's state capitalism thesis, which asserts that there has been a transition in Western countries “from a predominantly economic to an essentially political era,” thereby calling into question Marx's view of the primacy of economic forces within society. If the state now intervenes more frequently in the economy, direct political domination existed only in Nazi Germany. At most, Pollock's state capitalism thesis signals certain ominous tendencies in other Western countries.

What changed under monopoly capitalism was that the ruling class became anonymous: it disappeared “behind the concentration of capital.” Today, the concentration of capital has reached such proportions that capitalism “appears as an institution, as an expression of the entire society.” Indeed, Adorno sounds a profoundly Lukácsian note that resonates throughout his work when he criticizes the reifying effects of the capitalist economy on human beings. Since it now pervades almost every aspect of human life, “the fetish character of commodities, which reflects relations between people as those between things, ends in the socially totalitarian aspect of capital.” As Stefan Müller-Doohm observes, the pervasiveness of reification under monopoly capitalism also helps to answer the question posed in the preface to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; namely, why humanity is sinking into a new kind of barbarism, rather than entering into a truly human state.

The urgency of this question did not abate after Adorno returned to Frankfurt to teach again at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Institute in 1949. Until his death,

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40. Ibid., 377.
42. I am restating criticisms raised in my *Adorno, Habermas, and the Search for a Rational Society* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11–16. The view that Adorno adopted the state capitalism thesis in the mid-1940s is reiterated by Willem van Reijen and Jan Bransen in a commentary at the end of Jephcott's translation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 252, where the authors state that Horkheimer and Adorno distanced themselves “definitively from a form of Marxism which assumed the primacy of economics.” However, this view is false. In “Society,” Fredric Jameson (trans.), *Salmagundi* 3(9–10) (1969–70), 149, Adorno repeats the claim he had already made in “Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie” that society remains class society. Three years later, in “Late Capitalism or Industrial Society,” Fred van Gelder (trans.), in *Modern German Sociology*, V. Meja et al. (eds) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 242, Adorno states categorically that the economic system continues to predominate over the political system.

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almost all his work – including many of his books and essays on music and literature – deals with the related problems of fascism and monopoly capitalism. What concerns Adorno above all else is that conditions similar to those that accompanied the rise of Nazism in Germany persist in the West. Indeed he argues that little has changed since the end of the Second World War: “The economic order, and to a great extent also the economic organization modeled upon it, now as then renders the majority of people dependent upon conditions beyond their control and thus maintains them in a state of political immaturity.” In the interest of survival, individuals must “negate precisely that autonomous subjectivity to which the idea of democracy appeals; they can preserve themselves only if they renounce their self.” Conformity to the interests of the ruling economic and political class is reinforced by psychological techniques similar to the ones used by Hitler. Hitler revealed what critical theorists had been saying for some time; namely, that “the appeal to the unconscious, the natural, to unconstructed nature, to the gifted personality, and whatever else propaganda highlights by way of irrational powers, only contributes to the ultimate strengthening of the hegemony of a dehumanized apparatus, and ends in complete inhumanity.”

After 1950 – the year *The Authoritarian Personality* appeared along with four other volumes in a series entitled *Studies in Prejudice* – Adorno wrote a number of articles dealing with research methodology in the social sciences. While he was critical of empirical social research, arguing that social science must be guided by the normative idea “of a true society,” Adorno nonetheless continued to engage in empirical studies throughout the 1950s. In 1952, for example, he returned to Los Angeles to work briefly for the Hacker Foundation, where, among other things, he drafted a qualitative analysis of astrology columns

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46. Theodor W. Adorno, “Individuum und Organisation,” in *Soziologische Schriften I*, 440. This essay has not yet been published in translation.
in the *Los Angeles Times*, as well as two sociological studies of television. On his return to Germany, he took part in a project that examined the relationship between the manifest political opinions of Germans from different social strata and their latent attitudes. Part of the study focused on the ways in which German citizens sought to deny their recent past. Here again Adorno used psychoanalytic theory to explore the interaction between the guilt feelings of the German people and the defense mechanisms that enabled them to assuage their guilt.

According to Wiggershaus, however, Adorno abandoned empirical research at the end of the 1950s in order to devote himself completely to the elaboration of his critical social theory. Among the more important of his writings during this period is “Progress,” a “preliminary study” that “belongs within the complex” of Adorno’s major philosophical work *Negative Dialectics*. Here, Adorno revisits an idea that was advanced as early as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, when he states that what counts as progress today is the domination of external and internal nature, which, impelled by the instinct for self-preservation, now threatens to destroy what it is supposed to preserve. Progress worthy of that name would entail that humanity has become aware of its “own inbred nature” in order to put an end to “the domination that it exacts upon nature and through which domination by nature continues.” Catastrophe can be averted only if “a self-conscious global subject” develops and intervenes, using “technical forces of production” to abolish all forms of material deprivation on the planet, and rationally to establish “the whole society as humanity.”

Adorno was developing new ideas in the work he wrote in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. Among the more important of these are the ideas of identity and nonidentity thinking. Identity thinking had certainly been discussed as early as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, even if it had not been given that name. As J. M. Bernstein observes, what Adorno and Horkheimer describe as the principle of immanence in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was later called identity thinking. The principle of immanence entails that an object is known “only when it is classified in some way,” or “when it is shown, via subsumption, to share


55. *Ibid.*, 144.
characteristics or features” with other objects. Similarly, “an event is explained if it can be shown to fall within the ambit of a known pattern of occurrence, if it falls within the ambit of a known rule or is deducible from (subsumable by) a known law.” For their part, concepts, rules, and laws have a cognitive value only when they are “subsumed under or shown to be deducible from higher-level concepts, rules, or laws.”

Bernstein resumes: “[c]ognition is subsumption, subsumption is necessarily reiterable, and reiteration occurs through cognitive ascent from concrete to abstract, from particular to universal, from what is relatively universal, and thereby still in some respect particular, contingent, and conditioned, to what is more universal.”

Owing to this subsumption of objects and events under concepts and laws, and the higher-order subsumption of concepts and laws under explanatory systems, we have effectively dissociated ourselves from our lived experience of the world in order to dominate it. We substitute unity for diversity, simplicity for complexity, permanence for change, and identity for difference. Once particular objects are tethered to concepts, there is allegedly nothing more of importance to be said about them. Identity thinking consists in the claim that diverse objects fall under concept “X”; it thereby effectively obliterates the particularity of objects, their differences from one other, their individual development and histories, along with other distinctive traits they may possess. Classifying, ordering, and explaining the objective world by ranging it under concepts that are then organized systematically, identity thinking seeks – to quote Nietzsche, who interpreted this behavior as a manifestation of the physiological will to power – “to make all being thinkable,” to make it “yield and bend” for us.

The substitution of universal concepts for particular, nonconceptual objects is not problematic just on epistemological grounds; Adorno also claims that identity thinking reinforces stereotypical and schematic views of objects, while fostering conformity to the status quo. To solve these problems, he proposed a new cognitive paradigm: nonidentity thinking. Müller-Doohm claims that Adorno first publicly referred to nonidentity thinking in an essay on Hölderlin where he claimed that the poet had managed to surpass identity thinking; his is a poetry of the nonidentical. Yet the idea of nonidentity thinking was advanced earlier in Adorno’s 1959 lectures on Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. Although identity thinking persists in Kant to the extent that he wants to “ground being in

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the subject,” Kant begins to develop a nonidentity philosophy when he “attempts to restrict the claim to identity by insisting on the obstacle, the block, encountered by the subject in its search for knowledge.” Nonidentity appears in the idea that not only do our “affections” “arise from things-in-themselves,” but that these things are not reducible to our concepts and categories of them.\(^{60}\) In fact, in *Against Epistemology*, Adorno had already praised Kant’s view of the nonidentity of concept and object.\(^{61}\)

Adorno’s *magnum opus*, *Negative Dialectics*, is devoted to exploring the alternative cognitive paradigm of nonidentity thinking.\(^{62}\) In the introduction, he distinguishes Hegel’s dialectics from his own, arguing that his version of dialectics involves “the consistent sense of nonidentity” (ND 5). Later remarking that identity thinking merely “says what something falls under, what it exemplifies or represents, and what, accordingly, it is not itself,” Adorno contrasts it to nonidentity thinking, which “seeks to say what something is.” By saying “it is,” Adorno concedes that nonidentity thinking does identify; it even “identifies to a greater extent” than identity thinking. But nonidentity thinking identifies in “other ways” because it is not content merely to subsume objects under universal concepts with a view to manipulating and controlling them. Rather, nonidentity thinking tries to make its concepts consonant with nonconceptual particulars. In so doing, it reveals the “elements of affinity” between the nonconceptual object and our concepts of it: an affinity that makes concept formation possible in the first place (ND 149). This affinity exists because concepts themselves are thoroughly entwined in nonconceptuality; they are “moments of the reality that requires their formation, primarily for the control of nature” (ND 11). In nonidentity thinking, these “elements of affinity – of the object itself to the thought of it – come to live in identity” (ND 149).

Considerations like these on the affinity between concept and object may lend some support to Bernstein’s assertion that identity thinking is parasitic on nonidentity thinking.\(^{63}\) Concepts must be turned back toward nonconceptual particulars because they are generated in embodied contact with material things, and they continue to refer to these things by virtue of their meaning in which their mediation by the nonconceptual survives (ND 12). Yet concepts have a twofold relation to objects. On the one hand, they depend on the nonconceptual matter that provides their content and is the source of their power to name.

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In order to convey “full, unreduced experience in the medium of conceptual
reflection,” nonidentity thinking must immerse itself in things (ND 13). On the
other hand, concepts also transcend the objective realm by heeding “a poten-
tial that waits in the object,” and intending in the object “even that of which
the object was deprived by objectification” (ND 19). In this case, nonidentity
thinking grasps objects by means of possibility (ND 52). It deploys possibility to
indicate what an object would become if the damaged conditions under which
it developed were altered.

If concepts approximate objects by virtue of their orientation toward the
object’s material axis, the object in turn must approximate the concept. In the
context of discussing the affinity between concept and object, Adorno speaks
about the “longing” of the concept to become identical with the nonconceptual
thing. This longing reflects the inadequacy of objects with respect to concepts. It
is this inadequacy that nonidentity thinking also thematizes even as it attempts
to forge a route beyond it. Adorno illustrates this point when he discusses the
emphatic concept of freedom. Individuals are both more and less than the
freedom that may be ascribed to them. They are always more than free because
freedom is, at best, only one of their attributes. Yet they are less than free because
“the concept feeds on the idea of a condition in which individuals would have
qualities not to be ascribed to anyone here and now” (ND 150). In the latter
case, nonidentity thinking reveals the inadequacy of individuals to our concept
of them as free.

Adorno advocates this twofold orientation towards objects in Negative
Dialectics. Nonidentity thinking involves the “[r]eciprocal criticism of the
universal and of the particular.” It must judge both “whether the concept does
justice to what it covers” and “whether the particular fulfills its concept.” These
two critical operations jointly “constitute the medium of thinking about the
nonidentity of particular and concept” (ND 146). To remain content with the
judgment that the concept does (or does not do) justice to what it “covers” would
amount to leaving “behind the medium of virtuality, of anticipation that cannot
be wholly fulfilled by any piece of actuality.” Interpretation would be abandoned
in favor of merely positing what exists; this would make thought “untrue.”64 The
nonconceptual particular would satisfy its concept only by making good on its
own immanent potential – a potential that some emphatic concepts invoke or
intimate. Nonidentity can be said to contain identity in the prospective longing
of the concept to become identical with the thing (ND 149). In nonidentity
thinking, concepts are given a speculative orientation by aiming “at what would
be different” (ND 153).

64. Adorno, Minima Moralia, 127.
Nonidentity thinking therefore “contains identity” in a peculiar fashion. Attempting to make good on “the pledge that there should be no contradiction, no antagonism” between the object and the thought of it (ND 146), nonidentity thinking prospectively identifies the object with the concept. Its emphatically critical concepts point forward to changed conditions, such as the condition of a free society in which objects would be able to develop their possibilities unfettered. Evoking conditions that do not currently exist, these concepts “overshoot” what exists precisely in order to grasp it. (Parenthetically, Adorno shows in his posthumously published Aesthetic Theory that artworks share the proleptic orientation of nonidentity thinking when they anticipate “a being-in-itself that does not yet exist.”65 Modern art “constantly works at the Münchhausean trick of carrying out the identification of the non-identical.”66) Since nonconceptual particulars have been damaged under monopoly conditions and do not realize their potential, Adorno argues throughout his work that no particular is “as its particularity requires” (ND 152). He complains that the “substance of the contradiction between universal and particular” is that the nonconceptual particular “is not yet – and that, therefore, it is bad wherever established.” When it holds fast to what universal concepts usually rob from particulars, nonidentity thinking tries to retain the “‘more’ of the concept” as compared to these particulars (ND 151).

Inextricably entwined in nonconceptuality, concepts may evoke something more than what exists owing to their determinate negation of the existent. In fact, at the end of his 1965 lectures on metaphysics, Adorno claims that determinate negation is “the only form in which metaphysical experience survives today.”67 Resembling labor in its inherent resistance to “mere things in being” (ND 19), thought’s resistance is all the more powerful when its concepts are forged in the crucible of its painful experiences of damaged life. For in such experiences, the negative conditions that give rise to suffering are themselves negated in ideas and concepts that evoke conditions under which pain and suffering may one day end. Pain and negativity are “the moving forces of dialectical thinking” (ND 202) because, through them, human beings may glean reality’s better potential. To cite Marcuse, whose remarks echo Adorno’s, emphatically critical concepts point to “potentialities in a concrete historical sense” to the extent that they synthesize “experiential contents into ideas which transcend their particular realizations as

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66. Ibid., 23.
something that is to be surpassed, overcome."68 Through determinate negation, these concepts “conceptualize the stuff of which the experienced world consists, and they conceptualize it with a view of its possibilities, in light of their actual limitation, suppression and denial.”69

Again, Adorno illustrates these ideas in his discussion of the concept of freedom: the shape of freedom “can only be grasped in determinate negation in accordance with the concrete form of a specific unfreedom” (ND 231). Because the idea of freedom emerges in the negation of the negative, unfreedom is not just “an impediment to freedom but a premise of its concept.” Ideas of freedom are derived from a negation of those aspects of reality that cause suffering by perpetuating unfreedom. Both freedom and unfreedom are therefore conceived in “relation to extramental things: freedom as a polemical counter-image to the suffering brought on by social coercion; unfreedom as that coercion’s image” (ND 223). Indeed, Horkheimer had made a similar comment about dignity in Eclipse of Reason: the idea of human dignity was “born from the experience of barbarian forms of domination.”70 Although Adorno does not explicitly mention them, he invites us to think of emancipatory movements such as abolitionism, women’s liberation, and gay rights. In movements like these, the unfree conditions that cause suffering point to their possible reversal by giving rise to the idea of a condition in which oppression would cease to exist. Since an emphatic idea such as that of freedom arises within oppressive situations “as resistance to repression” (ND 265), what is possible – in this case, freedom from oppression – can be glimpsed historically only in experiences of unfreedom.

Emphatic concepts such as freedom must be deployed with other concepts in what Adorno calls a constellation. As opposed to identity-thinking, which dissociates itself from objects owing to its abstraction from them, Adorno claims that a constellation of concepts illuminates “the specific side of the object, the side which to a classifying procedure is either a matter of indifference or a burden.” Indeed, he praises Weber’s employment of ideal types, or of concepts that are “‘gradually composed’ from ‘individual parts … taken from historic reality’” (ND 164). To illustrate this procedure, Adorno turns briefly to Weber’s discussion of capitalism in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, where Weber gathers diverse concepts around capitalism – concepts such as acquisitiveness, the profit motive, lucrateness, calculation, organization, bookkeeping – in order to express what capitalism “aims at, not to circumscribe it to operational ends” (ND 166). Conceding that constellations are the result of an entirely subjective

69. Ibid., 215.
process, Adorno thinks that this “subjectively created context” is “readable as a sign of objectivity,” or of the “spiritual substance” of phenomena (ND 165).

Adorno defines truth as “a constellation of subject and object in which both penetrate each other” (ND 127). Even in this form, however, truth is not something static. Rather, thought must constantly renew itself “in the experience of the subject matter,” a matter that, for its part, is first determined by subjective concepts themselves. Truth is therefore “a constantly evolving constellation.”

At best, truth manifests itself in the progressive approximation of objects by concepts; this may help to explain why Adorno maintains that objects are “infinitely given as a task.” Moreover, Adorno again stresses the fallibility of emphatic ideas when he writes that “the truth of ideas is bound up with the possibility of their being wrong, the possibility of their failure.”

Devoting much of his later work to devising an alternative cognitive paradigm to overcome identity-thinking, Adorno also continued to criticize oppressive socioeconomic conditions. In fact, individuals now stand in relation to society in much the same way that material particulars stand to universal concepts. Adorno implies as much throughout his work when he refers to society as the “universal.” Whereas identity-thinking falsely maintains the primacy of concepts over objects, society reifies individuals by subsuming them under abstract exchange relations. In this respect, identity-thinking and exchange are isomorphic. Just as identity-thinking expunges particulars by identifying them with universal concepts in order to manipulate and control them with a view to ensuring our survival, exchange relations serve the same goal by making “nonidentical individuals and performances become commensurable and identical.”

Following Lukács, Adorno also argues that exchange relations currently encroach on areas of life that were formerly unaffected by them. Exchange plays such a dominant role in human life that activities other than labor have fallen victim to reification as well. Indeed, bourgeois individualism, which celebrates the individual as the substance of society, masks an entirely different reality: the predominance of exchange relations and their homogenizing and leveling effects on needs, behavior, thought, and interpersonal relations. Although we

73. Adorno, Metaphysics: Concept and Problems, 144.
have always subordinated ourselves to economic conditions that determine whether we work, when, where and how we work, as well as our working conditions, today even our needs and instincts are manipulated and controlled to correspond to available offers of commodified satisfaction, and our behavior is molded to fit socially approved models. Forced to adapt to a world “whose law is universal individual profit,” individuals now submit to forms of integration so complete and so far-reaching that Adorno compares them to genocide (ND 362).

Under late capitalism, individuals measure their own self-worth and the worth of others in terms of the value of the goods they possess and the places they occupy within the economic system; their possessions and occupations serve as social markers that position them within groups and distinguish them from other individuals and groups. In other words, individuals relate to one another as mere “agents and bearers of exchange value” (ND 148–9). At the same time, they are isolated and alienated from one another precisely because their interpersonal relations are often cemented by nothing more substantive than these exchange-based relationships. Indeed, Adorno is especially concerned about the damage done to social solidarity under the reifying conditions characteristic of late capitalism. As the exchange principle becomes more pervasive, degrading relations between people to relations between things, the solidarity needed to surmount these relations has evaporated. In other words, exchange relations undermine the very social solidarity that is required to overcome them.

Economic conditions today are such that they also severely impair the autonomy of the family and the public sphere. Owing to the development of monopoly conditions, most individuals are now completely dependent for their survival on the often fickle largesse of the state and the economy. This has made it all the easier for public and private institutions and agencies to usurp the role the family once played as the primary agent of socialization. As the authority of experts and specialists replaces authority structures within the family, ego development suffers because individuals no longer acquire a degree of autonomy by measuring their strength against their parents through rebellion and resistance. The ego’s defenses against the instinctual forces of the id and the superego have become extremely weak. Ego weakness contributes to the marked increase in narcissistic pathologies that Adorno was among the first to diagnose; these pathologies are characterized by emotionally shallow and manipulative interpersonal relations, a diminished capacity for intimacy and social commitment, and fantasies of omnipotence – all of which are easily exploited by demagogues and political leaders.74 Owing to the psychic economy of the reified and narcissistic personality, society “extends repressively into all psychology in the form of

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censorship and the superego.”

Regressive forms of solidarity have emerged in movements such as Nazism and neo-Nazism, where leaders attract followers by reanimating narcissistic superego introjects; these are formed in the image of “an omnipotent and unbridled father figure” that, bearing little or no resemblance to the individual’s real father, may be “enlarged into a ‘group ego.’”

Attempting to understand phenomena such as Nazism, Adorno found Freud’s work remarkably prescient. In “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” Freud had explained that, once individuals have identified with a leader, “what is heterogeneous is submerged in what is homogeneous” because the “mental superstructure, the development of which in individuals is so dissimilar,” is undermined “and the unconscious foundations, which are similar in everyone, stand exposed to view.” As members of a group, individuals behave instinctually rather than according to their egocentric interests. Adorno also adopted Freud’s view that groups frequently act as a “negatively integrating force.” Negative emotions toward out-groups (Jews, blacks, communists, etc.) offer a narcissistic gain for followers of the in-group because they believe that “simply through belonging to the in-group,” they are “better, higher, and purer than those who are excluded.”

More generally, Adorno remarks that collective narcissism compensates for social powerlessness by enabling people to turn themselves “either in fact or imagination into members of something higher and more encompassing to which they attribute qualities which they themselves lack and from which they profit by vicarious participation.”

Whereas the family no longer serves as the primary agent for socialization, the public sphere fails to fulfill its role as “the most important medium of all politically effective criticism” because it has become so commodified that it currently “works against the critical principle in order to market itself.” Speaking about opinion formation in his 1960 lecture “Opinion Delusion Society,” Adorno also argues that public opinion is now imposed from above by “the overall structure of society and hence by relations of domination.”

77. “It is not an overstatement if we say that Freud, though he was hardly interested in the political phase of the problem, clearly foresaw the rise and nature of fascist mass movements in purely psychological categories” (ibid., 120).
the privately owned culture industry merely reflect those of the economic and political elite: public opinion today is “indissolubly entangled” with particular interests in profit and power that only masquerade as universal. Not only has truth been replaced by statistically generated opinions, but the public has lost the capacity for concerted reflection and self-reflection that is “required by a concept of truth.” Now a mere expression of prevailing opinions that reinforce the public’s narcissistic view that it is *au courant*, the average public opinion has become a fetish. If the democratic principle of free speech, which includes “the right to propose, defend, and if possible successfully champion one’s own opinion, even when it is false, mad, disastrous,” presupposes a society that consists of “free, equal, and emancipated people,” it is currently the case that “society’s actual organization hinders all of that and produces and reproduces a condition of permanent regression among its subjects.”

This loss of individuality, autonomy, and freedom, which Adorno charts in all his work, can be traced to the surrender of the task of self-preservation to the welfare state and the capitalist economy. Acknowledging that this surrender was necessary to enable individuals to survive “in more highly developed social conditions,” Adorno nonetheless observes that Western societies now abstract from their living human substratum in their relentless pursuit of profit. Although necessary, the transfer of self-preservation to society has placed “the general rationality at odds with the particular human beings whom it must negate to become general, and whom it pretends – and not only pretends – to serve” (ND 318). To survive under capitalism, individuals are compelled to become the involuntary executors of the law of exchange (ND 312). As Simon Jarvis puts it in his introduction to Adorno’s work: “The more obvious it becomes that the economic basis of any individual’s life is liable to annihilation, and the more real economic initiative is concentrated with the concentration of capital, the more the individual seeks to identify with and adapt to capital.” To this Jarvis adds a chilling note: “For capital, however, the individual’s self-preservation is not in itself a matter of any importance.”

Adorno complains that even reflective people capable of criticizing society often have little choice but “to make an alien cause their own” (ND 311). But the vast majority of individuals remain the unconscious and largely helpless pawns of an economic system that uses and abuses them with the sole aim of promoting its particular interests in profit and power. Once the “self-preserving function” of their egos was “split off from that of consciousness” and subordinated to

economic and political agents and institutions, their attempts to preserve themselves effectively “surrendered to irrationality.” 87 Now that individuals are wholly dependent on society for their survival, late capitalism is able to dispense with “the mediating agencies of ego and individuality,” which it had originally fostered under the earlier stage of liberal capitalism. It thereby arrests “all differentiation,” while exploiting “the primitive core of the unconscious.” 88 Substantially weakened, few can resist the manipulation and exploitation of their instinctual drives.

Openly conceding that he was exaggerating the “sombre side” of our contemporary predicament, 89 Adorno was attempting to describe objective tendencies in the West where “the immense concentration of economical and administrative power leaves the individual no more room to maneuver,” that is, where “the structure of such a society tends toward totalitarian forms of domination.” 90 Yet he did not believe that individuals were doomed to remain oblivious to the ways in which they perpetuate their own powerlessness. Although survival instincts have led human beings to do destructive things both to themselves and to the nature on which their very survival depends, things might have gone, and may yet go, differently. It may still be possible to direct self-preservation consciously to the goal that it implicitly contains: the preservation of the species as a whole. In fact, Adorno argues that reason “should not be anything less than self-preservation, namely that of the species, upon which the survival of each individual literally depends.” 91 Reason can never be “split off from self-preservation,” not only because it owes its development to this drive but also, more emphatically, because the “preservation of humanity is inexorably inscribed within the meaning of rationality.” Self-preservation “has its end in a reasonable organization of society,” 92 a society that would orient itself to the goal of preserving its subjects “according to their unfettered potentialities.” 93

EPILOGUE

The goal of establishing a rational society that will preserve and enhance the lives of every one of its members without exception was championed by all first...

88. Ibid., 95.
92. Ibid., 272.
93. Ibid., 272–3.
generation critical theorists. Horkheimer and Adorno thought that this goal was currently within reach. Advancing a point that Marcuse also made in _One-Dimensional Man_, Adorno claims that “technical forces of production are at a stage that makes it possible to foresee the global dispensation from material labor, its reduction to a limiting value.”94 If it was once necessary to “struggle against the pleasure principle for the sake of one’s own self-preservation,” it is now the case that labor can be reduced to a minimum and need no longer be tied to self-denial.95 Adorno repeats this point in _Negative Dialectics_: the state of productive forces is currently such that much of our labor is superfluous. Consequently, “models of conduct which were formerly rational” have long since become “outdated.” Impelled by survival imperatives that continue to demand the sacrifice of internal nature and the domination of external nature even after technology has made self-preservation easy, the logic of history is logical no longer (ND 349).

To be sure, capitalism now appears to be second nature; it seems to have evolved naturally, and therefore to be unchangeable. Nevertheless this appearance is illusory because, as Adorno puts it, “[t]he rigidified institutions, the relations of production are not Being as such, but even in their omnipotence they are man-made and revocable.”96 That Marx’s reference to the “natural laws” of capitalism should not be taken literally is “confirmed by the strongest motive behind all Marxist theory: that those laws can be abolished” (ND 355). Necessity in history must be recognized as “realized appearance,” and historical determination as “metaphysical accident.” On a more heuristic note, Adorno adds:

> Only if things might have gone differently; if the totality is recognized as socially necessary semblance, as the hypostasis of the universal pressed out of individual human beings; if its claim to be absolute is broken – only then will a critical social consciousness retain its freedom to think that things might be different some day.

(ND 323)

The legacy of first generation critical theory lies not only in its diagnosis of conditions under which individual freedom and autonomy have been substantially undermined, but in its sustained defense of the need to envisage conditions that are fundamentally different from and better than these. Whereas second and third generation critical theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth,97

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94. Ibid., 267.
95. Ibid., 262.
97. Habermas’s work is discussed in more detail in an essay by Christopher F. Zurn in _The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6_. Honneth is discussed in Amy Allen’s essay on the third
have largely been content to promote the reform of existing economic, political and social institutions, their predecessors were far more radical: they wanted to overcome capitalism, along with the pseudo-democratic institutions and procedures that prop it up. Although they have certainly been criticized for failing to provide a blueprint for radical social change, Horkheimer and Adorno were convinced that such change was needed in order to foster the reconciliation of the individual and society that would enable individuals to develop freely outside economic constraints that have become as unnecessary as they are irrational. They were also convinced that critical reflection on our current predicament is the first step towards emancipation. Modifying Spinoza’s claim that all determination is negation, Adorno declares that “the false, once determinately known and precisely expressed, is already an index of what is right and better.”

To acquire a sense of what a more rational society might look like, we need to have a thorough grasp of the irrational conditions that continue to fetter us.

MAJOR WORKS


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generation of critical theorists in _The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7_.

Published in English as *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, translated by Glyn Adley and David Frisby. London: Heinemann, 1976.


Although Walter Benjamin\(^1\) was recognized during his lifetime as one of the most adventurous and penetrating thinkers of the Weimar period in German cultural history, his career was marked by poverty, exile, and disappointment. His ideal intellectual position would have been the completely autonomous critical metropolitan engagement embodied by Karl Kraus\(^2\) and his journal *Die Fackel* in Vienna, but his various attempts to institute a periodical of his own were unsuccessful. He worked at the margins of German academic philology, Brecht’s political theater, the Institute for Social Research in its prewar incarnations, and was primarily a contributor on cultural matters to ephemeral German and French left-wing feuilletons. Setting aside his translations of Baudelaire and Proust, he was able to see only three of his books into print, and his magnum opus, the *Arcades Project*, remained a collection of obscure notes hidden in the national library in Paris when Hitler’s advancing armies pushed Benjamin to suicide on the Spanish border.

And yet in the decades since his death in 1940, his reflections on the melancholy tenor of allegory, the emancipatory potential of anachronism, the political

\(^1\) Walter Benjamin (July 15, 1892–September 26, 1940; born in Berlin, Germany; died in Port Bou, Spain) was educated at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg/Br. (1912–13), Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Berlin (1913–15), Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität, Munich (1915–16), and the University of Bern (1917–19). He wrote his dissertation at the University of Bern in 1919, and his habilitation was rejected by the University of Frankfurt am Main in 1925. His influences included Bergson, Brecht, Cohen, Kant, Kraus, and Lukács.

\(^2\) Karl Kraus (1874–1936), poet, playwright and satirist, published his journal *Die Fackel* (The torch) in Vienna from 1899 to his death, for most of its run writing the entire publication himself. His satirical quotations of corrupt government officials and sycophantic journalists made *Die Fackel* a powerful and feared voice throughout the German-speaking world.
resilience of detritus, and the mnemonic dislocation of modernity have become touchstones of the contemporary intellectual landscape. His essay “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” stands as a founding document of the discipline of media studies. The rehabilitation of allegory and fragmentation as signifying processes that he championed continues to inform deconstructive criticism in both Europe and America. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the Frankfurt School’s cultural critique of the commodity form in late capitalism would be unimaginable without Benjamin’s theoretical inspiration. His notions of divine violence, bare life, and the inherent debility of sovereign authority nourish post-Soviet reflections on political theology by Giorgio Agamben, Jacob Taubes, and others. And beyond strictly theoretical discourse, in the music of Laurie Anderson3 or the architecture of Daniel Libeskind (whose Jewish Museum in Berlin reflects in its sixty broken sections the sixty shattered aphorisms of Benjamin’s *One Way Street*4), Benjamin’s writings continue to provoke a dizzying variety of responses. In paradoxical fashion, this peripatetic thinker of the scorned and the trivial at the end of civilization has come to preside in spirit over much of our contemporary theoretical self-awareness. By returning Benjamin’s multitudinous writings to the trajectory of his life as it unfolded, the following account does not aspire to reclaim an authoritative philosopher from even the most casual or outlandish appropriation of his work. The dispersed and discontinuous condition of his reception is far truer to Benjamin’s insights and their legacy than even the most careful and exhaustive paraphrase can be. Rather, a systematic reconstruction of Benjamin’s intellectual career is offered not as the conclusive explanation of its meaning but as a provisional renewal of the force of its emergence in service to subsequent encounters with the richness of his work by later readers, whose insights it cannot pretend to anticipate.

Walter Benjamin was born in 1892 in Berlin, Germany, the eldest son of Emil Benjamin, a prosperous antiquities dealer and auctioneer, and his wife, Pauline née Schoenflies. As the son of an assimilated Jewish *haute-bourgeois* family, Benjamin enjoyed a privileged education, taking his abitur in 1912 from the Kaiser-Friedrich-Schule in Charlottenburg, after having spent between 1905 and 1907 two academic years at the experimental *Landerziehungsheim* (rural residential school) in the tiny town of Haubinda, Thuringia. It was there that Benjamin first encountered the educational reformer Gustav Wyneken, who taught philosophy in Haubinda until 1906, when, in the midst of Benjamin’s

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brief tenure, conflict with its founder forced him to leave. Wyneken’s involuntary departure from the school interrupted any preliminary relationship with Benjamin, but his erstwhile pupil returned to the Kaiser-Friedrich-Schule a self-conscious representative of his teacher’s reformist attitudes. Wyneken meanwhile went on to found the experimental Freie Schulgemeinde Wickersdorf (Wickersdorf Free School Community) to enact more directly his pedagogic theories.

Upon achieving his abitur, Benjamin left Berlin for Germany’s Catholic south, enrolling in the Albert-Ludwigs Universität in Freiburg. The intellectual atmosphere in Freiburg was dominated by the neo-Kantian philosopher Heinrich Rickert and the historian Friedrich Meinecke, and Benjamin attended lectures by both men. But his interests, although intensely intellectual, were situated outside the lecture hall. He had soon become a prominent participant in the activism of the “Free Student Movement,” an uncoordinated network of reform-minded groups poised against the traditional Korporationen or dueling fraternities of the German university system. Among the loose amalgamation of extra-curricular reform organizations was a “chapter” established the year before in sympathy with Wyneken and his Wickersdorf theories: the “Detachment for School Reform.” This was the framework for Benjamin’s thinking and writing in Freiburg throughout 1912, and continued to inform his sympathies when he returned to Berlin and enrolled in the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität late in 1913. In the months before the outbreak of the First World War, Benjamin moved back and forth between these universities, while consistently promoting the extracurricular Wickersdorf ideal, becoming one of the most prominent student activists of his day.

In later years, Benjamin would disavow the intellectual vacuity of the ante-bellum Youth Movement debates, and his later friends and eventual biographers have tended to share that assessment. But a scornful attitude toward the substantive goals of Youth Movement organizations – toward their shrill commitments to abstinence, coeducation, or Zionism, not to mention the darker nationalistic and anti-Semitic tendencies metastasizing through them – was in fact central to Benjamin’s peculiar activism at the time, so his later disavowal is less straightforward than it might at first seem. Benjamin’s involvement in the “Detachment for School Reform” throughout his student years was unconditionally emphatic, but his understanding of “Youth,” the ideal for which he campaigned, was vested

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5. For a discussion of Rickert’s philosophy, see the essay on neo-Kantianism by Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.

6. Although the group abjured any overt confessional identity, a large percentage of its members were Jewish, despite Wyneken’s own lack of interest in Jewish influences in German society (a lack of interest that would in turn offer his opportunism little moral resistance, despite his broadly left-wing political sympathies, when the Nazis came to power).
in such a generalized antithetical attitude toward the mature society and its recognized culture that any practical consequences of his efforts were difficult to distinguish from disengagement. “This constantly vibrating feeling for the abstractness of pure spirit is what I call Youth,” Benjamin wrote to his friend Carla Seligson in 1913. “For only then (if we don’t want to become mere workers for a movement) when we keep our view clear to perceive spirit wherever it may be, will we become those who realize it. Almost everyone forgets that they themselves are the site where spirit realizes itself.”

Important for Benjamin were not the specific pedagogic recommendations implied by Wyneken’s theories, such as the prefect system or an emphasis on music education, but rather the confrontational attitude that Wyneken himself exemplified toward preexisting pedagogic frameworks. What Benjamin called “Youth” simply was this antithetical posture, logically prior to any objective issue that might occasion it, and so potentially conditioning any issue whatsoever. In lieu of a common object of concern that would define a movement externally, Benjamin’s activism aspired to the mutual recognition of those sharing that “youthful” posture as the precondition to an unspecific cultural renewal. The practical result was not a policy or program but a site in which programs and policies were already in contention: the Sprechsaal, or “discussion forum” he founded in Berlin.

What Benjamin would later recognize, and what would sever his mature thought irrevocably from this initial foray into cultural politics, was that a site from which such an unconditional critique of culture can be conducted never simply appears in the society as a specific condition, such as youth, or a specific locale, a Sprechsaal. Rather, such topoi are entirely unpredictable and tangential, “the most endangered, excoriated and ridiculed creations and thoughts embedded deeply in every present,” as he would say in his eventual farewell to the Youth Culture Movement, “The Life of Students.” Far from being an autonomous venue in which an ideal receptivity could reinterpret its entire social and cultural inheritance, the actual Sprechsaal was conditioned by all the moral inexperience and class myopia that characterized its attendees, and hence was intellectually irredeemable; this Benjamin would later insist on. But a receptive posture so sensitive to the elided authority of the past that it acts in the present as an example itself, and an attitude toward the contemporary world so antithetical

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to its collective evaluations that only a postponed transparency suspended in a permanent future perfect will have been able to recognize it: these recognize, demonstrative, and anticipatory orientations remain fundamental to Benjamin’s thought until the end.

In August 1914, twin catastrophes destroyed the context of Benjamin’s student activism and catapulted him into his adult career. Germany plunged into the Great War with a flurry of martial enthusiasm that left Benjamin entirely cold but swept up Wyneken, alienating him from his leading disciple. Almost simultaneously, Benjamin’s close friends Fritz Heinle and Rika Seligson committed suicide together in the Berlin Sprechsaal that had been the locus of their reformist efforts. The disaster destroyed both the masculine and the feminine paradigms of a “youthful” interlocutor and obliterated the site of conversation. Whatever the biographical or psychological repercussions of these events might have been, the theoretical shock explodes the elements of his youthful theorizing and starts Benjamin’s efforts on their mature trajectory. And this is the fourth aspect of enduring relevance in Benjamin’s youthful experience, along with the receptive position, demonstrative posture, and anticipatory attitude: thought, for Benjamin, unfolds always against the alternative of self-destruction.

With the Sprechsaal obliterated and the society it sought to reform plunged into war, Benjamin left Berlin for Munich and the Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität, and eventually concluded his studies in neutral Switzerland, at the University of Bern. During this time, he met his lifelong close friend the Cabbala scholar Gershom Scholem, and associated with various exiled artists and intellectuals, including the Dadaist Hugo Ball and his wife Emmy Hennings. As a scholar, he researched early German Romanticism, the writings of Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, about which he would write his dissertation after the war, as well as the history of German drama, which would inform his central theoretical work, the Origin of German Trauerspiel. In addition to this philological orientation, Benjamin also subjected the literary canon to more personal and impassioned critiques in essays on Hölderlin, Dostoevsky, and Goethe. And he produced a number of dense hermetic reflections that not only provided a persistent orientation for his own further theoretical work but, in the decades since their formulation, have proved to be inexhaustible stimuli for subsequent theorists as well. Although Benjamin never aspired to articulate a philosophical system, the coherence of these texts founds the undeniable concinnity in his subsequent views across the remarkable variety of his cultural interests.
At the origin of Benjamin’s thinking is an unyielding skepticism toward any supposed process of mediation. The topic is already central to his dissertation on the *Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism*. That treatise is organized around a derivation of what Benjamin calls the “Refl exionsmedium,” or medium of reflection. A commitment to such a medium defines early Romanticism. The notion, if not the term itself, is illustrated, so Benjamin claims, by Fichte’s metaphysics, which posits a subjective moment, the “I,” through which all objectivity, the “Not-I,” is necessarily mediated. What the early Romantics retained from this schema was not – despite the usual interpretation – its irreducible first-person subjectivity but the priority in it of active reflection over passive awareness. It is this activity and not the first-person orientation that Romanticism generalizes, and Fichte’s concrete “I” becomes the abstraction of an active self. “The Romantics start from mere thinking-oneself, as a phenomenon; this is proper to everything, for everything is a self.”9 Within this reflective process, an object is understood to be the unending potential to exhibit comprehensible form along a trajectory toward the infinite Absolute. An unlocalized reflective activity ends by constituting, so Benjamin thought, its unachievable Absolute not in an ideal identity of subject and object at the site of the subject, but as latently endless mediation at the site of the object. “In itself one would designate this Absolute most correctly as the medium of reflection …. Reflection constitutes the Absolute, and constitutes it as a medium.”10 This mediating Absolute is what Romanticism means by art, and particular artworks are consequent centers of reflection in which this prior absolute self-relation comes to itself for us and we to ourselves for it.

This Romantic idea of a continuously self-reflecting medium within which individual artworks gesture toward an infinite philosophical truth is the inverse of Benjamin’s own developing perspective on the relation between art and truth. In an appendix to the dissertation that he did not submit for the degree, Benjamin uses Goethe’s aesthetic theory as a contrast that clarifies his own differences from this Romantic position he had just described. The idea of an infinite Absolute that mediates works of art is tantamount to the conflation of artistic and speculative expression under the common rubric of form. The meaning of an artwork, beyond its mere perceptibility, opens directly on to the process of its formal comprehension: this is what Benjamin means when he claims that the Romantic “idea of art” is “the a priori of a method.” By contrast, Goethe’s understanding of the artwork, and by extension Benjamin’s own, relates it to a substantive ideal, “the a priori of a … content.” The ideal Goethe discerns in art is not an abstractly continuous formal process but a

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discontinuous arrangement of concrete achievements. It “is not a medium that
shelters in itself and builds out of itself the context of forms, but a unity of a
different sort. It can be grasped only in a limited plurality of pure contents, into
which it decomposes.” 11

The traditional plurality of the Muses suggests the irreducible plurality of
these pure contents; Goethe calls them “primal images” (Urbilder). Like his
hypothesis of the Ur-plant, a discrete botanical species the stages of whose life
cycle would manifest directly the process common to vegetation in all its divers-
ity, Goethe’s ideal of art distributed into primal images relates artworks substan-
tively to a truth essentially distinct from them and resident in the shared world
with which they contrast. Inasmuch as it opposes the conceptual mediation of
aesthetic form with this indirect apprehension of historical truth, the position
Benjamin attributes to Goethe is essentially his own. Benjamin, too, denies any
objectively continuous medium that would guarantee the intact transmission
of a durable abstract significance inscribed into the individual artifact. Rather,
the artifacts themselves despite their ultimate impermanence and diversity have
a logical priority over any abstract continuum. The permanent meaning of an
artwork is not borne explicitly by its enduring content but inhabits the vicis-
situdes of its historical testimony as artifact; what matters is not the “spell,” as
Benjamin calls it, of aesthetic artifice, but the contrast between that spell and
the changing circumstances into which it is cast.

This means that ultimately, despite his critical focus on works of art, Benjamin
is a historian and not an aesthetician. The work of art is of interest not for its own
sake but because it permits the indirect perception of a discontinuous historical counter-truth that the continuities of explicit historical traditions otherwise
necessarily overwrite. The constant reference to the author’s name in the titles of
Benjamin’s critical essays from this time is symptomatic of this perspective: “Two
Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin” (1915); “Dostoevsky’s The Idiot” (1917); “Goethe’s
Elective Affinities” (1922). The work does not appear alone but in the company of
the transient human life against which it arose, and if its interpretation involves
an imaginative projection into that prior authorial posture in all its estrangement
from present concerns, this is only in order to relate that posture historically to
a reimagined now-time. Benjamin captures this disillusioning theoretical move-
ment in his correlated distinctions between material content and truth content,
commentary and critique. The work is read scrupulously in order to reconstruct
that original substantive statement in its material content; this is commentary,
the enduring affinity of Benjamin’s literary theory with philological discipline.
But the truth the work provides appears as the ability of that latent content to
manifest a neglected urgency in the present. Discerning this truth content in the

present is critique. Where the historical circumstances fixed by commentary and
the eventual significance produced by critique have diverged sufficiently through
time, philology is the science that governs the reconstruction of their relation.
But even where no historical distance pertains in the intellectual engagement
with contemporaries, the urgency of the critical present encounters a dispassionate positivist deference to the object; a material content becomes the occa-
sion for an entirely heterogeneous truth content. Benjamin’s philological essays
on Dostoevsky, Hölderlin, and Goethe from this early period thus anticipate the
dislocated portraits of his contemporaries Marcel Proust, Karl Kraus, and Franz
Kafka through which Benjamin would triangulate his own mature position in
the early 1930s. More generally, Benjamin’s interpretive sensitivity to historical
discontinuity and his theoretical commitment to truth’s irreducible plurality
have meant that his writings have resonated powerfully with many subsequent
nontraditional approaches to culture in the post-Second World War world.

In addition to the academic work and the more personal literary essays,
Benjamin was also writing explicitly philosophical articulations of his position.
If his academic disquisition and his literary-historical critique pursue strate-
gies of indirection, so too do these hermetic writings. Such early statements
as “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” from 1916 or “On the
Program of the Coming Philosophy” from the following year do not employ
traditional forms of philosophical argument, with hypotheses ventured and
defended against possible objections. Their rhetoric is categorical and apodictic,
invoking overtly metaphysical and theological concepts to which it seems assent
is simply expected. For the most part they circulated privately and operated in
part as probes for a receptive consensus that has sometimes appeared to later
readers as dogmatic. But this appearance of dogmatism is deceptive, and these
writings do not fall outside the skepticism that defines Enlightenment discourse.
The assertoric character of Benjamin’s exposition and his recourse to exegetical
techniques are all in the service of a radically disillusioning interrogation of
received philosophical notions.

As in the dissertation, a principle of mediating continuity is consistently at
issue in these early essays. Whether communicative language in “On Language
as Such and on the Language of Man,” the neo-Kantian notion of the formal
limits of experience in “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy,” or the
causal nexus in “Fate and Character” (1919), in each case Benjamin’s exposi-
tory strategy – his signature dialectical trope – is to confront a mediating conti-
nuity with a qualitative interruption. Thus, “bourgeois” human language as a
medium of communication is disrupted by an utterly heterogeneous dimen-
sion in which Being as figured by God’s creative Logos (i.e. “language as such”)
encounters human ontological openness as figured by Adam’s responsive naming
(i.e. the “language of man”). The program of the coming philosophy will be to
overcome the neo-Kantian equation between the formal limits of experience and the knowledge mediated by physical science with an alternative experience whose truth rests in something beyond the continuous synthesis performed by a scientific subject on a persistent natural object. And in “Fate and Character,” the intuition that the causal nexus could comprehensibly link a moral life to its natural circumstances is supplanted by an oblique perspective that sees the natural continuity of life already as a fatal imbrication of tragic conditions, the impersonal guilt unto death once typified in the Athenian theater, whose interruption is promised, perhaps, by the comedic fixity of human character as it appears on Molière’s stage.

II

With his dissertation behind him, Benjamin spent several productive months in Heidelberg, where he associated with the circle around Marianne Weber, the widow of Max Weber, a circle that included at various times Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, and Scholem. The naive dream of the Sprechsaal re-emerged in the far more sophisticated and promising shape of a critical journal, to be called Angelus Novus after the watercolor by Paul Klee which Benjamin had recently acquired, and which would eventually inform one of his most famous texts, the ninth aphorism in “On the Concept of History,” describing the angel of history. In the unstable economic atmosphere of Weimar Germany, the journal was never realized, but the exemplary independence it promised guided Benjamin’s engagement with political theory. He read carefully Ernst Bloch’s Spirit of Utopia, Franz Rosenzweig’s Star of Redemption, and Georg Lukács’s History and Class Consciousness.

During this time Benjamin composed the difficult text on “The Task of the Translator” as well as the enigmatic fragments on “Capitalism as Religion” and on the relation of messianic to profane history, the so-called “Theological-Political Fragment.”12 The task of the translator, Benjamin suggests, is not simply mediating between idioms but lies in arranging the very plurality of languages so that they resonate with the absence of an ultimate perfect communication, what Benjamin calls the “pure language.” “Capitalism as Religion” adopts Max

12. The dating of this fragment remains controversial. Graphological evidence from the manuscript is inconclusive, and Benjamin’s executors, Scholem and Adorno, differed as to whether it was a late or an early text. On the strength primarily of the reference to Bloch’s Spirit of Utopia, which Benjamin is known to have been studying at this time, Scholem dated the fragment to 1920–21, while on the strength of its explicit messianism and reference to happiness, both of which find an echo in the second aphorism in “On the Concept of History” of 1940, Adorno thought the text clearly a late one.
Weber’s vocabulary to envision a specifically capitalist experience as a type of religious ritual stripped of both dogmatic authority and redemptive promise, a perpetual ceremony bestowing on its practitioners not salvation but a relentless indebtedness and guilt, or Schuld. Even in the ideologically diverse environment of Weimar Germany, these reflections on authority and history, couched in a theological terminology that places them beyond any localized partisan commitments, cannot be easily situated on a political spectrum. Rather, what characterizes them is their uncompromising extremism. Perhaps the epitome of that extremism is caught by the “Theological-Political Fragment,” where, under the sign of “nihilism,” the very self-destructiveness of happiness as such is embraced in order to solicit indirectly a Messianic transformation of the world. Benjamin would never mitigate this extremism, even as his relation to Europe’s accelerating political collapse grew more self-conscious and tactical. Until the end of his life his political credo remained: “immer radikal, niemals konsequent,” “always radical, never consistent,” as he put it in a letter to Scholem.13

Benjamin’s most overtly political text from this time is “The Critique of Violence,” a daring synthesis of the anarchist-socialist Georges Sorel, whose Réflexions sur la Violence advocated “mythic violence” in the shape of the general strike, and the Catholic conservative Carl Schmitt, whose Politische Theologie linked sovereignty to legal exception and thus set limits to the justifiability of public authority. Benjamin’s ideologically unclassifiable text further demonstrates his radicalism, and has garnered increasing attention as postwar ideological categories have seemed to lose their historical relevance. In Benjamin’s essay, violence – his term is Gewalt, a word whose meaning includes more generally force or coercion – is congruent with the notion of means in a political context. A critique of violence thus calls into question the intentional means–ends schema that renders human action rationally comprehensible. Independently of its role as the effective means for realizing reasonable ends, Benjamin maintains that public violence exerts an irrational fascination that testifies to its mythic origins. Benjamin analyzes this mythic power, through which violence appears clothed in the inevitability of fate, into lawmaking and law-preserving violence, the former evident in military conquest and the latter in judicial punishment. These aspects of violence exist in dialectical tension, for law-preserving violence claims to be the legitimate continuation of the lawmaking violence that inaugurated it but that inevitably provokes an antagonistic lawmaking violence in reaction to its authoritative exercise. The mythic closure of this dialect of violence could be interrupted only by violence of a totally different kind, a Gewalt that

overwhelms the instrumentality of law entirely and points toward an unprecedented social transformation. Benjamin calls this messianic notion “divine” violence, and how much it would look like the fascinating violence unleashed by wars and revolutions and deployed by policemen and executioners remains a point of interpretive contention.

Goethe, as well, continued to organize Benjamin’s theoretical work. The elaborate consideration of Goethe’s late novel *The Elective Affinities* dominates Benjamin’s writing in the first years of the 1920s. His long three-part essay uses Goethe’s tale of marital abdication and intertwined adulteries in service to a general characterization of the relation of life to appearance. The philosophical ambitions of the essay thus reach far beyond the meaning of a single literary work, whose role in the overall exposition is to exemplify the appearance with which actual human life in its mortal extremity contrasts. This essay represents the most densely imagined version of Benjamin’s dialectical critical method, drawn up at the outset of his mature career, and its methodological and thematic exemplarity justifies a slightly more detailed consideration.

As Benjamin reads it, Goethe’s novel has a material content anchored in its mortal origin, the historical circumstances from which it emerged, that can potentially reveal a consequent truth content to the moment of its surviving reception. Those original circumstances Benjamin identifies with the Enlightenment: Goethe’s novel appears at a historical moment singularly dismissive of supernatural traditions and with a particularly defiant attitude toward the superhuman forces that condition human life. Those superhuman forces in their relation to individual choice – the chemical metaphor of the title – is the material content of *The Elective Affinities*; Benjamin names this material content the Mythic. Despite the absence of anything overtly supernatural in Goethe’s story, a mythic condemnation pushes the emancipated spouses toward their eventual destruction beyond their hedonistic inclinations and rational agreements. Not the individual lovers but the superhuman forces on which they depend are in fact emancipated by the collapse of the marriage vow that had banned them, and those forces reveal their mythic nature in the inevitability of the death that they demand. This is the meaning of *The Elective Affinities* taken on its own. A material content, *mythic sanction*, reveals a truth content, *the inevitability of death*. In Benjamin’s reading, the significance of the novel verges on nihilism.

Yet the novel does not have the last word in the essay. Having produced in its first, philological section this somber literary acknowledgement of the limits of Enlightenment humanism, the second and third sections of Benjamin’s exposition confront this bleak vision with its vital antithesis. A novel as an aesthetic artifact is something other than a human life. Although both are historical phenomena, and so can be understood to have a material content and a truth
content, this does not mean that these material and truth contents are the same in both cases. If they were, if the material content of life were also mythic sanction, then the truth content of life would be the inevitability of death, as well. But if the material content of life were something other than subordination to the superhuman, then the truth content of life would be something other than inevitable death. This would mean, in short, that there is hope. This is the point of the second, existential section of Benjamin’s essay: to show that the material content of life is something other than the material content of the artwork. These material contents are different because art is circumscribed by appearance, Schein, while life at least potentially can exceed what it appears to be.

In order to demonstrate this difference, Benjamin aligns human life not with an apparent element in The Elective Affinities but rather with an expressive discrepancy between episodes: the contrast between the action of the novel and the fairy tale “the Miraculous Neighbor Children” that it contains. The unrepresentable difference between life and art finds an analogy in the difference between the realistic narrative of a marriage surrendering to amorous passion and the embedded fabulous love story. The material content of human life, and so its potential truth content, is reflected from outside the artifact back into it as a contrast between its figures and the figures of the fable. This is ultimately a contrast between duplicitous choices and irrevocable decision. The fairy tale shows us a pure decision: the miraculous neighbor children’s self-sacrificial leap for love into the surging water from which they are then rescued. This contrasts with the ambiguous choices made by the characters in the novel that lead eventually to the drowning of the infant from Eduard and Charlotte’s hollow marriage. Both sets of figures are motivated by passionate love, but the miraculous children reach a redemptive, pure act of decision that breaks with the mortal world, while the novel’s figures make choices on the basis of inclinations that bind them ever more completely to the world. The space between a pure act of decision from love and ambiguous choices from passion is the living space within which a material content is manifested. This space is governed not by representations but by its potential to host a pure decision, a fundamental interruption. The novel makes room for this possibility by opening a space between representable choices (the novel itself) and the artificial presentation of a pure act (the embedded fairy tale). Outside the artifice of a fable, such a pure decision is silent; its very purity precluding its Schein or manifest appearance, leaving it nothing but its truth. The truth content of human life appears when its material content is understood as pure decision, and it appears only paradoxically, in what Benjamin calls the “expressionless,” the silent epitome of expression. The final section of the essay traces, in the consequent renunciation and fatal expiration of the beautiful Ottilie after the child in her care has drowned, the extinction of philosophical appearance in its relation to truth. Truth never appears; it only occurs.
III

Benjamin’s efforts to secure an academic post in Germany, although eventually unsuccessful, did produce his most fully realized theoretical statement, *The Origin of German Trauerspiel* of 1925. This treatise takes as its topic a relatively obscure literary object, *Trauerspiel*, the highly stylized allegorical dramas written in Catholic Germany in the seventeenth century, in the wake of the devastating Thirty Years War. In examining these Baroque plays with their unmotivated characters, extreme plots, and stilted allegorical interludes, Benjamin is not attempting to discover an overlooked aesthetic competence in them. Rather, precisely by relating their representational eccentricities to the political atmosphere in which they arose, Benjamin discerns in the discontinuities of these works an index of historical crisis that has once again become legible in modernity.

The treatise has two main sections: the first half sharply distinguishes *Trauerspiel* as an aesthetic object from the Greek tragedies whose traditional continuation their authors imagined them to be, while the second rehabilitates the signifying processes of allegory. Benjamin’s theory of tragedy, which draws on Lukács and Rosenzweig as well as the work of his friend Florens Christian Rang, emphasizes the parallels between Greek theater and the Greek judicial court. The tragic hero stands accused of mythic transgression, and his response culminates in a defiant silence- unto- death that demonstrates his superiority to the powers that destroy him and allows him to exemplify a new and better community. But this tragic silence can appear on stage only in the uniquely propitious circumstances of Periclean Athens, for the elements from which it was composed – myth, hero, sacrifice – have never again arisen in comparable purity. What *Trauerspiel*, by contrast, demonstrates is the impossibility of a successful foundation of collective meaning. For, ideally, the poets of the German Baroque, like their Athenian predecessors, also wanted to redeem their shattered world in the light of a recognizable heroic sacrifice. But the world in which they worked could not in fact be made whole, and in their attempts to accommodate this blasted environment the dramatists were pushed out of the self- evidence of mythic conflict and sacrifice, and into artificial apparatuses of plot intrigue, overdetermined props, and most symptomatically, allegorical willfulness.

The second part of Benjamin’s treatise is thus a re- examination of allegory as a method of signification. In contrast to the Romantic symbol, in which Benjamin

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14. The centrality of this distinction to Benjamin’s exposition makes John Osborne’s English translation of the title, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, untenable. Translating the treatise remains a heroic achievement, but the irreducible point of the entire book is that *Trauerspiel* is not tragic drama.
sees a disingenuous appropriation of religious dogma to resolve representational aporias, allegory acknowledges its discontinuous artifice and consequent dependence on an anticipated audience. The audience for Trauerspiel was not simply anyone, but the Traurige, the melancholy. “For these are not so much plays which cause grief [Trauer], as plays through which grief finds its satisfaction: plays for the melancholy [Spiele vor Traurigen].”¹⁵ The historical relevance of Trauerspiel is mediated to the present by the melancholy indigenous both to the Baroque and to today, an affinity that appears in the spark of comprehension struck by the sharp conjunction of the stilted, anachronistic citations with Benjamin’s theoretical prose. Eventually it is this melancholy attitude that can realize in the allegorical skull upon Golgotha the ephemeral truth borne by the very experience of semantic collapse: “The bleak confusion of Golgotha … is not just a symbol of the desolation of human existence. In it transitoriness is not signified or allegorically represented, so much as, in its own significance, displayed as allegory.”¹⁶ This shift between representation and display, from communicating allegorical content to showing in itself the ultimate impermanence of any meaning, is the redemptive pivot that melancholic concentration performs within the allegorical emblem.

As a contribution to German philology, The Origin of German Trauerspiel, like Benjamin’s dissertation on the concept of art criticism in German Romanticism, has proved its scholarly value. But the treatise has exerted influence far beyond those concerned with questions of Baroque allegory in its middle-European context. This is in part the result of Benjamin’s existential generalization of the significance of allegorical tropes, as well as the incidental theories of sovereignty, tragedy, performance, melancholy, and natural history that emerge from his exposition. Nor should the aphoristic beauty and audacity of Benjamin’s style be underestimated in accounting for the book’s appeal. The virtues and frustrations of this elliptical and analogical expression are nowhere more in evidence than in the philosophical essay with which Benjamin introduced the treatise, the “Epistemo-critical Foreword.” The dense initial twelve paragraphs of this prefatory text are one of Benjamin’s most resonant discussions, although the exact nature of the claims he puts forth and the exact extent of his investment in the overtly idealist terminological in which they are couched remain contentious. The difficulties, despite appearances, lie less in any willful obscurity on Benjamin’s part and more in the consequent extremity of the position he is advocating. For the “epistemo-critical” foreword is not a critical epistemology but a critique of epistemology and its governing assumption: the possibility of human

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knowledge. Just as the earlier theory of language in “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” used an emphatic notion of superhuman presentation passing obliquely through human words in order to subvert our ordinary notion of language as a communicative medium, so here the foreword subverts the notion of knowable truth by contrasting it with a more emphatic truth of pure presentation latently situated beyond the intentions embodied in works of art, as their independent relation to eternal ideas. It is the paradoxical proximity of the philological reconstruction of forgotten textual content to a skeptical truth beyond representation that has lent Benjamin’s treatise its enduring fascination.

The *Origin of German Trauerspiel* is the culmination of Benjamin’s early efforts toward as direct an articulation of his concerns as possible. The foreword is the point at which the possibility of explicit communication passes into the necessity of implication. After this, the implicit significance of Benjamin’s writing takes ever more precedence over its explicit content. And even here, what can be explicitly stated is ultimately nothing but the negative impress of genuine insight. Operating on a boundary with expressive nihilism, the treatise could hardly have been acceptable to the academic standards of Benjamin’s day. This is something Benjamin seems to have anticipated, and his ambivalence about formal scholarship is reflected in the alternative book that he published along with *The Origin of German Trauerspiel*. On the Mediterranean island of Capri where Benjamin was working on his habilitation, he was also composing a series of brief aphorisms and reflections, a form Adorno would come to call the “thought-image,” with his close friends and associates in mind. These were the formal antithesis of continuous scholarly discourse, and when gathered together they would become his second book, *One Way Street*, published within weeks of *The Origin of German Trauerspiel*.

IV

An avant-garde text that challenges the very form of the book itself, *One Way Street* testifies to Benjamin’s increasingly radical perspective on the experience of modernity, and on the rhetorical sensitivity called for in addressing it.¹⁷ Sixty short texts ranging from accounts of dreams to descriptions of children’s

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¹⁷ Michael W. Jennings has shown that the relation of *One Way Street* to aesthetic avant-garde movements of the time, in particular to Russian constructivism and German Dada, was by no means accidental but reflected at least to some extent Benjamin’s involvement with Hans Richter and the “G-Group,” and its publication *G. Zeitschrift für elementare Gestaltung*. See Michael W. Jennings, “Walter Benjamin and the European Avant-garde,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, David S. Ferris (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
behavior to lists of similarities between books and prostitutes are coordinated with headings drawn from everyday placards and signs of the modern metropolis. For all its modernist polish, *One Way Street* demonstrates a challenge to theoretical expression whose implications could not be contained by a concept of the “work.” In the closely linked notions of the *Denkbild*, the linguistic thought-image, and the conceptual operation it registers, *Dialektik im Stillstand*, dialectics at a standstill, Benjamin discerned a basic methodological constraint on contemporary speculation: the limit-figure of a “dialectical image.”

The vast research project on the Parisian arcades, whose preliminary texts date from this time, pursues through this figure its aim of promoting into a tenuous if resilient visibility potential alternative conceptual affinities, an “Ur-history” of superhuman influences whose traces have been extinguished by the human history informing the bourgeois present in its self-evidence. As a principle of linguistic composition, the thought-image contrasts with the studied aphorism and the accidental fragment. It governs not only those texts Benjamin explicitly labeled “thought-images”18 but such varied discussions as the autobiographical *Berlin Childhood around 1900* or “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” owe their presentational rhythm to this principle of lyrical concentration and abrupt transition. The disruptive effect on settled habits of thought these thought-images are meant to bring about has at its vanishing point the dialectical image itself. The language of the thought-image is meant to respond to a dialectical contradiction inscribed in the world. The figure in which two heterogeneous temporalities intersect is dialectical. The *Flâneur* drifting idly across the surface of the industrious city, the child at play among the ruins of adult enterprise, the conspirator scheming toward the eventual destruction of established order – these figures assemble around themselves the dialectical energies unleashed by the incompatible temporal perspectives they embody, the trespass of forgotten past or alternative future into present self-evidence and automatism. These marginal figures are the dialectical shepherds in the artificial arcadia of Benjamin’s Parisian arcades. The “static dialectic” they bring into focus continues to refract the now into discontinuous constellations with the then as it proceeds down the inconceivable continuity of time. Discerning those particular constellations that appear across the spurious sheen of the nineteenth-century Parisian commercial arcades in their ephemeral pomposity was the project that came to guide all of Benjamin’s explorations through and reflections on the experience of modern disintegration.

*One Way Street* thus represented a breakthrough in Benjamin’s theorizing of no less moment than its companion treatise, and one that would, in a paradoxical

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way, prove more directly relevant to Benjamin’s subsequent irreducibly indirect expressive strategies. It moved Benjamin considerably closer to realizing in the thought-image the idiosyncratic element, the intellectual pulse of his writing. It also brought him immeasurably closer to his international political affiliations. The experience whose limits the thought-images were designed to illuminate, even when illustrated by German political conditions, was an urban disorientation in which historical contemporaneity overwhelmed any particular national situation. Only a political perspective militantly committed to overcoming those national conditions could accommodate the temporal urgency of this experience. That perspective was international communism, the organized destruction of the unjust bourgeois order. In Heidelberg, Benjamin had articulated a position suspended between anarchistic defiance and an absolute fatalism, in which the Marxism of Lukács and Bloch or Scholem’s Zionism, not to mention any publicly accredited ideological faction, must appear as a provisional orientation within an eternal violent oscillation in authority: the justification of violence passing into the violence of justification. But in the increasingly polarized political atmosphere of inflation-wracked Germany in the 1920s, that merely radical position of pure critique was proving insufficient to the substantive demands of the day.

Although *One Way Street* was hardly the expression of an unambiguous political credo, its rejection of the form of the book marked a decisive recognition of the inevitability of a communist framework for the theoretical questions Benjamin was asking. This framework had been affectively illuminated by his intense attachment to Asja Lacis, an associate of Bertolt Brecht’s and a fervent revolutionary, with whom he had fallen in love on Capri. Just as the breakthrough to which his Goethe essay testifies had been motivated by his passion for Jula Cohn, so in his captivation by Lacis’s fusion of aesthetic integrity and political commitment, Benjamin sensed in himself the possibility of a pure revolutionary affinity between historical effectiveness and messianic radicality. For a time, then, his revolutionary commitment evinced this political optimism. But while his commitment persisted to the end, his optimism would soon fade. Toward the end of 1926 Benjamin traveled to Moscow in pursuit both of Lacis and an intellectual role in Bolshevik Russia. The melancholy diary his sojourn produced recounts the collapse of the love affair and of his hopes for the Soviet experiment. For the rest of his career, Benjamin would orient his cultural reflections not toward Russian communism directly but across the widening Franco-Prussian fissure in European politics toward the cosmopolitan affinities between Berlin and Paris. In the history of German and French cultural radicalism, Benjamin would seek the origins of a transformative politics that would point beyond the gathering darkness of twentieth-century culture.
As the Weimar Republic stumbled toward the end of the decade, Benjamin had abandoned any hope of an academic career, and was supporting himself as a freelance book reviewer and journalist, contributing travel reports and cultural criticism to major German periodicals, in particular Ernst Rowohlt and Willy Haas’s *Literarische Welt* and the feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, edited by his friend Siegfried Kracauer. In these venues he published with brief commentary various letters, puzzles, and anecdotes that his researches on nineteenth-century culture had unearthed, evidence not only of the eclectic range of his interests but of the theoretical scope that the thought-image and its crystalized dialectic could accommodate. In 1928, he presented the beginnings of a theoretical exploration of the dialectical image in his essay on the first wave of French surrealism.

What is at stake in the essay “Surrealism: The Latest Exposure of the European Intelligentsia” is not in the last instance the meaning of surrealism as an aesthetic movement but the role of a “European intelligentsia” in promoting revolution in historical circumstances. Like Lukács in his analysis of reification and class consciousness, Benjamin understands any awareness of society and its revolutionary potential to be conditioned by the standpoint from which society is perceived. Bourgeois consciousness, therefore, which takes its currently dominant position to be anchored in a universal human truth beyond any historical change, is inevitably blinded to the historical reality of the world that has produced it. But unlike Lukács, Benjamin does not imagine that an alternative proletarian perspective congruent with the objective historical dynamic is available in the present. That is to say, Benjamin denies the implicit assumption in Lukács that the philosophical distinction between material base and ideal superstructure coincides with the sociological antagonism between proletariat and bourgeoisie. The revolutionary intellectual is not a denizen of the superstructure anticipating the integrated culture of a victorious proletarian base. Rather, every position in bourgeois-dominated society is inherently partial and prerevolutionary, anchored in substantially exploitative relations and beholden to deceptively universal ideologies. When Benjamin insists that the problem of proletarian culture cannot be solved “contemplatively” by the revolutionary intelligentsia,\(^\text{19}\) he is implicitly criticizing any attempt to substitute for the bourgeois ideal of an ahistorical Absolute Knowledge a virtual proletarian consciousness that in the end is not praxis but a *concept* of praxis.\(^\text{20}\)

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20. This difference between Benjamin’s commitment to a necessarily partial practice mediating any accurate conception of the social whole and Lukács’s commitment to a concept of totality...
At the close of the surrealism essay, Benjamin deploys Henri Bergson's terminology from the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* to characterize his alternative perspective. Bergson starts his metaphysical reflections from a highly idiosyncratic concept of “image” as the fundamental category of reality, contrasting it with idealism’s “representation” and realism’s “thing [chose].” A thing, taken as an element of ultimate reality, cannot in vital practice exceed its knowability, its eventual image, while a representation is that aspect of an image relevant to a particular embodied human perspective, a “living center.” In itself the domain of images has no center but is merely superhuman lawful movement. When Benjamin invokes the “image space,” “the world of universal and integral actualities, where the ‘best room’ is missing,” to describe the field of political engagement, he is using Bergson’s concepts to circumvent the Hegelian assumption of a metaphysically privileged perspective on historical reality from which a revolutionary outcome can be reliably anticipated. Materialism in Benjamin’s sense just *is* the acknowledgment of the partiality of any human awareness of the shared world and the corresponding recognition that totality is always only intermittently accessible to the present. In contrast to the dogmatic insistence on the metaphysical primacy of matter, Benjamin calls this actual materialism “anthropological.” The practical task of the intellectual is to reveal and transform the anthropological conditions of his own practice, even at the cost of his own existence, not to redeem proletarian labor culturally.

Benjamin’s essay on surrealism inaugurates the central period of his philosophical practice, which corresponds to the decline of the Weimar Republic. These years are dominated by Benjamin’s three great intellectual portraits of Proust, of Kraus, and of Kafka. His own theoretical position emerges indirectly through his recognition of these contemporaries. This is not to say that Benjamin imputes to Kraus or Proust positions that in fact he himself holds; rather, his own position appears negatively, as the displacement between the nominal object of the essay and the authorial attitude toward that object. Throughout his career, Benjamin’s own position remains intimate with a principled silence that bears the full impress of truth but that by that very token can never emerge immediately. The parallax of Benjamin’s eccentric perspective on Proust, Kraus, and Kafka converges on a fundamental dimension of historical becoming: what


*21. For a discussion of Bergson, see the essay by John Mullarkey in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.

in his final works Benjamin will come to call the “now of knowability,” or the
now-time. Proust recognizes an elegiac happiness in resisting the suffocating
legacy of the past by translating it into language; Kraus exemplifies a radical
antithesis to the present in his demonic citational practice; and Kafka preserves
in his ascetic vigil over primordial forces an irreducible relation to an unantici-
patable redemption. At the risk of reductive schematization we can say that these
three essays capture Benjamin’s mature historical philosophy of the superhuman
image space, Proust illuminating its recognitive relation to the past, Kraus its
demonstrative relation to the present, and Kafka its anticipatory relation to the
future.

By the summer of 1932 Benjamin’s economic situation had deteriorated
considerably, and in a hotel room in Nice on his fortieth birthday he made
serious preparations for suicide. He did not carry through the intention, but
this moment represents the nadir of his emotional existence until the fall of
France to the Nazis eight years later. Around this time as well he forged a lasting
friendship with the playwright Bertolt Brecht, who would offer him a refuge in
Denmark in the difficult years ahead. Brecht, in his nomadic and ferocious prac-
ticality, served as the fourth of the contemporary heralds of the image-space, the
destructive avatar of its gestural character. This limit to the meaning available in
the image-space, in its inevitable affinity with insurrectionary attitudes, would
grow in importance for Benjamin’s theory in the subsequent peripatetic years.
For with the Reichstag fire of February 17, 1933, Germany had become impos-
sible for him to survive. In March he began an exile in which death overtook
him and so which has never ended.

VI

Living hand to mouth in Paris and with his ex-wife Dora in San Remo, Italy, with
occasional stays in Denmark with Brecht, Benjamin continued to research the
Parisian arcades and although irrevocably delivered to the occasion, produced
a considerable number of enduring essays and studies. His main source of
income was Horkheimer and Adorno’s exiled Institute of Social Research, which
provided Benjamin with an indispensable stipend, as well as a largely sympa-
thetic theoretical venue in their Journal. At the same time, Adorno’s commit-
tment to a Hegelian concept of dialectical mediation did lead to fundamental
misunderstandings of Benjamin’s late work, which Adorno found perilously
close to mysticism and beholden to an undertheorized immediacy. And the
deep hostility that the institute evinced toward Brecht and his partisan engage-
ment would eventually distort the posthumous image of Benjamin that Adorno,
together with Scholem, promoted in the postwar years. Nonetheless, it is not too
much to say that Horkheimer and Adorno saved Benjamin’s life in these difficult times. And their requests for a publishable text from the Arcades material provoked Benjamin to write what would become his most famous text: “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility.”

This essay, like much of Benjamin’s later work, is subterraneously informed by the concept of an image-space. In nineteen dense aphoristic sections, Benjamin marshals a discontinuous multitude of descriptive frameworks to present what he sees as a contemporary mutation in the relation of cultural artifacts to the practices that give them meaning. This mutation can be perceived in the work of art in its historical exposure to technological reproduction. In extended considerations of the photographic and the cinematic image, Benjamin discerns as a consequence of this historical mutation what he calls “the decay of the aura” of the work of art and the rise of a new “reception in distraction.” What film and photography as techniques of reproduction call into question is the singularity and uniqueness of an image beyond its function as a representation for human concerns. The boundary at which an image-as-representation-of-something-else meets the image-in-itself is what Benjamin calls its aura. In archaic times, the relation between human purposes and the independent reality of the image was held in place by supernatural ritual. The holy relic, whose mere presence exceeds the symbol it embodies and which organizes a sacred space of cultic ceremony, is the paradigm of an auratic object. Today, however, the aesthetic object defines a disenchanted exhibition-space entirely subordinated to human purposes. The museum, and even more typically the theater, host the desecrated version of auratic singularity. It is into this exhibition-space that cinema, according to Benjamin, introduces the antithesis to imaginary aura: the apparatus. A term suspended between the expressionist anguish of Kafka’s “eigentümlicher Apparat” (peculiar apparatus) from “In the Penal Colony” and the constructivist euphoria of Vertov’s “Chelovek s kinoapparatom” (Man with a movie camera), the apparatus inhabits the image-space in a way that comes to light in the distracted reactions of the masses to mass-reproduced representations, and exposes the deepest conservative vulnerabilities of auratic hierarchy. Mass reception in distraction is the Ur-manifestation of the material apparatus that the insurrectionary positions in society must conquer for the revolution.

Deutsche Menschen (German Men and Women), the last book Benjamin was able to see published in his lifetime, came together quickly in 1936. In the pages of the Frankfurter Zeitung Benjamin had published a series of letters to and from nineteenth-century German cultural figures along with his own introductions. The book assembled those letters and introductions into an eccentric recollection of the humane tendencies in bourgeois history that National Socialism was in the process of remorselessly extinguishing. Published in Switzerland by an ad hoc press and bearing a pseudonym – Detlev Holz – that disguised its exiled
Jewish and communist provenance (and echoed Kant’s “krummen Holz,” the “crooked timber” of humanity), Deutsche Menschen was Benjamin’s attempt to refract the present through juxtaposed historical inscriptions and in so doing to preserve for the future an image of the German language as the occasion of a better alternative history. Although often misunderstood as a straightforward anthology, Deutsche Menschen, like Benjamin’s two earlier books, is an experiment. Where The Origin of German Trauerspiel was conducted on the scale of a discipline and its genre, the treatise, and One Way Street on the scale of an experience and its instantiation in the book per se, Deutsche Menschen operates across the institutions of writing in any possible form, from the public newspapers that harbored Benjamin’s original exposure of these letters to the private intimacies the archive shelters. This last book stages Benjamin’s antihumanist position as the suspended ad hominem implicit in these surviving eccentric fragments. To this day Deutsche Menschen remains an elusive and underappreciated achievement.

As the 1930s drew to a close, Benjamin’s reflections on European modernity and its origins came to focus more and more on the haunted figure of Charles Baudelaire. Benjamin found in Baudelaire’s marginal existence and perfect lyrics an epitome of the critical orientation art takes toward the historical present, around which the vast material gathered for the Arcades Project could be organized. The relationship between the poète maudit and the city of Paris came to dominate Benjamin’s understanding of the Ur-history of the European nineteenth century, and a planned reworking of the Arcades Project as Charles Baudelaire, a Lyric Poet in the Age of High Capitalism produced the studies “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” as well as “On Some Motifs of Baudelaire,” Benjamin’s final explorations of the antithetical role of art in history.

In February 1939 Benjamin’s German citizenship was revoked. In September the Second World War ignited. Shortly afterward French authorities interred Benjamin for several weeks, on the basis of his revoked nationality, in a detention camp in the town of Nevers, before the intervention of French cultural figures brought about his release at the end of November. In the half-year before the fall of Paris to the Nazis in June 1940, Benjamin managed to bring to paper the most compressed and profound expression of his philosophical position, the aphoristic sequence “On the Concept of History.” In these eighteen brief texts and two addenda, Benjamin claims for the thought-image its durable boundary with the modernist prose-poem. His subtle and evocative language challenges the intuition of a linear, progressive temporality underlying historical change. This notion of a neutral continuous time connecting past, present, and future in a predictable way was the proton pseudos or original flaw of those humanistic theories – in particular revisionist social democracy – that had so wretchedly failed to resist fascism. In contrast to a progressive “historicist” orientation toward history, Benjamin invokes a complex “historical materialist” temporality,
in which unpredictable conjunctions of past and present give rise to a volatile
now-time whose future can never be entirely closed off. This now-time is the
last surviving version of a Jewish transformational temporality for which “every
second was the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might enter.”
Here, at the end of European culture, Benjamin takes its death mask in the
concept of the now-time, as the ultimate vanishing point of the image-space he
had explored his entire life, and that harbored its last most tenuous hope.

Benjamin fled Paris only hours ahead of the Nazis and made his way south.
For months he had been negotiating a visa to the United States with the help of
Adorno, Horkheimer, and Hannah Arendt, with whom he had been friends since
1936, and who would be instrumental in mediating his legacy to the English-
language world. It was issued to him in Marseilles in September, but he was
not able to procure an exit visa from Nazi-complicit France. In the company of
several other refugees, he attempted to cross into Spain illegally through a pass
in the Pyrenees. They reached the border town of Port Bou on September 26,
but were halted there by Spanish officials. As night fell outside his rented room,
anticipating deportation back to hostile France, Benjamin killed himself with
an overdose of morphine; on the next morning the remaining refugees were
permitted to proceed to Lisbon. The site of Benjamin’s grave was lost.

VII. CONCLUSION

In the years after Benjamin’s death his memory was kept alive by his friends
in exile, in particular Arendt and Adorno in the United States and Scholem in
Jerusalem. Those of his papers that survived the Nazi catastrophe, after various
relocations and consolidations, were preserved in three different archives, one
assembled around Scholem’s collection in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem,
another from the texts Adorno gathered together in Frankfurt after the war, and
a third rescued from Vichy Paris and stored eventually in the literary archive of
the East German Academy of Arts in Berlin. Adorno’s publication in 1955 of a
two-volume collection of Benjamin’s essays, Schriften, in the Federal Republic
of Germany, began his reintroduction to wider audience. Arendt edited and

24. A useful compendium documenting the underexamined relation between Arendt and
Benjamin has been published: Arendt und Benjamin: Texte, Briefe, Dokumente, Detlev
Schöttker and Erdmut Wizisla (eds) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006). The volume reproduces a
fascinating variant of Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History” that he had sent to Arendt.
25. A detailed account of Benjamin’s publishing history (to which this summary is indebted)
is provided by Detlev Schöttker, “Edition und Werkkonstruktion: Zu den Ausgaben der
introduced an English translation of several of Benjamin’s major essays in 1968 under the title *Illuminations*. The enormous influence on contemporary aesthetic and media theory in the English-speaking world exercised by Benjamin’s essay on “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” can be dated from its appearance in this edition.

The developing interest in Benjamin’s work in the late 1960s and 1970s coincided with the conjunction of avant-garde aesthetics, revolutionary politics, and university reform that produced the Student Movement in West Germany and the New Left in the United States. Benjamin’s revolutionary political commitments and his use of explicitly Marxist categories to express them were particularly appealing to a generation in rebellion against the legacy of genocidal Western European fascism. Philologically, this period in Benjamin’s reception produced as well (and in a certain tension with the Student Movement) the ambitious German *Gesammelte Schriften* (Collected Writings), whose eventual seven volumes would be completed in 1989. By making most of the documents preserved in archives outside the Eastern bloc available to scholars, the *Collected Writings* gave a far more comprehensive picture of the scope and depth of Benjamin’s theoretical interests, and demonstrated far more convincingly his philosophical sophistication than had the earlier eclectic publications.

It was this edition and the readings it made possible that brought Benjamin’s work in the 1980s into the milieu of American poststructuralism. His delight in the arcane and obscure, reflected most vibrantly in his friendship with the scholar of mystical Cabbala Scholem, his sensitivity to the modernist dislocation of Baudelaire in the nineteenth century and Kafka in the twentieth, not to mention his rediscovery of Baroque allegory in the seventeenth century and the centrality of translation to his ontology, all made his work attractive to deconstructionist literary theory. At the same time, Benjamin’s deeply skeptical attitude toward humanist traditions and his fundamental sympathy for the politically and socially marginalized elements of history lent his thought a profound affinity with postcolonial cultural critiques from a subaltern position.26 The oft-cited sentence from the aphorisms “On the Concept of History” – “There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism”27 – brings to a point the demystifying aspect of Benjamin’s production that animated an important part of his reception in the 1980s and 1990s. This aspect only grew in relevance with the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany. A Marxist critical theory centered more on the capitalist

26. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* from 1983 bears an epigraph from Benjamin, drawn from the seventh aphorism “On the Concept of History”; just one indication of the profound influence Benjamin has exerted on critical cultural studies.

27. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, 696; *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 392.
commodity than on the historical class struggle appeared less compromised by
the collapse of the Soviet system than did many other communist theories. And
the rise of fundamentalist religious politics throughout the world at the end of
the 1990s contributed to a rise in interest in the explicitly theological dimension
of Benjamin’s political theory.  

The end of the 1990s saw, as well, the beginning of a more comprehensive
English-language edition of his writings, the four-volume *Selected Writings*
completed in 2003. Adhering to a strictly chronological organization, this edition
gives a far clearer impression of Benjamin’s simultaneous interests than does
the awkwardly structured German edition that underlies it, introducing many
untranslated texts while regularizing the translations that had appeared before.
With the appearance of the material Benjamin assembled for the *Arcades Project*,
first in German in 1982 and then in English translation in 2002, a concrete
example of Benjamin’s method for “redeeming” through dialectical juxtaposi-
tion fragments from across the entire range of a culture’s manifestations became
available to readers.

The ninth aphorism “On the Concept of History,” which describes the Klee
watercolor *Angelus Novus* as the angel of history, envisions the angel facing back-
ward into “the one single catastrophe” that is human history. “The angel would
like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.” The
rapid and respectful canonization of Benjamin partakes of that desire, as well.
Such simple satisfactions, though, are alien to Benjamin’s thought. The storm
of progress drives the angel of history “irresistibly into the future, to which his
back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky.”  

No reading, however deferential and celebratory, can rescue Walter Benjamin from
the destruction to which history drove him. It is rather his writings in their poly-
valent inventiveness and passion that will continue to exert their “weak messi-
anic power,” their potential to rescue us from the barbaric collapse that always
threatens our common future.

**MAJOR WORKS**

“Das Leben der Studenten.” *Das Ziel: Aufrufe zu tätigem Geist.* Edited by Kurt Hiller. Munich,
Berlin: Georg Müller, 1916. Published in English as “The Life of Students,” in *Selected Writings,*

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28. This is the context for Jacques Derrida’s only extended discussion of Benjamin, in the second
half of his political exploration “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” in
*Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice,* Drucilla Cornell et al. (eds) (New York: Routledge,

29. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 1, 697–8; *Selected Writings,* vol. 4, 392.

30. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 1, 694; *Selected Writings,* vol. 4, 390.


“Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie” [written 1917, and unpublished in Benjamin’s lifetime]. Published in English as “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy,” in Selected Writings, Vol. 1, 100–110.


“Karl Kraus.” Published in four parts in Frankfurter Zeitung und Handelsblatt 75(138, 195, 202, 205) (March 10, 14, 17, and 18, 1931). Published in English as “Karl Kraus,” in Selected Writings, Vol. 2, 433–58.


Das Passagen-Werk [composed 1926–40 and unpublished in Benjamin’s lifetime]. Published in

“Über den Begriff der Geschichte” [written 1940 and unpublished in Benjamin’s lifetime]. Published in English as “On the Concept of History,” in *Selected Writings, Vol. 4*, 389–400.
Hannah Arendt,¹ one of the most important political philosophers of the twentieth century, saw that the fundamental task of political theory today is to radically rethink the concept of the political after the event of totalitarianism revealed the bankruptcy of our traditional categories of moral and political thought.

In the first volume of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt asks the question, “What makes us think?” Nowhere is her answer more clearly given than in her 1945 essay, “Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought.”² While agreeing with the Greeks that philosophy begins with wonder at what is, Arendt harbors no nostalgia for recovering the Greek experience. Instead, she claims that whereas the Greek experience of wonder was rooted in the experience of beauty (*Kalon*), the experience of wonder today – if not engaged in a flight from reality – is rooted in the experience of horror at what humans are capable of, the speechless horror that must be philosophically comprehended:

> It is as though in this refusal to own up to the experience of horror and take it seriously the philosophers have inherited the traditional refusal to grant the realm of human affairs that *thaumadzein*, that

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¹. Hannah Arendt (October 14, 1906–December 4, 1975; born in Konigsberg, Germany; died in New York) was educated at Marburg Universität (1924–25), Freiburg Universität (1925), and Heidelberg Universität, (1926–29). Her influences included Aristotle, Augustine, Heidegger, Jaspers, Kant, Marx, Montesquieu, and Nietzsche, and she held appointments at the University of California-Berkeley (1955), New School for Social Research (1955–75), University of Chicago, Committee on Social Thought, (1956–74).

wonder at what is as it is … For the speechless horror at what man may do and what the world may become is in many ways related to the speechless wonder of gratitude from which the questions of philosophy spring.³

The differences between these two experiences of wonder have significant consequences for how Arendt understands the task of thinking politics today. The Greek *thaumadzein*, she argues, was wonder at the *kalon*, the beauty of appearances. This wonder extended into the realm of the public wherein the Greek concern was with the *kalon kágathon*, the public appearance of the actor. Wonder today at the horror of contemporary political events is wonder in the face of darkness. If wonder is the condition of thinking and, further, if it is now wonder in the face of obscurity, then the condition of thinking today is a fundamental darkness; it is a thinking that has as its condition the loss of the public realm. In other words, for Arendt, what makes us think today is the loss of the illuminating light of the public space.

The horrifying event of totalitarianism with its death camps and terror marks the extreme condition of this darkness. Indeed, Arendt argues that the first task in thinking politics today is to *comprehend* this unprecedented event. Comprehension, she argues, in the preface to the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,

does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed on us – neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight.⁴

While for Arendt the event of totalitarianism marks the complete destruction of the political, nonetheless, the political and moral order of Europe had in her view already crumbled before the death camps began their horrifying work. In other words, while the event of totalitarianism revealed the complete bankruptcy of traditional categories of political and ethical thought, the elements of totalitarianism were already present long before they suddenly crystallized into this event.

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Arendt is very careful in her use of this image of crystallization, insisting that, like crystals, the elements of totalitarianism do not add up to a whole nor do they act as causes that inevitably lead to certain effects. Instead, crystallization describes the sudden and unpredictable ways in which these elements coalesced into this event. For Arendt, her analysis of totalitarianism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was not strictly speaking a history of totalitarianism as such, but instead a philosophical examination of an event that marks “the very heart of our own century.” This event, she argues, “illuminates its own past; it can never be deduced from it.”

There is perhaps no more important question for Arendt than this question of thinking, of facing up to and bearing the burden of the events of our own time. Certainly, her abiding preoccupation with thinking is at work in her well-known and often-cited phrase “the banality of evil.” For her, the “banality of evil” is the evil committed out of complete and utter thoughtlessness. Coined at the end of her trial report as Eichmann, standing at the gallows, utters his last cliché, Arendt grasps that evil today is often committed by functionaries and bureaucrats who conform utterly to the society in which they find themselves. At the trial, she is confronted with a person who was unable to speak without using clichés and stock phrases; he lacked any capacity for independent thinking or judging; he simply went along with the course of events in which he was immersed. Eichmann is not alone. For Arendt, thoughtlessness marks the condition of contemporary life. In the prologue to *The Human Condition*, she writes, “thoughtlessness – the headless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of ‘truths,’ which have become trivial and empty – seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time.” Thinking, then, is for Arendt the only remedy for the banality of evil. And for her, comprehension – the ability to face up to and bear the burden of reality – is the first order of thought.

Here it is worth noting that Arendt does not agree with those who think it enough to simply repair the traditional categories of political and ethical thought in order to prevent the worst from happening again. Indeed, she ends the preface to the first edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by stating that the event of totalitarianism reveals a subterranean realm that renders all such rehabilitation projects futile: “The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live.” The crystallizing event of totalitarianism allows us a glimpse into the subterranean realm, revealing that modern politics, rooted in the rise of the sovereign nation-state and its declaration of human rights, is deeply entangled in

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racism and an imperialism that call for something more than a restoration of the Enlightenment project; it calls for a radical rethinking of the concept of politics.

I. RETHINKING THE MODERN NATION-STATE: ANTI-SEMITISM, RACISM, IMPERIALISM

For Arendt, the elements of totalitarianism are rooted in the rise of the modern nation-state with its inherent contradiction between the state as the instrument of law and the nation comprised of a homogeneous people. Nowhere is this contradiction more marked than in the nation-state’s declaration of human rights, which declares that human rights are universal to all of humanity and at the same time claims that these rights belong only to nationals. Anti-Semitism, racism, and imperialism are all elements that emerge from this contradiction.

Hobbes and Rousseau are, for her, the principle theorists of the modern nation-state. While Hobbes denies the presence of free will in a world where all movement is causally determined, he nonetheless defines *jus naturale*, natural right, in terms of the individual’s own power and movement to do what he can do to preserve his own life. In the state of nature, however nasty, brutish and short, each individual is sovereign, with the natural right to everything, including another’s body. For Hobbes, liberty and power are synonymous terms: the natural right to self-preservation is understood as a kind of “natural power.” As is well known, Hobbes defines power in *Leviathan* as the “present means to secure the future.” Power is one’s “present means” to secure one’s future self-preservation, which means one’s future security. As Arendt points out, this is power for the sake of power, power for the sake of itself. Everything – whether in the form of knowledge or wealth – is reduced to power: “Therefore, if man is actually driven by nothing but his individual interests, desire for power must be the fundamental passion of man.”

For Arendt, the sovereign commonwealth follows from Hobbes’s reduction of natural right to the power of a sovereign, self-interested individual who initially has the right to everything. The sovereign power of the Commonwealth, she argues, is made up of private individuals solely interested in the desire for power; it embodies the sum total of private interests:

Hobbes’ *Leviathan* exposed the only political theory according to which the state is based not on some kind of constituting law – whether divine law, the law of nature, or the law of social contract – which determines the rights and wrongs of the individual’s interest with respect to public affairs, but on the individual interests themselves, so that the “private interest is the same with the publique.”

Hobbes is for Arendt the perfect thinker for the rise of bourgeois political power during the imperialist era. He is, according to Arendt, imperialism’s “great thinker” based as *Leviathan* is on the endless desire and accumulation of power. In Hobbes, imperialism’s quest for “power for the sake of power” finds its theoretical underpinnings:

This new body politic was conceived for the benefit of the new bourgeois sketch for the new type of Man who would fit into it. The Commonwealth is based on the delegation of power, and not of rights. It acquires a monopoly on killing and provides in exchange a conditional guarantee against being killed.

In the Hobbesian framework, she argues, natural right corresponds to the endless process of accumulating power. And the equality of human beings lies solely in their equality of cunning in obtaining more power. This equality therefore has no inherent worth. According to Hobbes, it is not the seller but the buyer who determines the worth of an individual, Arendt points out that for Hobbes the individual possesses no inherent dignity worthy of respect; instead, one’s worth is dependent on one’s power, which is determined solely in the eyes of others.

For Arendt, Hobbes therefore excludes in principle the idea of humanity, an exclusion that Arendt argues has disastrous effects in the nineteenth century when Hobbes’s philosophy will provide the underpinnings of race ideology, a key element in the crystallizing event of totalitarianism:

The philosophy of Hobbes, it is true, contains nothing of modern race doctrines, which not only stir up the mob, but in their totalitarian form outline very clearly the forms of organization through which humanity could carry the process of capital and power accumulation through to its logical end in self-destruction. But Hobbes at least provided political thought with the requisite for all race

doctrines, that is, the exclusion in principle of the idea of humanity which constitutes the sole regulating idea of international law.¹³

Moreover, for Arendt the exclusion of the idea of humanity and the reduction of human rights to the self-interested power of a sovereign and isolated individual provides the theoretical underpinnings first to nineteenth-century imperialism in which “everything is permitted” and then to twentieth-century totalitarianism, with its race ideologies, for which “everything is possible.”

In her analysis of Rousseau, Arendt shows how the modern form of political anti-Semitism emerges out of the inherent contradiction between the state as an instrument of law and the nation as embodying the will of the people. Unlike earlier forms of anti-Semitism, which were based on religious differences, she argues that modern anti-Semitism is political insofar as the Jews were not considered nationals. With a history of financing the state’s business, the Jews came to be identified with the state itself. Thus, she argues, any group that found itself at odds with the state thought that it was at the same time at odds with the Jews:

For more than a hundred years, anti-Semitism had slowly and gradually made its way into almost all social strata in almost all European countries until it emerged suddenly as the one issue upon which an almost unified opinion could be achieved. The law according to which this process developed was simple: each class of society which came into conflict with the state as such became anti-Semitic because the only social group which seemed to represent the state was the Jews.¹⁴

When the nation usurped the state at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the political status of the Jews became ever more precarious; having no status as nationals, the Jews had little or no political protection at all.

Arendt’s criticism of Rousseau focuses on his claim that the principle of freedom is found in the sovereign will of the nation. She argues that Rousseau’s turn to the unanimous will of the nation is motivated by the problem of the profound instability of all modern political bodies, which is the result of an elementary lack of authority.¹⁵ One way to solve the problem of legitimate authority, she argues, is to make the nation absolute. The legitimacy of power and the legality of the laws would reside in the sovereign will of the nation: the

¹³. Ibid., 157.
¹⁴. Ibid., 25.
HANNAH ARENDT: RETHINKING THE POLITICAL

general will of the nation that would reflect the innate, natural goodness of each individual heart and will. Because Augustine had already demonstrated that a divided will is impotent, unanimity is mandatory for the concept of a powerful, general will. Thus, Arendt contends, the notion of the general will must be based on unanimous consent: unanimity of opinion rather than a plurality of opinions. In other words, the unanimity of the general will, whose absolute sovereignty guarantees the stability of the political realm, depends on the individual wills giving up their particular interests and consenting to be ruled by a government whose power has become sovereign precisely because individuals have given up their individual power. As in Hobbes, the existence of an absolute sovereign in whom the identical origin of law and power is embodied, makes the law powerful and power legitimate. And this does not change when the absolute sovereign is the general will of the people.

Thus the act of consent combines the principle of absolute rulership and national principles “according to which there must be one representative of the nation as a whole, and where the government is understood to incorporate the will of all nationals.” Here we see the emerging form of the sovereign nation-state. Indeed, Arendt argues that the modern understanding of the self as a subject who is the bearer of inalienable rights is inseparable from the notion of the sovereign nation-state that gets its power from the sovereign general will of the people. Human rights, then, are tied up with the question of national emancipation: “Only the emancipated sovereignty of the people, of one’s own people, seemed to be able to insure them.” In this schema, power is always associated with sovereignty and unity – either the unified sovereign will of the individual or the unity of the general will embodied in the figure of the ruler. Napoleon is the exemplary figure: “I am the pouvoir constituant.”

Arendt argues that the problem with this schema is twofold: first, rights are indistinguishable from the sovereignty of the general will of the nation-state, and this schema does not allow for the rights of those who are not recognized as part of the general will. This leads to the second problem: at the level of the individual, one must be a national in order to have rights. Indeed, Arendt’s critique of the modern understanding of “inalienable rights” is founded on this recognition that these rights were from the beginning tied up with national sovereignty. And, she argues, no group saw this more clearly than those who had lost the protection of the sovereign: “The rights of man, supposedly inalienable, proved to be unenforceable – even in countries whose constitutions were based on them – whenever people appeared who were no longer citizens of any

16. Ibid., 171.
sorthern state.”19 Human beings become singular and concrete by the exercise of human rights tied to state sovereignty, and those who are deprived of them become human beings without portfolio, “human beings in general.”

Most devastating, she argues, is that the world found nothing sacred in the “abstract nakedness” of being human:

If a human being loses his political status, he should, according to the implications of the inborn and inalienable rights of man, come under exactly the situation for which the declaration of such general rights provided. Actually the opposite is the case. It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man.”20

At the very moment when protection under the auspices of universal human rights was most desperately needed, no such protection was granted. Outside the law and not belonging to any political community, she and her fellow refugees were reduced to “mere naked human beings” in a “condition of complete rightlessness.”21 Contrary to Edmund Burke, for Arendt the abstraction is the abstract nudity of those who are nothing other than naked human beings, naked as the day they were born. She argues, it was in order to escape this “abstract nudity” that those who were stateless “insisted upon their nationality, this ultimate fact of their being citizens.”22

Arendt’s relation to Burke is complicated. While she agrees with Burke’s critique of the notion of natural rights, she does not agree with his further claim that human rights belong only to citizens of particular nation-states. Indeed, Arendt places Burke in the group of thinkers who are the predecessors of modern state racism. Burke’s insistence on reducing rights to the rights of Englishmen, she argues, is dangerously tied to his notion of a “race of aristocratic blue bloods.” This is possible, she argues, precisely because of his dismissal of a principle of humanity at work in human rights. As we saw above in her critique of Hobbes, racial thinking depends on this dismissal. In her analysis of “race-thinking before racism,” which includes a long section on Burke, she points out that at the heart of race-thinking is the consistent denial of the “great principle upon which national organizations of peoples are built, the principle of equality and solidarity of all peoples guaranteed by the idea of mankind.”23 Race, she argues, “politically speaking, is not the beginning of humanity but its

20. Ibid., 300.
21. Ibid., 296.
22. Ibid., 300.
23. Ibid., 161.
end, not the origin of peoples but their decay, not the natural birth of man but his unnatural death.”

While totalitarianism destroys the legal and moral person, nevertheless, Arendt insists that these regimes are not lawless. A totalitarian regime, she argues, “claims to obey strictly and unequivocally those laws of Nature and History from which all positive laws always have been supposed to spring.”

Raging against the constraining and absent symbolic law, totalitarian politics “promises justice on earth because it claims to make mankind itself the embodiment of the law.” Totalitarianism substitutes another law, a law that is incarnate and reassuring because the law can now be known; it literally dwells among us, having been brought down to earth.

The embodiment of the law is possible through the substitution of history for politics. More precisely, totalitarian regimes replace politics with its fundamental concern with freedom and action with an ideology that assigns reality “[to a] process that unfolds behind the backs of those who act and does its work in secret, beyond the visible historical process, and history comes to mean, in a very literal sense, the flow of history.” Fascist ideology provides the fiction of a ready-made, unified world: fixed, static, without contradiction, and utterly reliable. Its hellish fantasies are characterized by a “strident logicality,” a logic through which the whole of reality is thoroughly and systematically organized with a view to total domination.

For Arendt the appeal of this fiction has its roots in the modern phenomenon of superfluousness. Radical evil, she writes in _The Origins of Totalitarianism_, “has appeared in connection with a system in which all men have become superfluous in some way.” It is the desolation of individuals who are “economically superfluous and socially uprooted” with its peculiar kind of loneliness that provides the conditions for totalitarianism:

Loneliness, the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government, and for ideology and logicality, the preparation of its executions and victims, is closely connected with uprootedness and superfluousness which have been the curse of modern masses … To be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others, to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all.

25. _Ibid._, 461.
And the threat of totalitarianism is still with us as long as this condition of superfluousness continues: “The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms.”

Totalitarianism is the stripping away of everything that gives one a place in the world, from private property to personal relationships to the right of government protection. It is the stripping away of the legal and the moral person, leaving only the “naked human being.” Stripped down to bare existence, the conditions are set for mass murder: “Only in the last stage of a lengthy process is their right to life threatened; only if they remain perfectly ‘superfluous,’ if nobody can be found to ‘claim’ them, may their lives be in danger.”

If totalitarianism is marked fundamentally by the condition of worldlessness, whereby reality is replaced by a fiction, politics is reduced to the laws of history or nature, and masses of people are rendered superfluous and thereby murdered, then for Arendt our only remedy against the threat of totalitarianism is to recover a sense of reality and a place in the world. In other words, our only remedy is a return of the political. And this for Arendt requires first of all rethinking the fundamental categories of politics, namely, freedom, power, and action.

II. RETHINKING FREEDOM, POWER, AND ACTION

Arendt’s critique of Hobbes, Rousseau, and the modern nation-state is instructive not only for understanding the elements that crystallized into the event of totalitarianism, but also for understanding how her radical rethinking of freedom, power, and action allow her to offer a new theoretical framework for thinking the political. Only through a radical reformulation of power, freedom, and the public space, Arendt argues, is it possible to sever politics from the disastrous twin conceptions of sovereign agency and sovereign state power.

Indeed, Arendt’s rejection of sovereign power has its basis in her rejection of the dominant philosophical understanding of freedom, which, as we saw above, from Augustine onward has largely understood freedom as located in a subjective will. Her understanding of freedom, on the contrary, is political, located not in the “I will” but in the “I am able.” Indebted to Aristotle, she argues that freedom is always the freedom to move and is by definition worldly. Indeed,
she argues that the experience of “worldly freedom” is the condition of an inner sense of freedom:

Hence, in spite of the great influence the concept of an inner, nonpolitical freedom has exerted upon the tradition of thought, it seems safe to say that man would know nothing of inner freedom if he had not first experienced a condition of being free as a worldly tangible reality.

Freedom, she argues, is “experienced in the process of acting and nothing else”; this capacity to act and to move must be understood as the capacity to begin, to get a move on: “The Greek word archein which covers beginning, leading, ruling, that is, the outstanding qualities of the free man, bears witness to an experience in which being free and the capacity to begin something new coincided.” From the outset, Arendt’s understanding of freedom is inseparable from power, the ability to begin. And, to go further, the “I am able” must be understood as the ability to act in a public space, to move in a space of freedom with others.

Moreover, power according to Arendt must always be said in the plural. In other words, for power to exist there must be other centers of power: “Power comes into being only if and when men join themselves together for the purpose of action, and it will disappear when, for whatever reason, they disperse and desert one another.” Domination, by contrast, is the loss of power that occurs only where there is a central ruling power. Thus the notion of sovereignty can denote strength but it can never denote power. The principle of federalism, she argues, illuminates the point. The establishment of the Union of the United States, as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson understood, did not take away from the power of the states, but instead provided a new source of power. Indeed, she argues that if the individual states had not existed, the Union would have had to erect them in order to have the power it did. This again suggests that power is generated by power and to be powerful one must be in relation to other powers. Here we see Arendt’s rejection of Rousseau’s identification of sovereignty with power. Arendt argues instead that action demands a plurality of actors; further, power must be understand as the only “human attribute which applies solely to the worldly in-between space by which actors are mutually related.”

Power therefore denotes not only the ability to act, but action in concert with others. Thus Arendt insists that “the power structure itself precedes and

32. Ibid., 166.
34. Ibid.
outlasts all aims, so that power, far from being the means to an end, is actually the very condition enabling a group of people to think and act in the means–ends category.”36 This is why Arendt argues that full-blown terror, resulting in the complete atomization of the political, is the presence of an absolute violence without the presence of power. Power, present only when people act in concert, has completely disappeared. Charles Montesquieu already saw this problem: terror is ultimately impotent and self-destructive because it fears any and all organization, even turning against those in its own forces who might organize. Going further, Arendt argues that the difference between totalitarianism and tyranny is that the former turns even against the power of its friends.37

How then can we think legitimate power? I submit that Arendt’s understanding of a noncentralized nonsovereign power, synonymous with public freedom and action, allows for rethinking a legitimate principle of power. Here we must grasp that the modern understanding of law, having its roots in Hobbes, is contractual; furthermore, the contractual understanding of law is inseparable from an understanding of power as sovereign. Arendt argues, however, that the contract is not the exclusive foundation for the law. In contradistinction to the contract, the law can be founded on the mutual compact. She points to compacts such as the Mayflower Compact, which were made prior to the American Revolution, and which were made with no reference to prince or king. The principle of the compact (or covenant) is the claim to power without the further claim to sovereignty. The principle was “neither expansion nor conquest but the further combination of powers.”38 The compact, Arendt argues, understands the political bond in the old Roman sense of alliance: “Such an alliance gathers together the isolated strength of the allied partners and binds them into a new power structure by virtue of ‘free and sincere promises.’”39 Again, she argues, this is very different from the contract wherein an individual person resigns his “power to some higher authority and consents to be ruled in exchange for a reasonable protection of his life and property.”40 The difference between an act of covenant and an act of consent is that the first is based on an increase of power through the recognition of others inspired by the principle of plurality, while the second is based on the surrender of power in the recognition of sovereignty inspired by the principle of unanimity.

The notion of law that emerges out of the mutual covenant is one that understands the law as neither sovereign nor dominating, neither commandment nor imposed standard. Rather, following Montesquieu’s insight, Arendt suggests that

39. Ibid., 170.
40. Ibid., 169.
the law must be understood as regulator of different domains of power. Here there is a way to think multiplicity of power with rule. Arendt again looks to Montesquieu for whom the law, “never lost is original ‘spatial significance’ altogether, namely, ‘the notion of a range or province within which defined power may be legitimately exercised.’”41 And since the laws are no more than the relations that exist and preserve different realms of power, and are therefore relative by definition, Arendt argues that Montesquieu “needed no absolute source of authority and could describe the ‘spirit of the laws’ without ever posing the troublesome question of their absolute validity.”42

Yet Arendt does not relinquish the problem of legitimate principles of power, and it is this that moves her from an analysis of power to the formulation of a principle of humanity that would be the basis for distinguishing legitimate and illegitimate forms of power. She accomplishes this through an analysis of the event of natality, drawing on the triple meaning of the Greek word archē, which she argues conveys the triple sense of principle, beginning, and common ground. The principle of action, she argues, lies in its beginning and it is this principle of initium that provides the inspiration for power and action. Now, if it is the case that power is synonymous with action and freedom, and, further, if all three terms denote the appearance of an actor among a plurality of actors in a space of freedom, then the principle that inspires power and political action, and which lends action its legitimacy, is the principle of publicness: “Because of its inherent tendency to disclose the agent together with the act, action needs for its full appearance the shining brightness we once called glory, and which is possible only in the public realm.”43 Insofar as action and power are synonymous terms for Arendt, we can substitute power for action in the above passage. In other words, her analysis suggests that legitimate power is precisely power that allows the actor to appear in a public space with others. This principle of publicness is the principle that ought to inspire the constitution of the political space and all activities carried out therein: it demands that the divisions of power be such that all actors are able to appear and to act. In still other words, the principle of publicness demands that all positive, civil laws constitute and regulate the divisions of power in such a way that all the actors are empowered.

To go further, the principle of publicness also permits philosophically establishing a notion of “rights” that does not have its basis in an understanding of human nature as a sovereign subject endowed with inalienable rights. Arendt is able to reject the fiction of human nature and still think the inalienable right of the actor who in order to act must be able to appear in a public space of

41. Ibid., 186–7.
42. Ibid., 189.
43. Ibid., 180.
freedom. Although stripped of state, stripped of a home, the actor must not be stripped of this fundamental right to be able to appear, because the first act, the act of beginning itself – the event of natality – contains both the beginning and its principle within itself.

The event of natality carries within it the principle of publicness, which restated as the law of humanity (humanity understood as the appearance of the actor among a plurality of actors in a public space of freedom), demands that the actor have the right to appear, or, as Arendt so succinctly states, have “the right to have rights.” Again, this is a right not predicated on a metaphysical understanding of the human being as having a nature, but instead, on an event, the fundamental event of human existence, that is, the event of natality. To be born is to appear on the globe. This is precisely the law of humanity articulated by Kant in his essay “Perpetual Peace” and quoted so approvingly by Arendt in her Kant lectures: “Humans have it by virtue of their common possession of the earth, whereas on a globe, they cannot infinitely disperse and hence must finally tolerate the presence of each other. [For] the common right to the face of the earth … belongs to human beings generally.”

The new principle of humanity that grounds the “right to have rights” is the principle of publicness that demands that each actor by virtue of the event of natality itself has the right to appear; that is, the right to temporary sojourn on the face of the earth. Inseparable from the principle of publicness is the principle of plurality. As she argues in *The Human Condition*, appearance means to be seen and heard by others. The fundamental condition of being human, she argues, “is that men and not man inhabit the world.” In other words, “plurality is the law of the earth.” Being and appearing are coincident, and appearance requires a spectator: “Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator. In other words, nothing that is, insofar as it appears exists in the singular; everything that is is meant to be perceived by somebody.” Indeed, for Arendt “world” is constituted only through a plurality of perspectives. Again, since the fundamental event, the beginning itself, carries its principle within it, the event of natality, the event of appearance itself, carries the principle of plurality – with its inherent publicness – within it.

Moreover, for Arendt, “appearance” carries with it the notion of significant speech and action. It is not enough to give someone a place of refuge; instead, the

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46. Ibid., 7.
48. Ibid.
principle of plurality, with its inherent publicity demands that there be a public place where one is truly seen and heard. Otherwise, she argues, one is simply the fool or idiot: one who speaks or acts without significance, which is just another kind of invisibility. Moreover, one must be able to initiate human action in concert with others; it is our “freedom to begin something new and unexpected that was not there before.”49 And for Arendt, significant speech and action, as well as the capacity to begin something new, can occur only in a political space. In this context, Arendt’s approving reference to Pericles’s funeral oration receives added import: “Wherever you go, you will be a polis.”50 Wherever one goes, one has the right to belong to a political space where significant speech and action, as well as the capacity to initiate, is possible. And this is because each human being is an appearance who requires a public space in order to truly appear: “To be deprived of it means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance.”51

More fundamental than the rights of justice and freedom, for Arendt, is the right to action and opinion, as well as the right to belong to a political community in which one’s speech and action are rendered significant:

We became aware of the existence of a right to have rights (and this means to live in a framework where one is judged by one’s actions and opinions), as well as the right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerged who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political situation.52

Arendt’s theoretical reformulation of the fundamental “right to have rights” emerges out of her reflection on the initium inherent in the ontological event of natality, an initium that makes every human being a beginner. On this point, Arendt is much indebted to Augustine’s insight, “Initium ergo ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit [That there might be a beginning, man was created, before whom nobody was].”53 This principle of initium, she argues, allows for a radical reformulation of the modern framework of human rights, such that the rights of freedom and agency are rooted in the more fundamental rights of action and speech. Moreover, the right of sovereignty, individual and collective, is replaced with the right to belong to an organized political space, with its inherent plurality of actors. Ultimately, for Arendt, federated political

49. Arendt, Between Past and Future, 151.
51. Ibid., 199.
spaces with a plurality of power centers must replace the notion of the national sovereignty of a nation-state.

### III. REthinking Politics: The Event of Natality

In her analysis of totalitarianism, Arendt claims that with the rise of the historical sciences, “the central position which the concept of beginning and origin must have in all political thought has been lost ....”\(^5^4\) It is not too much to claim that Arendt’s rethinking of politics is an attempt to restore to central place the concept of “beginning.” If Heidegger is the thinker of mortality understood fundamentally in terms of being-towards-death, then Arendt is the thinker of mortality understood primarily in terms of natality, the fundamental event of beginning. Indeed, for her the political concern for immortality is rooted in this event of natality in which the beginner appears and as such desires endurance in time.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt begins her analysis of the vita activa with a distinction between eternity and immortality. While her discussion of immortality is often read as an argument for heroic deeds and speech that distinguish the actor in the public realm and, thereby, ensure through remembrance his or her endurance in time, close examination of Arendt’s argument reveals that she is not so much interested in the endurance of individual deeds as she is in the endurance of humanity itself. Immortality, she argues, is the concern of those beings who are mortal. Mortality marks the division between life and death; it marks a cut in time whereby human beings move “along a rectilinear line in a universe where everything, if it moves at all, moves in a cyclical order.”\(^5^5\) This transformation of linear into rectilinear time distinguishes the human being from other animal species.

Arendt makes the same point early on in *The Human Condition* in her discussion of the meaning of mortality:

> Men are “the mortals,” the only mortal things in existence, because unlike animals they do not exist only as members of the species whose immortal life is guaranteed through procreation. The mortality of men lies in the fact that individual life, with a recognizable life-story from birth to death, rises out of biological life.\(^5^6\)


Mortality is the cut in the temporality of biological life, and yet mortality is not completely cut off from biological life. Instead, the cut of mortality introduces another temporality into biological life, thereby infusing biological life with mortality. Insofar as the event of natality is for Arendt also the event of mortality, it must be understood as always already introducing this mortal cut into biological life, thereby confounding any strict distinction between the biological and the mortal. Simply put, for Arendt, the mortal never possesses “bare life.”

The concern with immortality is inseparable from a political life:

Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm is possible … But such a common world can survive the coming and going of the generations only to the extent that it appears in public. It is the publicity of the public realm which can absorb and make shine through the centuries whatever men may want to save from the natural ruin of time.57

Immortality, therefore, is a political achievement that institutes an enduring, common world. Neither a religious sentiment nor founded in the fear of death, the desire for immortality is the desire for a common world that delivers us from obscurity; it is the desire to be visible, to be seen and recognized by equals; it is the desire for our own image granted only through the perspectives of others. Far from celebrating a politics of heroic individualism, Arendt’s emphasis on immortality is rooted in the desire to appear, that is, the desire to be: “The term ‘public’ … means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance – something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality.”58 The fulfillment of this desire depends on there being a plurality of others who share a common world. Citing Aristotle, she argues, “To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all; ‘for what appears to all, this we call Being,’ and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream ….”59 Indeed, our very sense of reality “depends utterly upon appearance” in a common world, the reality of which “relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised.”60 It is clear in these passages that

57. Ibid., 55.
58. Ibid., 51.
59. Ibid., 199.
60. Ibid., 57.
Arendt is thinking the solidarity of humanity not as a solidarity that identifies with the other nor as one established in a reciprocity of identifications; rather, solidarity emerges out of the irreducible nonintegration of different standpoints wherein there is equality (not identification) in difference: “the sameness of utter diversity.”

Arendt goes so far as to call this desire to appear an “innate impulse” as compelling as the fear which accompanies the urge for self-preservation:

It is indeed as though everything that is alive – in addition to the fact that its surface is made for appearance, fit to be seen and meant to appear to others – has an urge to appear, to fit itself into the world of appearances by displaying and showing, not its “inner self” but itself as an individual.61

Looking to the research of the Swiss biologist and zoologist Adolf Portmann, Arendt argues that this “urge to appear” cannot be explained in functional terms; instead, she suggests, the “urge to appear” is gratuitous, having to do with the sheer pleasure of self-display. Human beings, who have a concern with an enduring image, transform this urge to self-display into a desire for self-presentation, which she argues involves a “promise to the world, to those to whom I appear, to act in accordance with my pleasure.”62

The division between the natural and mortal/immortal being, therefore, coincides with the first division between the private and public realm. For Arendt the only way our individual and collective desires can avoid the fanaticism and madness of radical evil is by the political institution of a different form of time – the time of immortality – rooted not in religion or fear but in the desire for an enduring image and mode of appearance. This is a desire met only in a public space with an irreducible plurality of others with whom we promise our pleasures rather than assert our needs. Indeed, Arendt’s highly controversial distinction between the social and the political must be understood against the background of this transformation of temporality.

Finally, Arendt suggests that the political institution of the temporality of immortality must be accompanied by an affectivity that provides an animating or dynamic basis for the political bond or what Arendt calls “the solidarity of humanity.”63 Indeed, one could read her “politics of natality” and its insistence

62. Ibid., vol. 1, 36.
63. Insisting on an affective dimension to political life, Arendt is in the tradition of Montesquieu, who argues that the laws and institutions (the form) of any political regime is always animated by an affective principle (the spirit of the laws) that establishes the political bond. Thus the laws and institutions of a monarchy are animated by the love of honor, while the laws and
on the move from the natural to the mortal/immortal, from zoē to bios, as adding another properly political chapter to Hobbes’s understanding of the human being. Contrary to Hobbes’s natural position, Arendt’s political understanding of the human being insists on the transformation of the time of self-interest to the temporality of public happiness with its promise of shared pleasures. This, in turn, allows her to reformulate the “solidarity of humanity” and its predicament of common responsibility.

In her essay On Violence, Arendt takes up the issue of whether “enlightened self-interest” can adequately resolve conflict and prevent violence. Using the example of a rent dispute between tenant and landlord, Arendt argues that enlightened interest would focus on a building fit for human habitation; however, the argument that “in the long run the interest of the building is the true interest of both the landlord and the tenant,” leaves out of account the time factor which is of paramount importance for all concerned.64

Because of mortality, she argues, the self qua self cannot calculate in long-term interest:

Self-interest, when asked to yield to “true interest” – that is, the interest of the world as distinguished from that of the self – will always reply, “Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin” … it is the not very noble but adequate response to the time discrepancy between men’s private lives and the altogether different life expectancy of the public world.65

To move from self-interest to “world-interest” requires a move from fear to love of the “public thing.”66

Love of the “public thing” occurs only through the vigilant partiality of political friendship, which rejects from the outset any notion of truth, engaging instead in the practice of questioning and doubt that marks the secular ordeal of modern humanity.

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64. Arendt, On Violence, 78.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
For Arendt, Gotthold Lessing is the figure who embraces this secular ordeal:

He was glad that – to use his parable – the genuine ring, if it had ever existed, had been lost; he was glad for the sake of the infinite number of opinions that arise when men discuss the affairs of this world. If the genuine ring did exist, that would mean an end to discourse and thus to friendship and thus to humanness.67

Lessing rejoices in that very thing that has caused so much distress, namely, “that the truth once uttered becomes one opinion among many, is contested, reformulated, reduced to one subject of discourse among others.”68 Arendt goes on to suggest that Lessing was a “completely political person” because of this understanding of the relation between truth and humanity:

He insisted that truth can exist only where it is humanized by discourse, only where each man says not what just happens to occur to him at the moment, but what he “deems truth.” But such speech is virtually impossible in solitude; it belongs to an arena in which there are many voices and where the announcement of what each “deems truth” both links and separates men, establishing in fact those distances between men which together comprise the world.69

This does not amount to tolerance; instead, “it has a great deal to do with the gift of friendship, with openness to the world, and finally with a genuine love of mankind.”70

Lessing’s antimony between truth and humanity provides Arendt with a kind of thought experiment. She asks the reader to assume for a moment that the racial theories of the Third Reich could have been proved: “Suppose that a race could indeed be shown, by indubitable scientific evidence to be inferior; would that fact justify its extermination?”71 She asks the reader not to make the experiment too easy by invoking a religious or moral principle such as “thou shalt not kill”; she asks this in order to show a kind of thinking not governed by legal, moral, or religious principles (she asks this in the sober recognition that legal, moral, and religious principles did not prevent the worst from happening). This way of thinking without recourse to transcendent principles paradoxically gives rise to a fundamental political principle by which to judge our “truths”: “Would

68. Ibid., 27.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid, 29.
any such doctrine, however convincingly proved, be worth the sacrifice of so much as a single friendship between two men?"\(^{72}\)

The political principle is friendship: any doctrine that in principle barred the possibility of friendship must be rejected. Political friendship retreats from a notion of truth as “objective”; nonetheless, Arendt argues, it has nothing to do with a kind of subjective relativism where everything is viewed in terms of the self and its interests. Instead, “it is always framed in terms of the relationship of men to their world, in terms of their positions and opinions.” Lessing’s understanding of friendship, therefore, has nothing to do with the warmth of fraternity that desires above all to avoid disputes and conflicts. The excessive closeness of brotherliness, Arendt claims, obliterates all distinctions and Lessing understood this: “He wanted to be the friend of many men, but no man’s brother.”\(^{73}\) Finally, while political friendship does not recognize any ultimate arbiter for its disputes and disagreements, nonetheless, it is guided by a fundamental exigency: we must assume responsibility for what is just and what is unjust, answering for our deeds and words.

**MAJOR WORKS**


*Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy.* Edited by Ronald Beiner. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1982.


\(^{72}\) *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

Georges Bataille\(^1\) occupies an important if eccentric position in the history of continental philosophy. To the common understanding and practice of philosophy he opposed his own, rather idiosyncratic “method of meditation,” an approach to thinking that would take into account not only what a human subject can know, but also the experience of “nonknowledge” or “unknowing” (le non-savoir) that Bataille saw as the core of human existence. Respectful of erudition, he remained wary of anyone who “acquires his intelligence at the University,”\(^2\) considering much academic philosophy to be pusillanimous (“that careful little man, philosopher!” he wrote of Bergson on finishing the latter’s *On Laughter*\(^3\)). He identified his own project with that of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose writings, on his view, opened the way toward an understanding of man as a “bacchant philosopher”:\(^4\) “What I teach,” Bataille writes, “is a drunkenness … not a philosophy: I am not a philosopher, but a *saint*, maybe a madman.”\(^5\)

\(^1\) Georges Bataille (September 10, 1897–July 8, 1962; born in Billem, France; died in Paris) was educated at the Séminaire de Saint-Fleur (1917), École des Chartes (1918–22), and École des Hautes Études Hispaniques, Madrid (1922). His influences included Hegel, Kojève, Mauss, Nietzsche, Sade, and Shestov, and he held appointments at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (1922–42), Bibliothèque de Carpentras (1949–51), and Bibliothèque d’Orléans (1951–62).


\(^3\) Ibid., 66.

\(^4\) Ibid., 28. [*] Nietzsche is discussed in detail in an essay by Daniel Conway in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*.

While his writings address some of the canonical texts of Western philosophy, especially Hegel’s, his engagement with these texts is so thoroughly critical that it would not be an exaggeration to say that Bataille sought, by philosophical means, to escape from philosophy. The cardinal concept of “inner experience” serves in his writings to highlight the limitations of philosophical inquiry and the ultimate “emptiness of intelligent questions.”  

6 Attempting to move beyond what he considered the verbalism and intellectualism of phenomenology (in particular), inner experience represents an attempt to accede to the realm of nonknowledge, the perfect (although unrealizable) expression of which would be silence. Such a project, the repressed traces of which Bataille thought he detected in Hegel’s dialectic, has obvious parallels in the Christian mystical tradition, a corpus that Bataille sometimes invokes; the proximity of his thought to currents of mysticism brought upon him the ridicule of “official” philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre.  

Although Bataille would later claim that his lack of philosophical training was in part a matter of principle (“it was deliberately that I decided not to be a specialist in philosophy”), his intellectual development was nonetheless influenced by encounters with two eminent philosophers, both of them Russian. Lev Shestov (Lev Izaakovic Schwartzmann, 1866–1938), who arrived in Paris in 1920 in flight from the Bolshevik Revolution, served the young Bataille as a “reliable” mentor in philosophical matters; for a number of years, he guided Bataille in his readings of Nietzsche and studied with him some of Plato’s works (Bataille, a good linguist, was able to read Plato in the original). The young Bataille, who had considered entering the priesthood and had attended a Catholic seminary before losing his faith in 1922, was attracted above all to Shestov’s embrace of the tragic side of existence. Author of The Philosophy of Tragedy: Dostoevsky and Nietzsche (1903), Shestov favored figures who stand on the threshold of philosophy and religion (Plotinus, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche), and whose writings, issuing directly from their experience, place them in proximity to the very categories of “madness” or “saintliness” that Bataille later claimed for himself. Shestov’s manner of writing philosophy also left its mark on Bataille. Aphoristic and often self-contradictory, Shestov’s style reflects his conviction that reason and knowledge alone cannot adequately account for the totality

of human experience. Bataille (who collaborated on the translation of one of Shestov’s books into French) absorbed this fragmentary and deliberately paradoxical style of philosophizing, while the conviction that existence is irreducible to rational inquiry underpins his notion of nonknowledge.

Bataille began to distance himself from Shestov in the late 1920s when, in his own accounting, he turned along with the rest of his generation toward Marxism. He met Alexandre Kojève (Aleksandr Vladimirovič Koževnikov, 1902–68) in the 1930s when he attended Kojève’s lectures on Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit at the École des Hautes Études. Kojève was slightly younger than Bataille. In his courses he read, translated, and commented on passages from Hegel that recur in Bataille’s writings, notably in Inner Experience and Guilty, both of which are in part a response to Kojève’s reading of Hegel. The encounter with Kojève allowed Bataille to focus his thinking about human activity in critical relation to phenomenology, and to formulate, in a sort of challenge to Hegel’s philosophy of action, a notion he calls (in a letter to Kojève) “unemployed negativity”: “If action (‘doing’) is – as Hegel says – negativity, the question arises as to whether the negativity of one who has ‘nothing more to do’ disappears or remains in a state of ‘unemployed negativity.’” The idea of remaining in a state of “unemployed negativity” appeals to Bataille; it is a state he theorizes in several essays and represents dramatically via his fictional characters, particularly Dirty and Troppmann in Blue of Noon. Throughout his life, Bataille remained deeply critical of the primacy in modern society of “the world of work,” to such an extent that, in his eyes, criminals, poets, saints and idlers – who refuse the world of work and the principle of utility that governs it, who refuse “action” – represent a destabilizing, even revolutionary energy. More generally, Bataille included in the category of “unemployed negativity” everything that in a given society remains irreducible to assimilation: waste matter, criminality, excess, eroticism, madness, and désœuvrement – all that heterogeneous matter that a system (be it philosophical or political) cannot readily put to use and must expel in order to function smoothly. Bataille’s encounter with Kojève is decisive in that he saw in Kojève’s Hegel exactly what he wanted to refute: a worldview based on knowledge, and that excludes the turbulent, unmasterable experiences that Bataille equates with being human.

From early in his career, Bataille expressed reservations about philosophy’s ability to reflect a reality that he felt to be essentially without form. “All of philosophy,” he wrote in a brief article from 1929, “has no other goal [than that] of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand,
affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.”

Since language, especially as it is used in philosophy as an instrument of enlightenment, tends to create the impression that human existence is knowable and obeys discoverable laws, it is not surprising that all of Bataille’s writings struggle with and protest against language’s form-giving powers. Bataille is indeed an important figure in what is sometimes called the “linguistic turn” in philosophy: his emphasis on the complex role of language in philosophical exposition has given rise to searching inquiries on the topic from Julia Kristeva to Jacques Derrida. His manner of writing – his way of insisting that language be made to divest itself of its rhetorical prowess – is a call to philosophers to be more attentive to the issue of how a thought is expressed, to be aware of the linguistic constructedness of a reality often presented as natural. “If it were necessary to give me a place in the history of thought,” Bataille wrote in 1953, “it would be I think for having discerned the effect, in our human life, of the ‘fading of discursive reality’ and for having drawn from these effects an evanescent light.” “Discursive reality” refers here to reality as it is construed in the texts of a number of philosophers for whom discourse and representation remain unproblematized categories. “Discursive reality,” Bataille believes, must not be taken to reflect the totality of existence (or the “whole person” as Bataille puts it). Hence every philosophical system must remain ultimately incomplete, because at its summit it will run up against a discursively untranslatable experience, an experience of “non-sense”: philosophy cannot have the last word.

Bataille is especially interested in those experiences and emotions – laughter, tears, extreme fear and pain, ecstasy, erotism, madness, drunkenness, and so on – that defy sense and resist translation into language. These states express themselves in shrieks, shudders, stammers, sobbing, silence – in some type of rupture with articulate speech. All of them, Bataille is convinced, indicate an absence of meaning; in speaking of them, or writing about them, Bataille is conscious of supplying a meaning they do not have. This is a paradox that Bataille never for an instant forgets; his books are shot through with avowals that his text is a necessary betrayal of a more perfect if impossible communication that would eschew words altogether:

Lautréamont said that the “intellectual bloodstain,” which is the mania for rationalizing, cannot be washed off. And in fact it cannot,


*13. For a discussion of this “linguistic turn” in continental philosophy, see the essay by Claire Colebrook in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.

I succumb to the use of words: *to be, effect, succumb, use*, all these words, assembled and chained together, proclaim my servitude; and it is not enough to recognize this in order to be rid of it. In fact, even the writer who is the most averse to discourse – to the “order of things” and to the servile language which expresses it – cannot be content with turning his back on it; he is himself forced to express himself on the level of discourse, forced to have an intellectual position. But this is painful to him: he does it against his will, with gnashing of teeth …

From this and dozens of similar passages throughout his *oeuvre* it emerges that Bataille is neither a Wittgensteinian, who would concede that there are things of which we cannot speak, nor a Romantic, lamenting language’s inability to capture ineffable experience. On the contrary, to the extent that there is something like a philosophy of language running through Bataille’s *oeuvre*, it is marked by a paradoxical, almost Beckettian sense of the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of speaking: his emphasis on an obligation (the writer is “forced” to use language) that is “painful” seems to suggest moreover an ethical dimension to writing.

The issue of language is thus for Bataille neither merely rhetorical, nor peripheral; it is primary, and it is intractable. While language defines us as human, we are not so naive as to imagine that language alone can envelop that nonmaterial “plenitude of being” of which every human has or can have a complete experience: “we are … the expectation that no material response can satisfy, no tricks with words deceive.” This frank recognition of the limitations of language incites Bataille to write at the limits of language (he strains syntax beyond the point of comprehensibility, leaves sentences unfinished, uses ellipses to excess) in an attempt to forge a writing that he calls (again echoing Beckett) “impossible.” This impossible language can come about only through “the liberation of the power of words,” which paradoxically means also (in French he employs a double genitive) a “liberation from the power of words”; since “words … serve only to flee” and “drain almost all life from within us,” only a liberation from them can create the conditions for “profound communication,” which, Bataille

writes, “demands silence.”

Only words that have been released from their condition of “servility,” from their “job” of producing meaning (of producing discursive reality), can communicate that moment when “existence gives way in a cry.”

“I cannot consider someone free if they do not have the desire to sever the bonds of language within themselves,” Bataille wrote. Yet the resources of the writer who would turn against language – or try to turn language against itself – are limited (Bataille is prudent in writing of “the desire to sever the bonds of language”). One strategy Bataille adopted in his writing was to refuse to limit himself to a single discursive field or genre, allowing his text to be traversed by multiple discourses and various forms that are often held apart. Bataille juxtaposes poetry and prose, philosophical analysis and personal anecdote, text and image; he borrows examples and metaphors and from the lexicons of political theory, economics, archaeology, ethnology, numismatics, philosophy, theology. His thought relies on a network of key terms, many of which he has so marked that they are virtually synonymous with his name, drawn from these different discursive domains: transgression, expenditure (dépense), consumption, sovereignty, erotism, nonknowledge, atheology, ecstasy, the impossible, restricted/general economy, and so on. The overarching inquiry that links all of these terms is an economic one and concerns the question of communication. Communication, the foundation of social existence, is what allows the isolated individual to escape from the prison of the self and to share in the experience of community. Communication cannot take place between perfectly self-sufficient beings; for communication to come about, there must be on either side a wound – some fissure or opening that allows for one being to enter into contact with another.

Bataille’s ideas about communication and the sacred were influenced by ethnology, with which he came into contact through his friend Alfred Metraux. Marcel Mauss’s 1925 essay The Gift, “a magisterial study” in Bataille’s words, had the greatest influence. In the early 1930s, Bataille was preoccupied with what he called “improductive expenditure” (la dépense improductive), meaning the expenditure of energy without reserve and without any expectation of return. Western capitalist societies are largely allergic to such spending, since the capitalist economy depends on its own endless expansion and this in turn depends on returns from spending and investments. Capitalist society, based on the values of prudence, calculation, and predictability, is produced by and

21. Ibid., 93.
22. Ibid., 119.
24. Mauss is discussed in an essay by Mike Gane in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
reproduces a particular type of subject, the *Homo economicus*, who in Bataille’s estimation is an “incomplete man,” a fearful, isolated and rather pitiful creature who has relinquished his sovereignty in exchange for an illusory sense of security. Bataille believed that life is essentially a conflagration, a fundamentally useless consummation of energy that should not be harnessed for any productive end. In reading about the gift-giving ceremony of potlatch among American Indians of the Canadian Northwest, discussed by Mauss, and about sacrifice among the Aztecs, Bataille felt he had come upon the refutation of the very principle of capitalist economics. These rituals suggested to him the possibility of an economy based not on production and gain, but on expenditure and waste, on the destruction rather than the accumulation of wealth. In *The Accursed Share*, he invokes these examples in order to oppose to the restricted economy that prevails a general economy that answers more adequately to humanity’s most fundamental needs.

The theory of general economy states that living organisms produce more than they need for their own survival; while some of the excess energy produced is channeled into expansion, an excess or “surplus” remains that must be expended in prodigious forms of waste:

When one considers the *totality* of productive wealth on the surface of the globe, it is evident that the products of this wealth can be employed for productive ends only insofar as the living organism that is economic mankind can increase its equipment. This is not entirely – neither always nor indefinitely – possible. A surplus must be dissipated though deficit operations: the final dissipation cannot fail to carry the movement that animates terrestrial energy.25

Bataille’s thesis challenged Marxist notions of economics, which tended to emphasize production and growth, shifting the ground of debate toward consumption and loss. If his thesis appears contrary to the logic of the economic market, and even to intuition, this is because the economy has not yet been considered “in general,” but has been envisaged only in a restricted fashion, that is, as a series of “particular operations with limited ends.”26 One need only look to the history of economics in different cultures, Bataille argued, to find instances

in which surplus energy is expended in a manner that does not seek a return or a profit. Bataille believed that human beings crave “deficit operations”; they are indeed “destined” for “glorious operation” and for “useless consumption.”

The Accursed Share thus urges us to take into account, in thinking about economics, a sovereign force running counter to the functional spending of traditional economic theory and that Bataille, trying to describe the object of inquiry of general economics, calls the “explosive character of this world.”

Bataille's interpretation of the meaning of Aztec and North-American Indian rituals, it has been suggested, may have been somewhat lyrical. Christian Duverger for one contests Bataille's citation of Aztec sacrifice as an example of improductive expenditure, showing it to be linked instead to the extension of Aztec power. It appears further that, for the societies that practiced them, potlatch ceremonies served an important regulatory economic function. But Bataille's misreading is instructive insofar as it illustrates what he took to be the challenge facing his generation: to work out an economics based on some principle other than that of accumulation, and in so doing to release man from the alienating effects of unchecked capitalism. This is the major theme of his postwar work, but we can find its origins in the essays Bataille penned in the 1930s. “Perhaps the worst of all ills afflicting human beings,” he wrote in 1938, “is the reduction of their existence to the condition of slavish instrument.”

The predominance of work had in Bataille's estimation resulted in a culture of “exhausting boredom”; the only adequate response, he believed, was “to refuse boredom and live only for fascination.”

It is important to note that while Aztec rituals, gift-giving ceremonies, and even the Marshall Plan fulfilled, on a grand scale, his vision of a society given over to joyful destruction and wastage, Bataille envisaged as well more modest ways of “living for fascination,” including meditation (of which he was an adept, having practiced some form of meditative techniques as early as 1922), the consumption of alcohol, and even smoking. Each of these activities represents a type of improductive expenditure that in itself is mildly revolutionary in that the one who so indulges subtracts himself or herself from the cycle of useful, productive labor and manages to escape momentarily into “ecstatic time.” Of smoking for example Bataille writes:

28. Ibid., 40.
There is in the use [of tobacco] a hidden sorcery: whoever smokes is in harmony with things (things such as the sky, a cloud, light). It isn’t important that the smoker know this: tobacco frees him for a moment from the need to act … Smoke escaping gently from a mouth gives to life freedom, the idleness one sees in the clouds.\footnote{Bataille, "La Limite de l’utile," in Œuvres complètes, vol. 7, 225.}

But perhaps the most pervasive instance of improductive expenditure in Bataille’s writings is eroticism (or erotism, as the French érotisme is sometimes translated). Bataille’s writings begin and end in eroticism, starting with the pseudonymously published *Story of the Eye* (1928), a tale of erotic initiation, and ending with *The Tears of Eros* (1961), a study of eros in art from prehistoric times to the present. A number of his many reflections on the topic – from the place of eroticism in inner experience to an analysis of the Kinsey Report – are collected in *L’Érotisme* (1957; published in English as *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*), a wide-ranging set of essays that complements his *History of Eroticism* (volume two of *The Accursed Share*). As the English title of this collection of essays makes plain, eroticism for Bataille is intimately related to an awareness of death: it is, he writes, “assenting to life up to the point of death.”\footnote{Bataille, *Erotism*, 11. The same sentence appears as a section heading in the chapter devoted to Emily Bronte’s fiction in *Literature and Evil*, Alistair Hamilton (trans.) (New York: Marion Boyars, 1983), 16.} Eroticism is linked to death in a first, rather literal sense in that it is not concerned with reproduction of the species: sex that does not seek a reproductive end is in a sense a refusal of life. But the link between sex and death lies also in the destruction and violence common to both; eroticism entails the “destruction of the structure of the closed being,” and the opening up of that “closed being” (“closed” in the sense that it is habitually confined to the profane world of work and necessity) to “an exuberance of life” that is however “not alien to death.”\footnote{Bataille, *Erotism*, 11.} When Bataille speaks of death in relation to eroticism, he is moreover thinking also in terms of the death of meaning, of a sudden, intense and absolute loss of sense comparable to that known in inner (or mystical) experience. (This is why poetry and eroticism are closely related: each involves a surpassing or a sacrifice of sense [“poetry is the sacrifice in which words are the victims,” Bataille wrote] and each leads to the same place: “Poetry leads to the same place as every form of eroticism, to indistinction, to the confusion of distinct objects. It leads us to eternity, it leads us to death …”\footnote{Ibid.} And as in the case of inner experience, the experience of “non-sense” triggered in eroticism is violent. “‘Violence’ overwhelms us strangely in each case [i.e. in both death and eroticism],” writes Bataille; “each time, what happens is
foreign to the received order of things, to which this violence each time stands in opposition.”38 Violence and eroticism are coterminous for Bataille: eroticism entails violence inasmuch as it involves the sacrifice of meaning, and in almost all cases in Bataille’s writings, violence is read in erotic terms.39

This complex interweaving of death, eroticism, and violence is the very heart of Bataille’s thinking: his philosophy as well as his fiction emerge from the “strangeness” of the world they engender, a world that is incongruous, volatile, unknowable, at times ecstatic, and, like the other instances of improdutive expenditure we have noted, potentially revolutionary. For to the extent that eroticism is linked to death and violence, Bataille conceives of the “the world of lovers” as a unit of political resistance: opposed in practice to the imperative to produce (or reproduce), opposed to “the primacy of work,” eroticism is an experience at once unknowable (the “tears” of Eros are the external sign that the mechanism of understanding is “overwhelmed,” to use his favored term) and unusable.

Eroticism is a key notion in Bataille’s oeuvre in two other, related domains. First, the part of Bataille’s philosophical project that consists in theorizing “nonknowledge” implicates thought in a process of eroticization in which thought finds itself pushed into zones where traditional forms of knowledge falter. The aim of much of Bataille’s philosophizing is to sacrifice thought, meaning at once to sacralize it and to put it to death, and his erotic theory serves this end. It is fair to regard Inner Experience and Guilty as works that seek to violate philosophy, to make it swoon, to open it up to the possibility of nonknowledge and jouissance. “Only violent thinking coincides with the disappearance of thought,” he wrote.40 If at times Bataille insisted that lectures take place in brothels (see below), it is because he wanted to conceive of thought as a festival, or, better, an orgy leading to the “death of thought”: “the death of thought is the voluptuous orgy that prepares death, the festival held in the house of death.”41

Second, in Bataille’s writings eroticism is inseparable from religion. “The meaning of eroticism escapes anyone who cannot see its religious meaning,” he writes; “Reciprocally, the meaning of religion in its totality escapes anyone

39. Bataille was fascinated by violent criminals, especially those whose crimes were sexual in nature. See The Trial of Gilles de Rais, Richard Robinson (trans.) (Los Angeles, CA: Amok, 1991), and The Tears of Eros (especially “Gilles de Rais and Erzébet Báthory” and “Chinese Torture”).
who disregards the link with eroticism.”42 The connection between eroticism and religion lies in their shared “sensibility”: as is the case with eroticism, “religious sensibility … always closely links desire and fright, intense pleasure and anguish.”43 So intimate is the link between eroticism and religion that Bataille, in trying to situate his book Erotism, presents his work as something akin to “theology”: “The determination of eroticism is primitively religious and my work is closer to ‘theology’ than to the scientific history of religion … As for me, I speak of religion from the inside, like a theologian speaks of theology.”44

Of course, the religious experience of which Bataille speaks, like the erotic experience or again the “inner experience,” entails an “inward cessation of all intellectual functioning,”45 such that properly speaking there can be no “science” (or logos) about it. This is why Bataille’s “theology” is an “atheology.” La Somme athéologique (Atheological Summa) is the name Bataille intended for a collected version of a number of his writings. He worked on their arrangement from 1952 until his death, without ever settling on either the content or the order of the edition. We know however from paratextual notes that it was to include at least Inner Experience (including Method of Meditation and an important “Postscript”), Guilty, and On Nietzsche, plus (in another version of the plan) a work on Pure Happiness and another to be entitled The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge. These last two works were never completed, although numerous lectures, essays and aphorisms give us a sense of what they might have included.46

The choice of La Somme athéologique as title for this sprawling, ultimately formless work can be seen as ironic or even parodic. It refers of course to Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologica (in his notes, Bataille situates his own endeavor “in the history of religions”47). But whereas Aquinas took the existence of God to be irrefutable and expounded on divine knowledge and Aristotelian science, Bataille wrote in the Nietzschean, acephalic moment after the death of God, insisting on ignorance and the impossibility of knowledge in the absence of God. Atheology is indeed “the science of the death or destruction of God.”48 With his special genius for orchestrating unlikely and promiscuous encounters, Bataille’s atheological Summa was meant to bring together saints and sinners, philosophers, mystics, criminals and poets in an immense parody of rational thinking.

42. Bataille, The Tears of Eros, 70.
43. Bataille, Erotism, 39, translation modified.
44. Ibid., 31–2, translation modified.
46. See Stuart Kendall’s “Editor’s Introduction: Unlimited Assemblage,” in The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge. I am indebted to Kendall in what follows.

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At the same time, however, Bataille shares common theological ground with Aquinas in that the object for each of them is God. As Bataille writes about the origins of his book *Erotism* “nothing has intrigued me more than the idea of once more coming across the image that haunted my adolescence, the image of God. This is certainly not a return to the faith of my youth. But human passion has only one object in this abandoned world of ours.” Bataille’s subject would always remain a *homo religiosos*: eroticism (but also meditation and especially poetry) leads, like the God of the mystics, to a “surpassing of personal being and of every limit.”

While never completely abandoning either the lexicon or the canonical texts of philosophical inquiry, Bataille reserves a special place, in his *oeuvre* and in his criticism, for literature and for poetry. The author of numerous works of fiction (*Story of the Eye, Blue of Noon, Madame Edwarda, My Mother*) that have secured for him an important place in the history of French letters, he consistently refuses to partition philosophy and literature, conceiving of his fictional output as a way of engaging otherwise, and complementarily, themes he has explored also in a more philosophical (or at times sociological) idiom. Thus his philosophical reflections on Hegel and Descartes in *Inner Experience* stand cheek by jowl with passages on Proust or Rimbaud or with his own poetry, while Kant makes an unlikely appearance in the pornographic novel *L’Abbé C*. The issue is not simply one of a hierarchy of genres: the ability to approach the “formless” quality of human experience is not by any means an inherent prerogative of literature. This is why Bataille chose to entitle his major statement on fiction *The Hatred of Poetry*, meaning to suggest his hatred for the elegance and refinement with which poetry is sometimes associated, and to distance himself from polite or effete forms of literature that relish their form-giving powers. Rather, Bataille privileges “outsider” writers who have challenged conventional literary and social practices. Some of these writers count among the *poètes maudits* – “that race forever cursed by the powerful of the earth” in Alfred de Vigny’s phrase – such as Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Rimbaud; others lived as political, social, or sexual outcasts in the society of their time (Sade, Blake, Kafka, Genet). What they have in common, according to Bataille, is an intimate relation to “an acute form of evil.” Bataille thus conceived of literature in broadly ethical terms, as a space of absolute freedom, including freedom from morality itself (he spoke of literature as a “hypermorality” resulting only from “complicity in the knowledge of Evil”). Bataille’s conception of aesthetics is thus rigorously

50. Ibid., 130, translation modified.
52. Ibid.
and explicitly opposed to the idea of littérature engagée expounded by Sartre and which Bataille felt to involve a domestication of literature’s subversive potential: “It is important to define what literature, which cannot be reduced to serving a master, brings into play. Non serviam, it is said, is the motto of the devil. In that case, literature is diabolical.”

I. THE COLLEGE OF SOCIOLOGY

Michel Surya notes that of those attending Kojève’s seminar on Hegel, only two – Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Eric Weil – can be considered “pure” philosophers. The others – Bataille, Raymond Queneau, Jacques Lacan, Raymond Aron, André Breton – are of diverse intellectual backgrounds. Bataille was very much at home in this kind of mixed milieu. Convinced of the virtue of collectives devoted to the discussion of ideas, he devoted a great deal of energy to collaborative intellectual labor, beginning with his work on a number of journals and reviews in the late 1920s and 1930s (Documents, La Critique sociale, Contre-Attaque) and his participation in groups in the prewar years, most notably Acéphale and the College of Sociology, but also in the lesser-known Society of Collective Psychology (of which Bataille was vice-president in 1937 and 1938). This commitment to collective undertakings, which he pursued after the war by founding the journal Critique, is very much in keeping with the centrality in his work of notions of community and communication.

Acéphale names both a review that appeared between June 1936 and June 1939 (five issues in all), and a secret society associated with the review and about which we know relatively little. Meetings of the society were held variously at the café L’Univers in the Place du Palais-Royal, in a brothel on the rue Pigalle, or, at night, at the site of a blasted tree in a remote part of the forest of Saint-Nom-la-Bretèche. This last venue was for the members of Acéphale (which included Georges Ambrosino, Roger Cailllois, Pierre Klossowski, Patrick Waldberg, and perhaps half a dozen others) a place for ritualistic acts, including the burning of sulfur. More mundane, daytime rites included refusing to shake the hands of known anti-Semites and eating horsemeat at lunch. Bataille’s fascination during this period with the religion of the Aztecs and with rituals of sacrifice perhaps explains the interest in the ranks of the Acéphale group in the sacrifice of one of its members by another; this act, the summum genus of the lesser rites,


55. Ibid., 255–6.
was to bind the members indissolubly, making of them a sort of brotherhood or even a kind of Church, founded on an “irreparable ritual gesture.”

An article by Bataille published in the first issue of *Acéphale*, “The Sacred Conspiracy,” constitutes something close to a manifesto for the group. Appearing in the turbulent political context of France in 1936, it is remarkable for the untimeliness of its central message: “It is time to abandon the civilized world and its light. It is too late to be reasonable and educated.” Skeptical of the value of political agitation, Bataille offers up in this article a form of religiosity that would facilitate, through a firmness that borders on violence, an escape from the vacuities and impasses of political debate: “we are ferociously religious, and, to the extent that our existence is the condemnation of everything that is recognized today, an inner exigency demands that we be equally imperious. What we are starting is a war.” By “ferociously religious,” Bataille means anti-Christian (Bataille authored an unpublished work entitled *Manual of the Anti-Christian*), and above all Nietzschean: several of the issues of *Acéphale* are devoted to Nietzsche, to his madness and to Dionysus, but also to the highly political issue of the appropriation of Nietzsche’s work by fascists, which Bataille denounced and patiently deconstructed.

The Acéphale group was as much an experiment in community as an intellectual adventure (the two were indissociable for Bataille). The foundation of the College of Sociology was announced in a “Note” in the July 1937 issue of *Acéphale*; the activities of the two organizations were thus concurrent. Like Acéphale, the college was in part an attempt to create a community; unlike Acéphale, its membership was open and it had an explicit theoretical and scholarly agenda – to study the conditions underlying the creation of a community, and specifically the place of the sacred in contemporary society. Meetings began in October 1937 and continued until July 1939; the first took place at the Grand Véfour (at the time a “dusty café at Palais Royal,” according to Caillois), those after that at Les Galeries du Livre, a bookstore in the Latin Quarter. The college was managed by Bataille and Caillois along with Michel Leiris; it seems to have been Bataille and Leiris who together determined the agenda for the meetings and decided who would deliver the lecture that served as a basis for discussion (in spite of its name, the college had no didactic function). Kojève, whose seminar on Hegel Bataille was still attending, was approached early on as a potential ally, but had reservations. According to Caillois, he specifically objected that

56. The words are Caillois’s; see Claudine Frank, *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 30.

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Bataille, in attempting to reintroduce the sacred dimension lacking in modern society, wanted to play at being a sorcerer’s apprentice: “such a miracle-worker,” he is reported to have said, “could no more be carried away by a sacred knowingly activated by himself than could a conjurer be persuaded of the existence of magic while marveling at his own sleight of hand.”59 Kojève foresaw, even before its inaugural lecture, the tension at the heart of the college between a scholarly inquiry into the sacred, on the one hand, and the desire (on the part of Bataille in particular) to arouse, incite, or even incarnate that sacred (a goal he was pursuing quite explicitly with Acéphale). Founding members, in addition to Bataille, Caillios, and Leiris, included Jules Monnerot, who quickly distanced himself, Ambrosino, Pierre Libra, and Klossowski. Participants included Denis de Rougemont, Georges Duthuit, René Guastalla, Anatole Lewitzky, Hans Mayer, Jean Paulhan, Jean Wahl, Kojève (who consented to speak), and (probably) Paul-Louis Landsberg. Walter Benjamin was in regular attendance, although plans for him to present his essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” did not materialize.

In keeping with the thesis that society had been “devirilized” on account of “the relaxation of society’s ties, practically non-existent as a result of the development of bourgeois individualism,”60 the college set about an analysis of elements in society that have a communifying value. The privileged but far from unique object of this analysis was the sacred itself; in an essay entitled “The Sacred,” published in 1939, and which we can consider to have been stimulated by the college’s agenda, Bataille writes: “the sacred is only a privileged moment of communal unity, a moment of the convulsive communication of what is ordinarily stifled.”61 With his emphasis on heterogeneous matter that has historically been excluded (“stifled”) as well as on the “convulsive” nature of the communication of the sacred, Bataille situates the overall project of the college as a critique of the hegemony of reason and science (or “knowledge”). This is also the dominant theme of “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” Bataille’s response to Kojève’s withering remark about the incoherence of the college’s aims. Here, Bataille opposes to “dissociated existence” or existence “broken into parts”62 a vision of the “whole person”63 and of the “totality of existence” that might once again become possible if only “simple, intense existence” were not “destroyed by a slavishness to function.”64 Once again, here as elsewhere Bataille seeks for human beings an emancipation from constraints imposed by the modern world of work, with its incitement to careerism and specialization, and more generally

60. Ibid., 45.
63. Ibid., 14.
64. Ibid., 18.
from the pervasive utilitarianism that harbors a denial of what is truly human (“[I]t is human to burn … On the contrary, it is inhuman to abandon existence to a series of useful acts”\textsuperscript{65}).

The cast of characters that make up the college includes a large number of emigrés (the Russians Kojève and Lewitzky, the Italian born Guastalla, the Germans Benjamin, Landsberg, and Mayer, the Swiss de Rougemont). Its members are from diverse intellectual backgrounds (Ambrosino had trained as a physicist, Duthuit was an art historian, Paulhan managing editor at the \textit{Nouvelle Revue Française}, Guastalla a Hellenist, etc.) and of differing political coloring (Bataille was a leftist but politically autonomous, Kojève was a Stalinist, Libra held some right-wing positions, Landsberg was close to Catholic currents of thought, de Rougemont was allied to Emmanuel Mounier’s personalism, etc.). Such professional and political (not to mention temperamental) diversity conforms to the aim of the college (as stated by Caillois on behalf of the founding members) to “develop a moral community” that would be “different from the one ordinarily uniting scholars”\textsuperscript{66} different, in other words, from the university. Wahl, who held a Chair in Philosophy at the Sorbonne since 1936, seems to have been the only university professor involved in the college, and he is moreover an exceptional figure: a specialist of Plato and Descartes and – of more immediate interest to the college – an expert on Hegel and Kierkegaard, he was also a poet (\textit{Connaître sans connaître} [To know without knowing], the title of a volume of poems from 1938, suggests an affinity with Bataille) and translator of poetry (of Thomas Traherne among others). That he was able successfully to conjoin these disparate identities in a professional context resistant to any association between poetry and philosophy (institutional practices at the Sorbonne kept the two rigorously apart\textsuperscript{67}), makes of Wahl a champion in the struggle against institutional forces that seek to reduce existence to a series of rigidly compartmentalized activities. The college, in aiming to create a sort of community without unity, sought to counter the “tendential reduction of human character” and the “reduction of differences”\textsuperscript{68} that Bataille had earlier identified as the state’s preferred mechanisms of social homogenization. The eclecticism of its membership seems moreover to have been willed; its directors explicitly reject the limitations of national, social, and political boundaries:

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 10.
The College of Sociology is not a political organism. Its members hold whatever opinion they please … [I]t urges those, for whom the only solution anguish disclosed is the creation of a vital bond between men, to join with it, with no determining factor other than the awareness of the absolute lie of current political forms and the necessity for reconstructing on this assumption a collective mode of existence that takes no geographical or social limitation into account and that allows one to behave oneself when death threatens.69

Death was indeed threatening when Bataille, Caillois, and Leiris collectively wrote these words (October 7, 1938) in a “Declaration” unequivocally condemning the Munich accords and France’s role in bringing them about. There is therefore a link between what the members of the college see as the “devirilization of man,” witnessed in the absence of a collective reaction in the face of war, and the creation of a “moral community” that would be “bound precisely to the virulent character of the realm studied.”70 That “realm” was “Sacred Sociology,” especially “insofar as that implies the study of social existence in every manifestation where there is a clear, active presence of the sacred.”71 The emphasis placed by the college on “social existence” is in part a critique of surrealism (many of the college’s members were dissident surrealists), which, by overly privileging the individual and the unconscious, had obscured questions concerning the structure of collective entities and their relation to power. “The intention [of the college] is thus to establish the points of coincidence between the fundamental obsessive tendencies of individual psychology and the principal structures governing social organization and in command of its revolutions.”72 The lectures delivered at the college between November 1937 and June 1939 address these collective structures: Bataille spoke about “The Structure and Notion of the Army,” about “The Structure of Democracies,” and about “Hitler and the Teutonic Order”; Caillois spoke about “Animal Societies” and about “Brotherhoods, Orders, Secret Societies, Churches”; Mayer delivered a lecture on “The Rituals of Political Association in Germany of the Romantic Period”; Duthuit talked on “The Myth of the English Monarchy,” and so on.

Bataille’s interest in the dehumanizing effects of a society dominated by a principle of utility is to some extent in line with the critique of bourgeois rationality carried out at around the same time at Adorno and Horkheimer’s Institute of Social Research, especially to the extent that this critique emerged

70. Ibid., 10.
71. Ibid., 11.
72. Ibid.
from Weber’s theses concerning rationalization and the disenchantment of the world. Indeed, as Michael Weingrad has shown, if Benjamin was present at the meetings of the college, this was at least in part because Adorno had asked him to seek out appropriate French co-workers for the institute with a view to “creating an intellectual homeland for Critical Theory in France.”73 But while Bataille at times entered the same orbit as Adorno and Horkheimer’s Dialectic of Enlightenment, his response to the dehumanizing effect of Enlightenment thought is to reject dialectical thinking altogether in favor of his own brand of excess. Bataille’s interest in sorcery, in coincidence, and in miracles around this period represents an attempt to get away from a scientifically explained world in which the values associated with the sacred play no part. Not content with uncovering and subjecting to analysis the processes that lead to dehumanization, Bataille actively urges a return of the forms of social effervescence (sacrifice, rituals, etc.) that modern capitalism has evacuated.

To the Frankfurt School, this looked rather like the kind of “irrationalist confusion” (Adorno’s words) they had deplored in Acéphale and that they associated with a degenerate form of surrealism.74 The celebration of the irrational irked others, including Mauss,75 and troubled also Bataille’s cofounders. The break-up of the college in 1939 is attributed by Bataille himself to fundamental differences between himself and Caillois; the latter felt that Bataille placed too much emphasis on mysticism, madness, and death. Wahl characterized their different approaches as follows: “Caillois is in search of rigor, Bataille appeals to the heart, to enthusiasm, to ecstasy, to earth and fire, to the guts.”76 Leiris for his part was concerned that the Maussian and Durkheimian principles to which the group purported to adhere had been traduced, and even that basic intellectual “rigor” had not been observed in the analyses undertaken. Although there had been a broad consensus that the college would consider “social existence” and “the problems of power, of the sacred, and of myths,” Bataille was almost diametrically opposed to his cofounders as regards the method for carrying out such a study. The fact that the college had a more precise and scholarly agenda than Acéphale, an agenda that attracted many intellectuals into the group, did not in Bataille’s mind mean excluding from its activities the passion and agitation of an existence “lived from within, lived to the point of a trance.”77

74. Ibid., 133–4.
II. BATAILLE’S INFLUENCE

In “From Work to Text” (1971), Roland Barthes cites Bataille as an example of a writer whose “text” subverts conventional notions of clearly defined, individuated works:

What constitutes the Text is … its subversive force in respect of the old classifications. How do you classify a writer like Georges Bataille? Novelist, poet, essayist, economist, philosopher, mystic? The answer is so difficult that literary manuals generally tend to forget about Bataille who, in fact, wrote texts, perhaps continuously one single text.  

Indeed, as much as for any of his individual works or ideas, Bataille is noted for having fashioned a highly original “text” that transcends disciplinary and generic boundaries. Bataille’s style of philosophizing, which seeks to expose philosophy to its others (sociology, economics, literature, erotics, etc.) constitutes in itself an important part of his legacy and has opened up radically new paths in philosophy as well as in other disciplines.

Bataille has contributed significantly to the agenda of poststructuralist philosophy. His tireless promotion of Nietzsche contributed to a wave of re-readings of the German philosopher that form part of the genealogy of poststructuralism. He is often cited as a precursor to thinkers who focus on écriture and on the aporia of language; almost all French intellectuals who came of age in the 1960s (Bataille died in 1962) acknowledge his role in “the linguistic turn.” The notion of the “end of history,” which originates in Kojève’s reading of Hegel, is one key theme that obsessed Bataille and that comes back in the writings of the poststructuralists. Related to this is the more general idea of the “crisis of the subject” (which we could call the crisis of humanism; Kojève said that “The end of history is the death of Man as such”), also a prominent motif in Bataille’s texts. The “crisis of the subject” refers to the preoccupation, shared by many of Bataille’s successors (Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva), with the instability of the philosophical subject inherited from Descartes. Foucault has written of Bataille’s writings that they represent a “desperate and relentless attack on the

80. These thinkers are discussed in various essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
preeminence of the philosophical subject.”81 Bataille consistently sought to open up the rational, thinking, humanist subject, constituted by knowledge, to the effects of that “nonknowledge” that in his view played an equally if not more important part in human experience and that seemed to him to be absent from philosophical accounts of man (with the exception of Nietzsche’s). The “crisis” that this operation engendered takes many forms: in Barthes, it is recognizable in “The Death of the Author”; in Foucault, it can be seen in the shift from the “author” to the less humanist “author-function” as well as in “the disappearance of man” that Foucault traces in The Order of Things; in Derrida, it informs the subject of différance and originary delay; in Kristeva, it recurs in the subject of abjection; Lacan’s split subject owes something to Bataille’s relentless assault on the integrity of the unified subject. The work of Derrida, perhaps as much as anyone’s, shows the pervasive, if at times subtextual, influence of Bataille on contemporary French philosophy. For if “From a Restricted to a General Economy” is rightly credited with having brought to the attention of French and anglophone readers the significance of Bataille’s model of economic thought in a philosophical context, and is known as Derrida’s major statement on Bataille, Derrida has also noted that in fact many of his own texts, including “The Double Session,” “Plato’s Pharmacy,” “White Mythology,” and “several others” are “situated explicitly in relation to Bataille, and also propose a reading of Bataille.”82

The fact that Bataille did not emerge from and was never a member of the French academic establishment has surely been of significance to several of his admirers. He was and remains something of an outsider in relation to mainstream philosophy and as such he has come to serve as an example of resistance to institutionalized forms of thinking. Especially for those who may not have come to philosophy via the classical route, or who have aspired to practice a philosophy at odds with accepted norms (e.g. Derrida, whose philosophy was not easily accommodated in the French academy; Deleuze, who allied philosophy to literature and a radical form of psychoanalysis), Bataille’s work serves as a resource. More broadly, his inscription of everything and everyone that social forces try to expel (criminals, madmen, shit, sperm, tears, blood, etc.) has proved especially meaningful to those whom society has marginalized. Foucault’s essay “A Preface to Transgression” is an homage to Bataille and an enlistment of this serviceable concept; in his own work on criminality and on madness, and to the extent that his project is concerned fundamentally with mechanisms of social

constraint, he develops Bataille's thinking on the oppressive forces of social homogenization.

In France, Bataille's work as an editor of journals and reviews has inspired a number of important publications. *Critique*, the journal he founded in 1946, is still published and continues to be influential in framing public debate. *Tel Quel* (eighty-four issues between 1960 and 1982), under the direction of Philippe Sollers, has been influenced by Bataille and at the same time has done much to promote interest in his writings. The 1972 colloquium on Bataille and Artaud at Cerisy-la-Salle was organized by the members of the *Tel Quel* group and served to bring Bataille to the forefront of the French intellectual scene. *Tel Quel* published Derrida's "From a Restricted to a General Economy" as well as Kristeva's essay on inner experience. *TXT*, an important journal of poetry and poetics, edited by Christian Prigent, takes its cue from Bataille's notion of the "hatred" of poetry. Jean-Christophe Bailly's review *Aléa* is indebted to Bataille; allied with this review, we should mention that the most sustained philosophical reflection on Bataille is Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* (1982), which seeks to understand Bataille's (and our) experience of the ruptures and the continuities of community that mark the modern era. *Lignes*, a journal of analysis and opinion covering a wide variety of topics, founded in 1987 by Surya, the same year he published his authoritative biography of Bataille, was "born under the auspices" of Bataille.

It was partly because of references to Bataille in the essays of such important philosophers as Barthes, Kristeva, Foucault, and Derrida, that Bataille became a person of interest in the US, where academics were curious to study the intellectual genealogy of poststructuralist and deconstructive practices. Hence Bataille's writings began to be translated only after the writings of those who referenced him had appeared in English. Immensely important in this respect has been the translation of Bataille's essays from the late 1920s and 1930s by Allan Stoekl, entitled *Visions of Excess* and published in the University of Minnesota's *Theory of History and Literature* series in 1985. This series, which prior to publishing Stoekl's translation had published works by Tzvetan Todorov, Hans Robert Jauss, Paul de Man and Jean-François Lyotard, did more than any other to popularize theory in the American academy in the 1980s. The happy inclusion of Bataille boosted his prominence and led to further translations, notably an expanded English version of Denis Hollier's masterful reconstruction of the lectures of the College of Sociology in the same series. Over the next two decades almost all of Bataille's theoretical writings would be rendered into English. A great deal of his work has been brought out by trade publishers (City Lights Press, Zone Books, Paragon, Amok), suggesting that Bataille has a broad following among non-university-affiliated readers. Indeed, Bataille's writings remain difficult to assimilate in the university, where his profoundly interdisciplinary profile
and explosively a-systematic style upset existing paradigms of knowledge. His interest in ethnology has led to studies of his work in the field of anthropology; his fascination with the sacred has generated interest in religious studies; the art world has appreciated his questioning of form; and in the field of literary studies, where his fiction is highly regarded, key notions such as transgression, excess, and the heterogeneous continue to have currency. In the field of philosophy, he has been, perhaps predictably, less influential. For principled reasons he did not produce a cohesive philosophy and his relentless insistence on meaninglessness and nonknowledge are not easily recuperable. The centrality of the eroticized body in his works has led to interest in his sexual politics (Kristeva had already associated Bataille with writing and *jouissance*). While some feminists take issue with his “obsession with virility,” other writers see in Bataille a less orthodox mapping of sexuality (a “straight man with a twist” in the words of Carolyn Dean); for others still his liberatory vision of sexuality proves helpful to queer theory. Most recently, his economic writings, particularly *The Accursed Share*, have been the focus of renewed investigations, suggesting the continued pertinence of his theory of expenditure.

**MAJOR WORKS**


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83. See, for example, Michèle Richman, *Reading Georges Bataille: Beyond the Gift* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).


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In order to put in proper perspective the significance of Marxism in French intellectual life during the period following the Second World War and continuing until, perhaps, as late as the watershed year of 1968, it is impossible to resist the temptation to cite one of Jean-Paul Sartre's most frequently cited assertions. It occurs in *Search for a Method (Questions de méthode)*, an essay that he originally wrote for a Polish journal that, during the time of the so-called “Thaw” under Soviet Communist Party First Secretary Khrushchev, dedicated a special issue to the intellectual climate in France in that year, 1957. Near the beginning of this essay, which was later to serve as an introduction to the first volume of his *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Sartre offers a disquisition on great philosophers (philosophies) that dominate their historical periods. He names three such eras: those of Descartes, of Kant and Hegel, and, at present, of Marx. Within their respective time frames, he says, there is no going beyond the dominant philosophy: one either works, in one way or another, within its framework, or one tries to revert to an earlier one.¹

Much of the remainder of *Search for a Method* constitutes an attempt to argue for the integration of existentialism,² with its special concern for the individual human being, within the Marxist framework – an attempt made all the more urgent, Sartre contends, by the blockage or rigidification that has occurred within the official Marxism, then often self-servingly referred to as “orthodox Marxism,” of the international Communist Party. Sartre is just as insistent on identifying and

2. Existentialism, and Sartre, are discussed in several essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
criticizing this blockage as he is on asserting Marxism’s intellectual dominance. This is an especially important point to stress at a time, half a century later, when some may still (or again) be inclined to make the assumption that both virulent communists and virulent anticommunists of that period wanted everyone to make, obviously for opposite reasons; namely, that Marxism is equivalent to the “official” communist ideology. But that was not and certainly is not the case, as the evolution of Sartre’s own thought and ultimately the intellectual evolutions of most of the other major figures in the history of French Marxism in its heyday well demonstrate. This essay will focus on a few of those figures, Sartre included, with a view to illustrating the inevitable tension between the intellectual and the political, theory and practice, that prevailed even (or particularly) within a worldview that prided itself on overcoming that very tension – or, as Marx had expressed it in one of his famous _Theses on Feuerbach_ (the one that is to be found, significantly enough, on his tombstone), on changing the world rather than, in traditional philosophical fashion, merely understanding it in various ways.

The French Communist Party already existed, to be sure, in the “period between the two wars,” as it came to be called, and some serious philosophers were members of it. Among these were Henri Lefebvre, who was to outlive most members of his generation; Roger Garaudy, who joined the Party in 1933 as a young man who was a believer in both Marxism and Christianity; and Paul Nizan, who had been Sartre’s classmate at the École Normale Supérieure during the 1920s. The Party was politically active, and it played a role in the formation of the short-lived (1936–38) “Popular Front,” a Left-oriented coalition government. However, by virtue of its disciplined and unwavering commitment to the Soviet leadership, the Party suffered a severe setback, in terms of popularity and membership, when Stalin signed his infamous nonaggression pact with Hitler – a pact that was in effect, it should be noted, for twenty-two months until Hitler invaded Russia in mid-1941. It was during that time that Hitler’s armies invaded Poland, thus triggering the state of war with France and Britain, and that France then surrendered to Hitler after a period of generally ineffective French military resistance, known as the “phony war.” That war was real enough, though, for those who were its casualties; among them was the erstwhile communist Nizan, who had renounced his Party membership in the wake of the nonaggression pact and died in combat shortly before the French surrender. Then, beginning exactly one year after the armistice that ushered in the German Occupation of France, Hitler’s attack on Russia enabled a reinvigorated French Communist Party to begin to play a major role in the clandestine Resistance. (At the same time, during the same war period, some Party members, including Garaudy, were imprisoned by the collaborationist Vichy government simply because they were communists and hence suspect.) It was in large measure because of this role that the Party emerged from the war with renewed popularity, even winning a plurality of votes.
in the French elections of November 1946, and continuing for some time thereafter, despite fierce opposition from other parties, to enjoy the regular support of up to 25 per cent of the electorate. The atmosphere was one of great unrest, with the developing Cold War placing France in a precarious position between the two “blocs,” Soviet and American, even while its successive governments sided with the latter in the international arena; with African and Asian colonies seeking independence; and with a large industrial working class that was still generally poorly paid and at times seemed ripe for revolt. While the socialists as well as some Trotskyite parties claimed to support the interests of that class more authentically than the Communists, the latter remained relatively effective in arrogating to themselves the label “Party of the Working Class.” In short, the French Communist Party, despite its strict discipline and slavish adherence to the “Moscow line” (whatever that might be at any given moment), was very much a force to be reckoned with.

So much for the historical and political background concerning the Communist Party; now, what about Marxism? It is undoubtedly true that Marxist philosophy enjoyed some added prestige that was borrowed from the prestige of the Party, which claimed Marxism as its official ideology (just as, years later, Marxist philosophy lost this borrowed prestige when the Soviet bloc collapsed). However, other, more strictly intellectual, factors also entered into the postwar rise of Marxist thinking in France’s collective psyche. For one thing, there was a widespread revolt, within philosophy and related disciplines, against the abstract, frequently idealist, types of philosophizing that had predominated in the Academy earlier in the century. (The title of one of the earliest books by Jean Wahl, then a young professor at the Sorbonne and a great influence in helping to shape the growing awareness of existentialism as a philosophical movement even during the 1930s, is a significant indicator of this: Vers le Concret [Toward the concrete].) Specific examples of this spirit of revolt were the personalist movement of the religious Left (epitomized in the work of Emmanuel Mounier and the journal Esprit) and the immediate postwar fad of existentialism itself, which in France was most closely identified with Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre. The communists, of course, frowned on both of these currents, since both rejected dialectical materialism as the key to explaining the world. Yet both of them took the Marxist message very seriously as, like the Marxists, they advocated engagement with the real world and its problems and strongly opposed oppressive social relationships, relationships of dominance and subordination.

Among other influences deserving special mention is that of Alexandre Kojève,³ who introduced Hegel’s thought to French intellectuals in courses given

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³. For a discussion of Kojève and French Hegelianism, see the essay by John Russon in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.
during the 1930s, and whose reading of Hegel, particularly of the famous dialectic of “lordship and bondage” or “master and servant” in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, was decidedly proto-Marxist – that is, it presented Hegel’s thought as anticipatory of Marx’s. Sartre, in the early pages of his *Cahiers pour une morale*, published only posthumously but written beginning in 1947, makes frequent reference to works by Kojève and by his student, Jean Hyppolite. A further, important stimulus to the burgeoning postwar interest in Marxism was the ever-increasing awareness of Marx’s remarkable *1844 Manuscripts*, excerpts of which had first been brought out in translation by Lefebvre in the 1930s, but which were only “discovered” by wider audiences, in France and in other Western countries as well, after the war. The *Manuscripts* revealed a younger, more “humanistic” Marx than the one previously known, the author of *Capital*. Finally, perhaps most importantly of all, it began to be recognized ever more widely that Marxism offered explanatory categories and concepts that were simply missing from the repertoires of liberal political theories – categories and concepts that fitted more adequately, for example, with the lived experiences of the colonial subjects from Indochina, North and sub-Saharan Africa, and the French West Indies, whose presence within the student bodies of the French universities was becoming increasingly significant. In short, it was no longer Papa’s France (“la France de Papa”), and the cosmopolitan worldview that was a central part of Marxism’s message provided a useful intellectual tool for coming to grips with the new realities.

In late 1945, there appeared the first issue of a journal in which many of the topics that were to dominate the thinking of at least the noncommunist French Marxists and quasi-Marxists during the ensuing years were to play themselves out: *Les Temps modernes*. Named after a film in which Charlie Chaplin, the famous comic actor with strong Marxist sympathies, played the lead, this journal was originally edited by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, and a number of other well-known theorists were listed as members of the original editorial board, including Beauvoir, Camus, and even Sartre’s erstwhile classmate, Raymond Aron, who was soon to establish himself as perhaps the leading liberal democratic theorist in France. Some, such as Aron and Camus, soon

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4. Mention of Indochina conjures up the now somewhat forgotten name of Trân Đức Thao (1917–93), a Vietnamese native who was a student in France from the late 1930s into the 1940s, working with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, receiving high recognition for his treatises on first Hegel and then Husserl, and spending some years composing his outstanding Marxist critique of the latter, *Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique*, which was published in 1951 and was widely discussed at the time. In that same year, 1951, he returned to Vietnam and joined in the resistance to the French, eventually becoming the rector of the national university, but later falling out of favor with the regime; he spent most of the remainder of his career in comparative obscurity as a translator of philosophy books from French into Vietnamese. He died in France, where he had gone to seek medical aid.
dropped out of the editorial picture; others, notably Beauvoir, remained. The “Presentation” of the journal in the inaugural issue, signed by Sartre,5 declared the editors’ intention to maintain an attitude of political engagement while not adhering to any particular political party. Many of Sartre’s most important political essays, as his involvement with the noncommunist but still strongly Marxist-influenced Left grew, were first published on the pages of this revue.

One of the earliest and most significant of these was entitled “Matérialisme et révolution,” which appeared in two successive summer issues (vols 9 and 10) in 1946. Sartre’s core point in this essay is that while revolutionary change is desirable and the “orthodox” Marxists’ political objectives are basically sound, and while materialism as a doctrine has the psychologically valuable property of making members of the proletariat who accept it see those in power as being no different from, no better than, they themselves, nevertheless materialism is a myth; a philosophy of revolution that upholds human freedom against doctrinaire materialism is needed to replace the communists’ “diamat.” Sartre there alludes to conversations that he has had with members of the Party, including Garaudy and the even more staunchly materialist thinker Pierre Naville,6 and refers to the work of Lefebvre as well. While he treats the latter with respect, he points to a “confusion” between Lefebvre’s assertion, commenting on a text from the early Marx, that Marx sought to overcome the antinomy between idealism and materialism, and Garaudy’s insistence (in an article printed in a journal of the Party) that Sartre, by rejecting materialism, could not avoid idealism despite his expressed wish to do so. In fact, Sartre displays a certain contempt for Garaudy’s intellectual capacities, reporting, near the end of the essay, on a remark made by one of Garaudy’s comrades to the effect that he is just a scientist and bourgeois Protestant, who, for reasons of personal edification, has substituted historical materialism for the hand of God.7 Sartre agrees with this comment, but points out that the Party still makes use of and endorses his work. Above all, he is appalled by Garaudy’s rigid adherence to Party discipline whatever the cost, as in his continuing insistence on the rightness (at least within the context of that time) and historical inevitability of Stalin’s pact with Hitler.

Such anecdotes are clear evidence that on a personal level, despite the constraints of Party discipline, dialogue was taking place between communists and noncommunists. But public appearances were of quite a different order, as

6. Pierre Naville (1904–93) was a French sociologist best known for his psycho-sociology of work and studies of automation and industrial society. After an early association with surrealism, he passed through communist and Trotskyist parties before aligning himself with various socialist parties from the 1940s through the end of his life.
evidenced by a book by Lefebvre, *L’Existentialisme*, that was published in 1946, the same year as Sartre’s article. In this book Lefebvre, who in fact was the most original and profound of the Communist Party philosophers, charges Sartre with irrationalism, lack of rigor, and even intellectual dishonesty, asserting that for this reason “Sartre does not merit the title of philosopher.”8 Lefebvre’s precise argument here is a plausible enough one, based on his view – one that is central to much of his thought – that knowledge is possible only through the use of concepts, and hence that Sartre’s claim that consciousness could intuit objects directly was unsustainable and self-refuting. But the level of vitriolic polemic, which is maintained more or less throughout this short book, is a reflection of the then-prevalent atmosphere, suffused with the Cold War spirit of what Stalin (and many others) called “the two camps,” one that contrasts sharply with the calm, balanced, although still highly critical, tone of Lefebvre’s later work, particularly after his dismissal from the Communist Party.

One of the most extraordinary works of this immediate postwar period – in many respects the most extraordinary – was *Humanism and Terror* (subtitled “Essai sur le problème communiste”), written by Sartre’s then close friend and associate Merleau-Ponty, and published in 1947.9 Although less, let us say, histrionic than Sartre and less inclined to reveal personal conversations in print, Merleau-Ponty appears to have had closer personal ties with communist intellectuals at the time and indeed, while certainly not accepting the letter of Marxist doctrine (he who throughout his writings emphasized ambiguity and eschewed absolutist systems), to have begun by feeling greater sympathy than Sartre for the communist point of view. This is well illustrated by *Humanism and Terror*, which is an attempt to reach an understanding, one different from and, Merleau-Ponty hoped, more accurate than, the picture painted by Arthur Koestler, in his novel *Darkness at Noon*, of the infamous Moscow Purge Trials of 1937–38, through which Stalin had succeeded in liquidating Nikolai Bukharin and other former top Soviet officials. Merleau-Ponty shows – successfully, I think – how Bukharin could honestly have made the confession in which he admitted to having been objectively guilty of treason while not having subjectively intended to commit it. The book is an exercise in philosophical explanation and really not an apology for the actions taken by Stalin’s agents, but in the hysterical atmosphere of the time it was regarded as being the latter by some perfervid anti-communists. Among them was Camus, who had himself been a Party member for a short time when a very young man in Algeria, and who decided to have

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9. For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
no further contact with Merleau-Ponty as a result of this book. This was not to be the last rupture between former colleagues over “the communist question.”

The tensions of those early Cold War times in Paris were probably best captured by Beauvoir in her novel *The Mandarins*, a work of considerable philosophical as well as historical and literary interest.\(^\text{10}\) Although Beauvoir always vehemently denied that it was a *roman à clef*, many of its characters bear striking resemblances to actual people in the real world that is reflected in it: Camus, Koestler (who was living in Paris at that time), Sartre, Communist Party members, and even Beauvoir herself as well as her erstwhile American lover, the novelist Nelson Algren, to whom the book was dedicated. Written over a three-year period (1951–54) during which many events of utmost importance for the future of French Marxism were taking place, this book focuses most centrally on a drama that closely resembles certain events that occurred immediately prior to its inception: to wit, the revelation of the existence of an extensive network of slave labor camps in the Soviet Union and the ensuing debate within the editorial board of a putatively fictitious noncommunist revue that has nevertheless striven to make common cause with the communists against Western imperialism and capitalism (called, with deliberate irony, *L’Espoir* in the novel) over whether to publish these revelations and thus risk a complete break as well as damage to the common political cause. An article entitled “Les Jours de notre vie,” jointly signed by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty but in fact written by Merleau-Ponty alone (and later reprinted in his essay collection, *Signes*, under the title “L’URSS et les camps”), which appeared in the January 1950 issue (vol. 51) of *Les Temps modernes*, was the actual outcome of the historical counterpart to Beauvoir’s tale. Among the novel’s other sub-themes with historical counterparts is the effort by some of the characters to develop a viable noncommunist Left political party. Merleau-Ponty and especially Sartre were in fact involved in just such an effort in 1948 and most of 1949; called the RDR (Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire), it collapsed when it was learned that its most prominent leader, David Rousset, had been receiving *sub rosa* financial assistance from the American labor unions, the AFL and the CIO, as well as from the American former Marxist philosopher turned vehement anticommunist, Sidney Hook.

Nineteen fifty was also the year in which military forces from North Korea invaded the South, initiating a state of war that is still technically in effect. Opinions in France varied as to whether it was a deliberate act of unprovoked aggression, or whether certain American provocations (in particular, a visit to the border by the American Secretary of State, Dulles) had been the real

trigger. Merleau-Ponty was inclined to the first view, Sartre to the second, and this disagreement accelerated a movement of reversal of positions between them, at once political and philosophical, which culminated in the rupture of their friendship and eventually resulted in two important works with opposite tendencies: Merleau-Ponty’s *The Adventures of the Dialectic* (1955) and Sartre’s previously mentioned *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960, with the preliminary essay, “Questions de méthode,” from 1957). *The Adventures of the Dialectic* is actually a collection of essays, in which Merleau-Ponty’s theoretical disillusionment with Marxism and with the failure of Marx’s aspiration to combine theory and practice, a point of view that still does not amount to a complete disillusionment with dialectical thinking as such, is interwoven into studies of Lukács, Trotsky, Max Weber, and, in the last and longest chapter, Sartre himself. In that chapter, entitled “Sartre and Ultra-Bolshevism,” Merleau-Ponty alleges that Sartre’s pattern of thinking is absolutist, incapable of taking adequate account of realities that are intermediate between individual human consciousnesses and things (“*médiations*”: history, symbolism, etc.), and hence compatible with an atomistic and opportunistic conception of political action according to which spontaneous decisions of the Party express *eo ipso* the historically correct course. While Sartre himself never replied directly to this attack, Beauvoir did, in a long and excruciatingly well-documented polemical essay entitled “Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartrism,” which in effect purports to show that Merleau-Ponty (who until the time of the Korean War, she says in her opening sentence, had confused Marx with Kant) simply has Sartre wrong. But one way of viewing Sartre’s entire *Critique of Dialectical Reason* itself is as a very lengthy, detailed response to Merleau-Ponty’s charges; about the *Critique*, more anon.

Meanwhile, prior even to the publication of *The Adventures of the Dialectic* and while the Korean War was ongoing, some developments on the home front were impelling Sartre to his period of closest collaboration with the communists. One was “the Henri Martin Affair,” which began with the arrest of a young French sailor, a Communist Party member, who had fulfilled all his military obligations but had come to realize the injustice of the French war to maintain its control over Indochina as a colony, and therefore wrote and published pamphlets in protest against that war. Arrested and sentenced to five years in prison in 1950, he became the focal point of a campaign by the Communist Party in 1951, a campaign that Sartre agreed to join in early 1952. In connection with this Sartre eventually made a visit to the French president, who conceded that the prison sentence had been too harsh, and collected testimonials on Martin’s behalf to which he added his own hundred-page commentary. Actual publication of *L’Affaire Henri Martin*, however, was for some reason delayed until just after Martin himself had been freed in mid-1953. (Martin, still vigorous and active as a septuagenarian Party member and occasional honored
visitor to Vietnam, was a guest speaker at the annual meeting of the Groupe d’Études Sartriennes in Paris in summer 2006. All the dramatic changes that have occurred since the heyday of French communism should not cause us to forget the many continuities.

Of even greater importance than the Henri Martin Affair, however, was the Jacques Duclos Affair, which occurred during the momentous year of 1952. The Communist Party had organized a rally to protest the arrival in Paris of the new (American) commander of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE), General Ridgeway, and had called for a general strike as well. A half hour after the demonstration, French police arrested Duclos, a Party official, on trumped-up charges (e.g. that the pigeons that they found in his car, which were already dead and had been bought to take home for dinner, were really carrier pigeons trained to fly secret messages to Moscow!); and the strike was not supported by the mass of workers. Sartre, on vacation in Italy at the time, was furious when he heard the news and learned of the ensuing triumphalist attitude of the French Right. Convinced that “an anti-Communist is a dog,” he began composing what became a three-part article, in effect a short book, entitled “The Communists and Peace.” Among other points, Sartre claims here, ostensibly on the basis of his own principles and not theirs, that the communists, whatever their failings, are at present the authentic representatives of the working class; that the workers only failed to support the strike out of extreme discouragement; and of course that the communists are in favor of peace, not war. The third part of the essay, which deals in large measure with the history of class conflict in nineteenth-century France and the peculiar evolution of French industry and labor organizations and is both historically and philosophically richer than the first two, was published only in early 1954. But the first two parts appeared in the July (vol. 81) and October–November (combined vols 84–5) 1952 issues of Les Temps modernes, between which, in the August issue, there appeared a polemic that was no doubt much more widely discussed, in France and eventually worldwide, than anything written in “The Communists and Peace”: the public break between Sartre and Camus.

The occasion was the appearance, during the previous year, of Camus's L'Homme révolté (The Rebel in its English title). Such a major essay by such

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a renowned author clearly called for a review in *Les Temps modernes*, but for some time no one on the staff was willing to volunteer to write it, since there was general agreement that a negatively critical response to it would be the only appropriate one, and everyone realized that this would cause a furor. Camus’s book is in fact, in my opinion, highly defective in a number of respects, certainly including the philosophical dimension. Its fundamental message, although this sometimes becomes obscured by the analyses of various individual writers and movements with which it is filled, is that, while individual rebellion can sometimes be of great cultural value, political revolution is bound ultimately to be counter-productive. Needless to say, this position – the product not only of Camus’s strong disaffection with the communists but also no doubt of the growing torment in his soul over the future of Algeria, where he was born and his mother still lived, the ethnic majority of which was displaying increasing unrest that would soon lead to a bloody struggle for independence from France – found no resonance with the belief in *engagement* shared by all the members of the *Temps Modernes* “team.” Eventually Francis Jeanson, who as a very young man still personally unacquainted with Sartre had authored an extremely perceptive account of the ethical implications, left untouched by Sartre himself, of the latter’s early work (and who was later to become an active clandestine supporter of the Algerian revolution), offered to write the review. Published in the May issue with the title “Albert Camus, ou l’âme révoltée” (a pun, meaning “the soul in revolt”), it was scathing. Sartre offered Camus the opportunity to reply; what he wrote, in a very offended and distant tone (he addressed his remarks, impersonally, to “the director of *Temps Modernes*,” i.e., Sartre, rather than to Jeanson himself, whom Camus treated as simply Sartre’s “stooge”), together with Sartre’s response (which opened with the assertion that their friendship had always been a difficult one, but that he would miss it) and a further essay by Jeanson, was the focal point of the August issue in question. The highly personal and mediatic aspects of this polemic aside, it served well to clarify the divide on the French Left (of which Camus continued to consider himself a part), in which, as usual, perceptions of the Communist Party and views on Marxist philosophy – especially concerning the nature of history and the possibility of fundamental social change – both had a part.

In December 1952 there was a much-publicized peace conference in Vienna, in the preparation of which the international Communist Party played a major role. Sartre was very supportive of it and participated in it. He was to continue to

13. For some detailed reasons for my saying this, see my “After a Lot More History Has Taken Place,” in *Sartre and Camus: A Historic Confrontation*, David A. Sprintzen and Adrian van den Hoven (eds) (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2004). In the same volume other essays that take Camus’s “side” can be found.
be on relatively friendly terms with some Soviet writers, such as Ilya Ehrenburg, throughout the rest of the 1950s and well into the 1960s, and his first trip to the Soviet Union in mid-1954, from which he returned offering a quite excessively positive report on its development, was followed by several more in the ensuing years. Stalin had died and Khrushchev had been named his successor in 1953; that was also the year in which Merleau-Ponty formally severed his connections with Les Temps modernes and finally broke with Sartre as well, although that break was not quite as decisive as their respective breaks with Camus, and Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir apparently continued on relatively friendly personal terms even after she published her fierce defense of Sartre against his attack on Sartre’s “ultra-Bolshevism” in The Adventures of the Dialectic.

Somewhat coincidentally, it was also in mid-1953 that Garaudy defended his Sorbonne dissertation, which was published that same year under the title Théorie matérialiste de la connaissance. When I read it some years ago, I was struck by its banality and especially by its dogged insistence on defending Lenin’s so-called “reflection theory of cognition”: the idea that all knowledge is in some way or other a reflection, although of course sometimes a very distorted one, of objectively existing empirical reality, as expressed in Lenin’s most purely philosophical (and at the same time also, to my mind, philosophically least defensible) work, Materialism and Empirio-Criticism. It is a dreadfully unsophisticated conception of epistemology, and its detailed elaboration by Garaudy seemed to me to be an excellent vindication of Sartre’s criticism of so-called “orthodox Marxist” materialism in “Materialism and Revolution” and elsewhere. Somewhat to my surprise, but by way of well illustrating the hypocrisy and putrefaction of its “official” ideology that was, in retrospect, inexorably undermining the Communist Party during those years, one finds the same judgment pronounced by Garaudy himself in his autobiography of 1989. I shall cite just a few sentences, in my own translation, from the part of this text in which he discusses that book and the occasion of the formal thesis defense, for which a police guard had been required because of his reputation as a leading Party official:

Quite frankly, I think that Théorie matérialiste de la connaissance is the worst of my books, the only one I forbade to be republished when it went out of print, one year after its appearance, at the Presses Universitaires de France.

It is a conscientious synthesis of what was being written at that time about the philosophy of science in the Soviet Union and among intellectuals of various Communist Parties, from England to Brazil.

Despite some personal research, especially concerning scientific development, its general orientation is invalidated by the theory according to which knowledge is a reflection of the real. Greek,
Thomist, and 18th Century inheritance, and one-sided utilization of Lenin’s book *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. I have no excuse, other than a false conception of “Party spirit” making it a duty to share the mistakes of others.\(^1\)

He goes on to recount that some years later he encountered the kindly thesis advisor who had protected him at his defense, Gaston Bachelard, who had by then become quite famous for his work having virtually nothing to do with Marxism, and that in the course of this meeting Bachelard told him that he had completely disagreed with Garaudy’s thesis, but that he had wanted to encourage him rather than to influence him.

Garaudy was somehow to “hang on” as a Communist Party official for many years thereafter: his formal expulsion from the Party finally took place at a meeting in February 1970, as a virtually inevitable sequel to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in late 1968 and the worldwide disgust that it provoked and that he shared and publicly expressed. I shall return to that event at the end of this essay. Garaudy’s own quite curious later evolution eventuated in his conversion to Islam, which he found to be quite compatible with, and indeed supportive of, his strong commitment to peace movements. But in the intervening years of the late 1950s and the 1960s he managed, in part through the personal support and friendship of the French Communist Party leader, Maurice Thorez, not only to maintain his party membership but also to become the leading French figure in promoting a renewed dialogue between Marxists and Christians, as epitomized in his very popular book, *From Anathema to Dialogue*. A longtime admirer both of the philosophical work of the Jesuit anthropologist, Teilhard de Chardin, and of the “worker-priest” movement in the French Catholic Church, he received further encouragement from the ascendancy of John XXIII to the papacy and the short-lived but influential spirit of *aggiornamento* that the latter created during his reign. In pursuit of this dialogue, Garaudy even deigned, *mirabile dictu*, to make a brief speaking tour of the United States in 1966. There were protests, needless to say, but he received considerable publicity and survived. One has to wonder, in retrospect, whether this tour was more symptomatic of French Marxism’s continued flourishing or of its decline.\(^2\)

Lefebvre, on the other hand, had long since been ousted from the Party: in 1958, in reaction to the publication of his book, highly critical of contem-

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\(^{2}\) At the end of the century, Garaudy again received considerable publicity in response to his 1995 book *Les Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (*The Founding Myths of Modern Israel*), in which he denied that the Holocaust had occurred. On February 27, 1998, a French court found Garaudy guilty of “racial defamation” and of violating a law that prohibits the disputing of crimes against humanity, imposing a fine of 240,000 francs (roughly $40,000).
porary thinking among communists, entitled Problèmes actuels du marxisme. (He, however, continued years later to be denied a visa to visit the United States because of his past Communist Party membership.) He had always, at least in the postwar years, been more of an outsider to the Party leadership than had Garaudy: despite his previously mentioned Party-line polemic against existentialism (for which he later expressed regret), he had already published some highly original, creative works on the borderline between philosophy and sociology, perhaps the most interesting of which is Critique de la vie quotidienne (1947). This was republished in the same year as that of his expulsion, 1958, and in the following year he produced a fascinating text combining autobiography with literary criticism, philosophy, sociology, and even some poetry entitled La Somme et le reste. Much more was to follow; his Introduction à la modernité (Introduction to Modernity) is especially well known in the domain of sociological theory, at once drawing on Marx’s thought and yet dealing with many new problems in the daily life of a society that had obviously become quite different from that of Marx’s time, the early Industrial Revolution, and that called for a new critical theory less exclusively focused on the structure of the capitalist economic system and the class struggle that it fostered. It should be little surprise, then, that Lefebvre’s name loomed large during the French student uprising of May 1968, which began with sociology students at the University of Nanterre, on the outskirts of Paris, where Lefebvre was by then a professor. It was the decision of the Party not to support the students and the factory workers who had joined in solidarity with them that, together with the crushing of the so-called “Prague Spring” by Soviet forces a few months later, tolled the death knell of that Party’s serious influence in France, as Garaudy at the time saw quite clearly that it would. But by that same time, the ever-widening gap between communism and Marxist theory, and the ever-growing dispersion of the latter into various novel shapes and forms, had already become quite apparent, as Lefebvre’s intellectual liberation and development well illustrate.

Arguably the most prominent exemplification of both this gap and this dispersion, however, was Sartre himself during these same years of the late 1950s and the 1960s. His Search for a Method, cited at the beginning of this essay as a product of the period of the so-called “Thaw” that began with Khrushchev’s detailed denunciation, given to a closed Party gathering but soon made public around the world, of Stalin’s crimes, was actually published in its first, Polish version several months after the Soviet intervention in Hungary to crush workers’ demonstrations there. Since Poland, for various complex reasons, had (narrowly) escaped the same fate, the special issue on French intellectual life of the journal Twórczość (which also, incidentally, included an article by Lefebvre) was still permitted to be published in April 1957. But by this time Sartre had vehemently denounced the Soviet action in Hungary and made it clear that, as
a result, he was giving up all efforts to make common cause with the French Communist Party, or at least with those who belonged to its still-Stalinist core. This position was first enunciated in an interview that he gave to the magazine, *L’Express*, immediately after the events in question, and soon thereafter in a special triple issue of *Les Temps modernes* on the Hungarian revolt to which Sartre contributed a long essay, “Le Fantôme de Staline” (*The Spectre of Stalin*). At the same time, it must be remembered that Sartre still continued to maintain the judgment expressed in *Search for a Method*, both in its Polish version and in the French version that first appeared a half-year later in *Les Temps modernes*, to the effect that Marxism remained the dominant worldview of the age, *despite* the sclerosis to which “official” Marxism had succumbed. This judgment continued to be an underlying assumption of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* itself, the 800-page first volume of which he wrote at a feverish pace between late 1957 and early 1960.

My summary here of this very interesting and, in my opinion, still not sufficiently well-known or well-respected work will be very brief and sketchy, intended primarily to single it out as a particularly salient illustration of what I have called the “dispersion of Marxist theory.” Early on in it, Sartre asserts that not only is this critique of his dependent, obviously enough, on the writings of Marx and of Hegel before him, but also that it would have been impossible for anyone to undertake it *prior to* the abuses that have clouded the very notion of dialectical rationality and have produced a new split between *praxis* and the knowledge that illuminates it… It can only happen as the intellectual expression of the *putting back in order* that characterizes, in this *one World* which is ours, the post-Stalinist era.¹⁶

This is as clear an acknowledgment as one can imagine of Sartre’s belief that a historical corner had been turned – a turning that, as he then hoped, would allow for the re-establishment of Marxism itself on more solid ground. Accordingly, the *Critique* proceeds, at a level far more abstract, at least in its early phases, than *Search for a Method*, to fill in the outlines of an idea borrowed from Lefebvre that Sartre had discussed in that earlier work, to wit, the idea of a “progressive-regressive method.” Whereas Marx had generally confined himself to the progressive reconstruction of history as it appeared in his time, saying

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little about the underlying, interactive structures of human society that would help explain the nature of history, Sartre proposes to devote his investigations in Volume I of the Critique to the latter (“ensembles pratiques,” in the words of its subtitle), that is, to the “regressive” part of the method.\textsuperscript{17}

The starting-point of the Critique is the human being conceived as “praxis” (a term famously associated with the early Marx), living under conditions of scarcity (a notion that, as Sartre was to observe years later, plays much more of a role in the writings of Marx’s bourgeois political economist predecessors than in those of Marx himself), and forced to labor on “inert matter” in order to survive. The domain in which this interaction takes place is designated as the “practico-inert,” and the interaction itself results in a sort of reversal whereby the freedom that for Sartre is most fundamental to praxis comes to be thwarted and human beings are reduced to an alienated condition that he calls “the series” or “seriality.” Under certain conditions, however, often those of threats from outsiders, it becomes possible for some human beings at a given place and time to band together, reasserting their freedom through some common activity, in a type of formation radically different from the series, which he denominates the “group.” His chosen example of a group at its height (“in fusion”) is the residents of the Quartier St. Antoine in Paris in 1789 who, fearing a rumored attack on them by royal troops, decide to capture the fortress-prison, the Bastille, that commanded the entrance to their neighborhood. Success in such an enterprise, should it be successful, is likely to entail follow-up organizational measures in order to preserve it (e.g. mounting watch against the possible return of the troops), leading eventually to the swearing of an oath of loyalty to the group and, from there, to further institutionalization and finally bureaucracy. Sartre insists that neither the sequence in which he depicts these developments nor their rather negative outcome as I have just summarized it is inevitable, and the final part of Volume I is designed as a transition to his planned study of history, conceived as a vast “totalization” (a favorite word of Sartre’s here) in progress. Thus, there is some concession to Marxian optimism concerning the historical future, but only some: the overall impression left by the Critique is indeed far removed from that with which, let us say, The Communist Manifesto concludes.

One of the reasons for the lesser attention paid to Sartre’s Critique as compared with that which had been accorded to his earlier chef d’œuvre, Being and Nothingness, was the fact that by the time of its appearance philosophical

\textsuperscript{17.} Volume II, only partially completed and published posthumously, consists in large measure of a detailed examination, in light of the theoretical conclusions of Volume I, of Russia under Stalin during a portion of the decade of the 1930s; it was to have been the “progressive” portion of the massive projected work, subtitled “the intelligibility of history,” with the Stalin study being only one of several from different eras and different types of sociopolitical organization.
voices of a later generation and of quite different orientations, some of which were soon to become very well known, had begun to be heard and attended to. Among these voices were those of Sartre’s friend and severe critic, Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose very influential *Anthropologie structurale* had been published in 1958, and of Michel Foucault, whose *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (*History of Madness*) was published in 1962, but who had already established a certain reputation for his fresh approaches to philosophical analysis. “Structuralism,” a blanket term that came to be applied to many thinkers of the next decade even though most, including Foucault himself, tended to express discomfort with it as a label for themselves, was becoming the new rage, whereas Sartre was still seen as being first and foremost an existentialist, albeit now a “Marxist” (or at least “neo-Marxist”) existentialist. Structuralism, whatever else it meant, entailed a scientistic approach to the understanding of human society, as Lévi-Strauss’s attack on Sartre’s *Critique* in the final chapter, “Histoire et dialectique,” of his book *La Pensée Sauvage* well illustrates.

To those outside France who followed these changes in intellectual currents in that country, by far the best-known figure associated at once with both structuralism and Marxism during the 1960s was, and still is, Louis Althusser. Younger than Lefebvre, Sartre, and Lévi-Strauss, and older than Foucault (whom he tutored in preparation for the latter’s *agrégation* examination and influenced considerably, despite their ultimate disagreement about the value of Marx’s thought), Althusser was a unique individual whose tortured life can be seen, in retrospect, as a living crossroads of the historical contradictions – a term dear to the Marxists themselves – of which the eventual outcome was the end of the Marxist era. Very shortly after completing his diploma, in 1947, at the École Normale Supérieure, he was invited to serve as an instructor there, a position that he still occupied when he famously killed his wife and longtime friend, Hélène Rytmann-Legotien, in an episode of his frequently recurring madness, in 1980: at the time, the École Normale Supérieure was also their place of residence. He joined the Communist Party (of which Hélène had already been a member prior to the war, but from which she had then been excluded because

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*18. For a discussion of Foucault, see the essay by Timothy O’Leary in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
19. His first book-length work, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (*Mental Illness and Psychology*), had appeared in 1954, and exhibited considerable influence from, and references to, Marx; in a revised version of the same work, also published in 1962, there is a very significant shift away from these influences and references.

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of certain alleged “errors”) in 1948 as he became increasingly disillusioned with the Catholicism in which he had formerly believed. Never a member of the Party’s inner circle and on several occasions the object of its strong disapproval because of his publicly expressed criticisms of, for instance, its official acceptance of “humanism,” he nevertheless retained his Party membership until he chose voluntarily to withdraw in 1980, after which he still remained, as he put it citing Lenin, a “communist without party.” He gave courses on structuralism as early as the late 1950s but himself resisted the label because he did not wish to be identified with Lévi-Strauss’s more formalistic approach. Although his best-known book, at least outside France, is his essay collection Pour Marx (For Marx), which was first published in the same year as the four-volume work prepared in collaboration with his student Étienne Balibar and others, Lire Le Capital, he acknowledges in his strange, posthumously published autobiography, L’Avenir dure longtemps (The future lasts a long time; published in English as The Future Lasts Forever), that his own first reading of Capital only occurred in connection with the 1964–65 seminar that produced Reading Capital!\textsuperscript{22}

Not an original systematic philosopher, Althusser is likely to be best remembered as a theorist for his insistence on several debatable points of Marx interpretation. He believed that there was a sharp division between the earlier, “humanist,” Marx and the later one, a division that he famously denominated the “epistemological break.” The later Marx, for him, was the creator of a new science of history, with special emphasis on the word “science.” While history was determined, to be sure, by economic factors, the famous “forces of production,” Althusser took this to be true only “in the last instance,” for history was in fact “overdetermined.” And, while “ideology,” which Marx, unlike the later so-called “orthodox Marxists” of the Communist Party, had regarded as a pejorative term, was according to Althusser to be strictly distinguished from “science,” nevertheless the role of ideology in connecting individuals with the culture of their time and place was for him indispensable and would remain so.

But probably Althusser’s greatest historical significance lay in his influence on and through his students at the École Normale Supérieure,\textsuperscript{23} and his reputation spread far beyond the walls of that elite institution. One of those students, Bernard-Henri Lévy, himself a strange case in many respects but certainly not in the same respects as Althusser, concludes a long, revealing, and far from unqualifiedly positive digression on him, in his own highly controversial book about Sartre, by asking whether we should forget Althusser and replies, “Non,

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\textsuperscript{23} The work of many of Althusser’s students are discussed in the essay by Patrice Maniglier in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
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bien sûr. Justement non.” He goes on to say that it was Althusser who was and still is his master (and indeed the master of a whole generation), who taught him to write and to think, who taught him both his Marxism and his anti-Marxism, and much, much more. It is clear that Althusser had become very much the rage among politically involved students during the period leading up to the confused and confusing events of May 1968. (Lévy was himself a member of the École Normale Supérieure class of ’68.) As Althusser recounts it, many of the students whom he knew best had broken with the Communist Party’s official youth wing, the Union des étudiants communistes (UCEC), to form a new organization called the Union des jeunesse communistes (marxistes-léninistes) (UJC m-l), a move that he had in fact criticized. Nevertheless, his name remained a rallying point for many of the very large number of students who, disdaining all hierarchies and hence not clearly under the leadership of any single faction or individual, marched under red banners and erected barricades in the sequence of events that began, as I have already mentioned, in Nanterre, and then moved on to Paris’s Left Bank, where both the old Sorbonne building and the École Normale Supérieure are located. The revolt seemed to gain momentum for some days, as workers at major factories joined in, and even Sartre gave his endorsement in a short talk (he was told in no uncertain terms, in a note, to be brief) at the student-occupied Sorbonne. But, as I have noted, the ever more enfeebled and rigidified Communist Party leadership refused to support the movement, and eventually President De Gaulle regained the upper hand, even though flare-ups and small street battles continued for a month thereafter, and occasionally even into the early months of the following year. As for Althusser himself, he was being taken by car to another one of his periodic psychiatric hospital commitments when he observed some marching groups that signaled the start of the May uprising.

The dramatic failure of that uprising, which had echoes of diverse kinds in diverse national contexts worldwide, can clearly be seen in retrospect as the end of an epoch, not just for the French Communist Party and other Western Communist Parties but also for Marxist theory itself. In France, since that is our focus here, its sequels included both the ultra-radical but in fact short-lived Gauche Prolétarienne (otherwise known as “the Maos”), to which Sartre lent his name and prestige, on the one hand, and the rise of anti-Marxism in various forms, on the other. Within a few years there developed an intellectual movement known as the Nouveaux Philosophes, the most prominent names among whom were Bernard-Henri Lévy and a former Gauche Prolétarienne

leader named André Glucksmann; fiercely anti-Marxist and critical of modern systematic thinkers such as Hegel, Marx, and Sartre (“master thinkers,” in the words of the title of a book by Glucksmann), it was also short-lived in its original form, although it can be regarded as part of the evolution to what later came to be known as “postmodernism.”

A similar anti-Marxist drift occurred among former Trotskyite thinkers such as Cornelius Castoriadis, one of the originators of the movement known as Socialisme ou Barbarie (socialism or barbarism), which was also the name given to its journal. Estimates of Castoriadis’s importance both as a social philosopher and as one of the significant inspirations of the 1968 student revolt vary greatly. For example, David Ames Curtis, one of the foremost proponents of Castoriadis’s ideas, reports that a leading figure in that revolt, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, claimed to have “largely ‘plagiarized’ Castoriadis’s and S. ou B.’s views.”

However, as Castoriadis himself has made clear, the Socialisme ou Barbarie group, having undergone several previous splits, suffered a decisive one in 1963 and had ceased to function by spring 1966. Castoriadis’s long, varied career, beginning with a brief period as a member of the Communist Youth in his native Greece, continuing with initial enthusiasm for, then disillusionment with, Trotsky’s ideas, followed by systematic repudiation of major tenets of Marxist thought (while at the same time he claimed still to adhere to the ideal of a “revolutionary project”), is a particularly noteworthy case study in the complex process of the dissolution of French Marxism.

One of the other well-known young figures from the May days of 1968, another student of Althusser’s (from the class of ’65), Benny Lévy, moved from being a “Mao” leader (the connection of this group with Mao Tse-Tung’s thought was quite superficial, involving above all the adoption of a provocative label, hence my avoidance of the adjective “Maoist”) to becoming Sartre’s secretary and confidant in his declining years as he went blind and then, after Sartre’s death, to being the leader of an orthodox Jewish commune first in Strasbourg and later in Israel. Sartre himself, in an interview conducted a few years before his death by three interlocutors in connection with the publication of a Library of Living Philosophers volume on him, declared that he no longer considered himself a Marxist – among other reasons because, after all, he no longer thought that Marxism was compatible with a philosophy of human freedom such as his own.

Of course, adherence to the Marxian tradition remains strong among some French philosophers – Balibar continues writing along Marxist lines, for


*26. Balibar’s work is discussed in the essays by Simon Duffy and Patrice Maniglier in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7; his more recent work is also discussed in the essay by Rosi Braidotti in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
example – and Althusser in his autobiography (begun in 1985, some five years prior to his death) thinks of such adherence as having remained strong through the 1970s, even while admitting that as the inspiration of a political movement (and indeed of several movements) it did indeed die, slowly but surely, after 1968. As the title of that book of his correctly affirms, the future does indeed last a long time. But I have confined myself to the *heyday* period of Marxism in France, and no objective observer of France today could possibly claim that that period is anything but a now-distant memory.
Frantz Fanon,¹ the famed Martinican psychiatrist and philosopher, succinctly summarized the black predicament of the self: “the black soul is a white construction.”² Prior to the emergence of the modern world, indigenous or first peoples of Africa, Southern Asia, and the South Pacific had no reason to think of themselves as black. That construction is indebted to the anthropology of race and racism born of colonization and global practices of enslavement in the modern world. Black existential thought focuses, *inter alia*, on three themes occasioned by that construction: (i) what it means to be human; (ii) the meaning of freedom and liberation; and (iii) the degradation of reason in the modern world. Black existential thought brings the question of existence to these three problematics.

The first, which we could call philosophical anthropology, is raised by the challenges to the humanity of black people posed by colonialism, slavery, and racism in the modern world. In the case of slavery, the humanity of black enslaved people was challenged by virtue of their status as property. The status of property placed rights in the hands of their owners. One never technically harmed a

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¹ Frantz Fanon (July 20, 1925–December 6, 1961; born in Martinique; died in Bethesda, Maryland, USA) studied medicine at the University of Lyon (1947–51). Among his influences were Césaire, Sartre, and Senghor. He served as Chef de service at the psychiatric hospital of Blida-Joinville, Algeria (1953–56) and on the editorial board of the Algerian liberation movement (Front de Libération Nationale, or FLN) newspaper *El Moudjahid*.

² Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), 11, my translation. There are two English translations available, both of which are published by Grove Press in New York; the first, by Charles Lamm Markman, was published in 1967, and the second, by Richard Philcox, was published in 2008. My references will be to the original French, and the translations will be my own.
slave but a slave owner’s property. Philosophical anthropology comes to the fore when one questions whether any human being could properly be property. The enslaved could, for example, defend their humanity as being the same as those who have enslaved them, but the problem faced is the folly of justifying oneself in such terms in the first place. By what right is the humanity of enslavers, or for that matter those who contend their racial superiority, presumed? Who, or for that matter what, is the proper standard, if any, of the human? This question leads not only to the interrogation of those who challenged the humanity of black people but also to the questioning of the black self: if the black is a white construction, then what is the black left with who attempts to transcend that construction? The interrogation of black existence in this sense leads also to an inquiry into the meaning of the human being and, thus, human existence.³

Concerns with freedom and liberation make sense for a subject bearing the weight of enslavement and colonization. Problems of reason emerge through the kinds of justification offered for the anthropology of black existence and the discussion of freedom. An anthropology that degrades black existence, as found in the rationalizations of racialized slavery and colonization since the sixteenth-century expansion of Christendom into the formation of Europe and the Americas, uses reason to justify itself.⁴ The black existential critique of reason thus poses the question of whether reason is, in a word, reasonable.

Philosophical anthropology, concerns of liberation and freedom, and struggles with reason also come to the fore in black existential discussions of experience. Racialized slavery and racism offer conceptions of black people devoid of an inner life, experience, and the faculty of choice. For existentialists, an appeal to experience is thus a rallying cry against appealing to overdetermined conceptions of black people that precede what they encounter and do. Similar to Sartre’s credo of existence preceding essence, experience is a lived reality that precedes the concepts by which it is understood. Experience cannot be understood, however, without interpretation, meaning, or thought. That being

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Black existentialism also is the critical reflection on the conditions of black experience.

Black experience as a theme of black existential significance first emerges in black music and literature. The spiritual, as is well known, is an early aesthetic expression of black suffering. That suffering took transformed artistic expression in the blues, which focus on life’s difficulties and bring existential reflection to the world of feeling or black suffering and joy. As an art form, the blues defies predictability and human closure. It welcomes improvisation, which makes it and its offsprings – jazz, rhythm and blues, and the subsequent forms of black popular music – exemplify the credo of existence preceding essence and its connection to the question of freedom. The worst condemnation one could make of black music is that it has become “predictable.” The blues also brings the absurdities of life into focus, which is a form of facing instead of avoiding it, the result of which is an adult sensibility. In a world where black men were called “boys” and black women “girls,” or worse, the blues stood as an important adversary of antiblack racism. It reminds them of being, in a word, “grown.” Yet in spite of such expressions of maturity, the blues were also testaments to ironic dimensions of life in the form of play. In existential thought from Nietzsche to Sartre, and even in some of the poststructural heirs such as Derrida, there is a critique of the spirit of seriousness, by which is meant the treatment of values as material features of reality. Their counsel is to transcend seriousness with play. The blues is a manifestation of this critique through its reminder, as ironic play, of not taking life too seriously. This performance of a suffering people is not, as some critics thought, the folly of a people incapable of understanding their situation. It was, in this reading, indication of their understanding the injustice and suffering they bore, the double standards imposed on them as mundane features of modern life.

The blues were first explicitly brought to literature in the writings of one of the most influential existential novelists of the twentieth century, Richard Wright (1908–60), and one of the most influential poets, Aimé Césaire (1913–2008). The former is the main source of the black Anglophonic literary genealogy, although Wright spent the last decade of his life in Paris, where his

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6. For a discussion of Nietzsche, see the essay by Daniel Conway in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*. Existentialism and Sartre are discussed in several essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*. 
impact on African diasporic thought in Europe was as influential as it was in North America, Africa, and the Caribbean. Césaire plays a similar role for black Francophonic literature, although his influence on literary development in the Caribbean crosses the linguistic lines. Let us turn to the first.

Wright was the son of sharecroppers in Mississippi. After an itinerant, poverty-stricken childhood, in which he did not complete high school, in spite of commencing his writing career at the age of fifteen, he made his way to Chicago, where he became a member of the Communist Party (CPUSA). His work with the CPUSA was primarily as an editor of various publications, which led to accusations of his having bourgeois sensibilities, in spite of his sub-proletariat background. He moved to New York, where he eventually broke from the party and published his acclaimed collection of short stories *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), and then his monumental novel *Native Son* (1940). Wright's politics was always too radical and left-leaning for the United States. He moved to Paris in 1946, became a French citizen in 1947, and remained there until his death. In Paris, he was part of a community of intellectuals that included Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus, and he was instrumental in organizing forums for writers across the African Diaspora, such as the Black Writers Congress of 1956, which was held in Paris. That meeting included Césaire, Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin (1924–87), and George Lamming (1927–), among others.

Wright articulates black experience at the level of what existentialists such as Sartre and Beauvoir call a *situation*, which they typically describe as a conflict of freedoms. Human beings face their limitations in relation to each other, for another human being has the power of refusal, of being able to reject doing what one wants them to do. More, the resulting situation is also susceptible to manifesting meanings well beyond one's intentions. As we saw with the observation of the black as a white construction, what a black person *means* by his or her action is not necessarily the same as what the situation he or she is in allows others to understand. This observation is evident in Wright's short stories but it is most known through his novels. In *Native Son*, the protagonist Bigger Thomas finds himself “in a situation” when he helps his employer's drunken daughter to her bedroom after chauffeuring her and her boyfriend around town and realizes that he, with her in his arms, was at risk of being “discovered” as a “rapist.” Wright provides reflections on the relationship between choice and options for those who are denied normality in the modern world; often lacking the power to set the conditions and thereby determine the social meaning of their situation, they find themselves constantly thrown into circumstances they would rather have

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avoided. Ordinary situations such as seeking employment, spending leisure time with one's associates, and simply traveling from one part of a city to another are weighted down by possibilities of white racist inscription: an economic recession that allows black unemployment lines outside factories to be interpreted as a sign of black servility; a criminal justice system that presumes groups of black men at play to be involved in criminal behavior; blacks passing through white neighborhoods facing suspicions of being up to no good. Wright's novel outlines many of the classic existential problems of freedom and responsibility that follow. In “How Bigger Was Born,” his famous introduction to the 1940 edition of Native Son, he argued that American society “makes” Bigger Thomases: people who, in attempting to assert their humanity, become its troublemakers to be forced back “into their place” while being held responsible for their actions. Wright is able to criticize a system for what it does to people while recognizing the importance of responsibility, even under unjust systems, as a necessary condition for human dignity and maturity. In his last novel, The Outsider (1953), he explicitly made through the antihero Cross Damon, who finds himself incapable of experiencing responsibility because he lives in a world that inhibits his development into a man. His greatest fear is realized when he dies confessing a feeling of “innocence” after having killed several people.

Wright's work raises an important challenge to the understanding of death in existential thought. From Hegel through Heidegger, death formed one's subjectivity as a source of fear and anxiety and as an ontological limit that constitutes the self. Wright's work reveals, in a tradition that dates back to the thought of Frederick Douglass, that black subjectivity is constituted by an understanding of freedom as a premonition of early death or being imperiled by risking freedom in social life. But instead of simple fear of death there is the dread of bondage. The decision to live as a struggle for freedom forms, then, a subjectivity of presumed death.

Another theme of black existential thought is invisibility, a subject that has become almost synonymous with the name Ralph Ellison (1913–94) since the publication of his novel Invisible Man in 1952. Here, black invisibility is a function of hypervisibility. It is a form of being what Fanon called a phobogenic object, an object that stimulates anxiety. Ellison laments the madness faced by educated blacks, who believe that their achievements will enable their inclusion (visibility) instead of heightened exclusion (invisibility) in US society. Baldwin also brings such questions to interracial, homosexual, and bisexual settings and

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8. The Outsider was also the title of the British translation of Albert Camus's most famous novel L’Étranger (1942), whose American translation was The Stranger.

looks at the question of suffering as a struggle to defend the possibility of genuine human relationships. The question of invisibility later takes on a unique form, as well, in the novels of Toni Morrison (1931–), particularly her first, *The Bluest Eye.* There, Morrison brings out the peculiarity of notions such as “ugliness” and “beauty” that dominate women’s lives in general but black women’s in a profound way through their attempt to whiten their appearance. The expectation that black women should look like their white counterparts pressures them into a condition of bad faith and what Du Bois formulated as initial double consciousness: that is, seeing themselves through the eyes of hostile others. They live by a standard that they can never meet. This theme of living by a standard that is not one’s own is taken to another level when Morrison writes of bad “mixture” in a world that creates liaisons between adults and children, the consequence of which is molestation, incest, and madness.

Unlike Wright, who was a US expatriate in France, Césaire was more directly linked, through his studies at the École Normale Supérieure, to the European tradition that received much criticism in his work. A native of Martinique, Césaire and his wife, Suzanne (also from Martinique), were married while both studied in Paris, wherein they were, with Léopold Senghor (1906–2001) and Léon Damas (1912–78), among the founders of the Négritude movement. The Césaires returned to Martinique, where they cofounded (with a collective that included René Ménil [1907–2004] and many other influential Martinican intellectuals) the journal *Tropiques* and taught in the island’s *lycée.* Among their students was Fanon, to whose thought we shall soon turn. Césaire then shifted to a career in politics, where he became mayor of Fort-de-France and député from Martinique to the French National Assembly. Under his leadership, Martinique became an overseas extension of France in 1946. Césaire continued his literary production throughout his career in public service, from which he retired in 2001.

Césaire’s contributions are many, but the most influential are his classics *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*)

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(1939) and Discours sur le colonialisme (Discourse on Colonialism) (1953). The first was a long poem that grew out of his reflections on Martinique while preparing for his examinations at the École Normale Supérieure. Césaire drew on poetry to articulate the cultural contradictions of an educational system that demanded maximum assimilation while maintaining colonial segregation. He was concerned about a political anthropology that demanded him literally to become, to paraphrase Fanon’s later formulation, a white man in a black skin. That a long string of cultural and economic relations was linked to that body raised the question of unjust relations that were protected by such erasure. Césaire took up that question in the Discours, which locates him in a long tradition of Africana writers on philosophy of civilization.

Although philosophers no longer speak of civilization in such terms, the debates in that area have continued in the social sciences and many areas of the academy, as the debate on Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis attests, and contemporary discussions of civil society in anthropology and political thought reveal. In Africana thought, the question was at the forefront of the thought of Alexander Crummell (1819–98), who founded the American Negro Academy in 1897. In Césaire’s thought, colonialism was a brutal system of exploitation that jeopardized civilization by creating a binary system of rationalized violence through a racist anthropology. Efforts to de-link class exploitation and racism fail to understand their symbiotic relationship in colonial society. In effect, European colonialism only considered its practices barbaric, he argued, when applied against (white) Europeans. Thus, from Césaire’s point of view, European outrage at the Holocaust against European Jews was not in fact an argument against genocide and brutal exploitation but about whom such activities should be committed against. Such practices were mundane features of life in the colonies and against blacks (and, although he does not mention them, Native American populations). This is because of the philosophical anthropology of dehumanization that governed everyday life under such a system:

> colonization … dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other

14. For discussion, see, for example, Peter Burke, Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and What is Cultural History? (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).
15. See my An Introduction to Africana Philosophy, 51–3.
man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal.16

Césaire advanced here a familiar argument in existential thought: that dehumanizing others dehumanizes one’s self. He concluded the text with a demonstration of intellectual rationalizations of colonial relations whose effect is, in today’s parlance, an evocation of a colonial epistêmé (or cultural paradigm of knowledge, authority, and power), and offered the following philosophical anthropological considerations: “One of the values invented by the bourgeoisie in former times and launched throughout the world was man – and we have seen what has become of that.”17 By posing “man” as an invention, Césaire problematized theories of a transcendental anthropology. Man, in this formulation, becomes one among other possibilities of existence. Although he concluded the text in a more Marxist-oriented appeal to the proletariat as transcending another invention (the nation), the argument itself situates his reflections within an existential Marxist framework. Just as Sartre reflected on his own existential Marxism in Search for a Method – his famous preface to his Critique of Dialectical Reason – so Césaire reflected on his when he observed that “the salvation of Europe is not a matter of a revolution in methods.”18

A curious feature of the Discours is the author’s style. Although avowedly an essay, the sentences have poetic significance that challenges the norms of rationalization. Césaire’s philosophy of existence was not only a matter of what he was arguing but also how he did it. Paget Henry has described this, in Caliban’s Reason, as Caribbean poeticism, but when considered in the framework of existential philosophy, additional genealogical links to Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, both of whom challenged the norms of philosophical writing, are evident. Whether in the Africana tradition, where a similar point could be ascribed to Du Bois, or the European or Asian ones, it is clear that writing as an activity in which existentialists offer a metacritique of the white’s cold and detached discourse of philosophical reason demands a commitment from existential writers against reductionist reflections on the human subject as an abstract, disembodied locus of pure identity.

Césaire’s writings thus brought the semiological significance of colonization to the fore. His approach of offering a poetic reordering of the valuative signifiers, where the negative constructions of black existence are reordered in positive terms, influenced Africana scholars to the present. Along with the

17. Ibid., 74.
18. Ibid., 78.
Senegalese Senghor and the Guyanese Damas, this reordering was offered in the development of “Négritude,” a term coined by Césaire, whose basic tenet was to affirm blackness and the articulation of a uniquely African personality. These concerns were explored by Senghor, who also became a politician, but his efforts, unlike Césaire’s, led to the independence of Senegal and his becoming its first president. In *Liberté I: Négritude et humanisme* (1964), Senghor offered a critique of modern European notions of freedom by exploring the differences between conceptions of a healthy human being in the West versus those in Africa. His main target was Arthur de Gobineau (1816–82), whose *Essai sur l’Inégalité des Races Humaines* (1854) is one of the founding texts of modern European racism. Gobineau, and many European writers, wrote under the presumption that being dominated by rationality was a source of health, which they contrasted with the African. Such European writers sought inspiration from (and a wished-for genealogical link with) the ancient Greeks, whom they saw as governed by reason. The result is the unfortunate dictum “Reason is Greek as emotion is Negro.” Senghor argued that a healthy human being is a mixture of reason and passion, and, in his brand of Négritude poetry, celebrated the African’s supposedly being at home in the world of affect.

Senghor’s work was well received in francophone regions of the African continent, where it was possible to assert black normativity in ethnic terms not readily available to Césaire, even with blacks being the majority population of Martinique. Although having experienced colonization, blacks in Africa were, and continue to be, more aware of their ethnic identity as an ongoing, lived narrative. The Caribbean black could often only speculate on the ethnic communities to which he or she is related in Africa. Césaire, however, brought race to the forefront with his assertion of a shared blackness that crossed the many ethnic divides in Africa. He did not know whether he was Asante, Yoruba, Igbo, Wimbum, or any of the many ethnic groups of Africa, but he offered those communities the presentation of a more esteemed version of the blackness he shared with the members of those groups. In the francophone Caribbean of Césaire’s younger years, where the only standards of human excellence that mattered were those of Europeans, such reflections were “scandalous” as the local population mocked the idea of a dark-skinned Martinican expressing pride instead of shame in his appearance. “What indeed could be more grotesque,”

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Fanon recalled of those times, “than an educated man, a man with a diploma, having in consequence understood a good many things, among others that ‘it was unfortunate to be a negro,’ proclaiming that his skin was beautiful and that the ‘big black hole’ [Africa] was a source of truth.”

Césaire’s thought, as we have seen, demanded positive black identification with Africa and an aesthetic that subverted the notion of white Eurocentrism and white superiority over the African/black.

Césaire had an extraordinary impact on Caribbean writers who today include Lamming, Derek Walcott (1930– ), Edouard Glissant (1928– ), Sylvia Wynter (1928– ), Marise Condé (1934– ), and Simone Schwarz-Bart (1938– ). The most explicitly existential of these thinkers, however, is Lamming, whose work reveals the meeting of the genealogical lines of Wright and Césaire. His novel In the Castle of My Skin (1953) stands as a correlate to Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks. Like Lamming, Fanon was also influenced by the convergence of Wright and Césaire. Lamming’s novel is an autobiographical exploration of problems of existence from the standpoint of a nine-year-old boy. Through the metaphor of rain, Lamming in effect explores Sartre’s famous observation of slime being “the agony of water” or the facticity of the past clinging to, and weighing down, revolutionary action and totalizing self-conscious choice to be “other.” If slime is the agony of water, and if history moves like an unyielding river or, as it is often characterized, tide, then what might be the agony wrought by its recent, epochal flow? What, in other words, is the agony of modernity?

The little boy suffers in Lamming’s novel. He, with many in the community that constitutes the world of his childhood, suffers the agony of modernity. It is agonizing because it promises that which it is not prepared to give without a costly price. He faces this world promised to him by the British Empire, and he walks through it with faith in humanity that stimulates anyone who still believes in promises. But that world, he discovers, is a slimy one – imposing the determinism of white rationalistic order as a condition for “freedom.” Wright reflected on that world as one that constantly generates illicit humanity. Recall that for him, Bigger Thomas was its agony, and even the structural imposition of racial inferiority and denial of agency never entailed an absence of responsibility; there was always the sense that such responsibility was elusive at every moment the inner-man confronted a world that locked him in perpetual boyhood. Wright, as we saw, raised the question of the modern alienation that militated against responsibility through the constant force of innocence. Perpetual guilt takes

22. Ibid.
*23. For further discussion of Glissant, see the essay by Rosi Braidotti in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
away agency, thereby mitigating guilt. It collapses upon itself and transforms such guilt into “innocence,” but this makes the black condition one of double jeopardy: the salvation of becoming a man or a woman promises the possibility of damnation, but remaining frozen into the form of an innocent child is a denial of adulthood, responsibility, and freedom.

Lamming also saw this as the paradox of colonization: “Barbados or Little England was the oldest and purest of England’s children.” Lamming revealed an entire island that is a child whose native inhabitants were washed away by what the tide brought in from Europe. In that death was born, allegorically, the new: labor to maintain commerce, the economy, the identities, the peoples, the New World. And in spite of its age, the colony seemed never to grow up. Lamming thus brought to the fore a recurring existential problematic: whether, to paraphrase Kant, a black adult is possible.

I. THE THEORETICAL LINE

Although the literary black existentialists also wrote critical essays on colonialism, their ideas were often suggestive and have been subsequently studied more as a matter of literary interpretation than, in rare cases, philosophical reflection. The existential problematic of reason in an unreasonable world was made explicit, however, in the thought of the revolutionary psychiatrist Fanon, who was also most effective in bringing black existential thought to a variety of disciplines and movements. Fanon was born in 1925 on the island of Martinique. He and his siblings studied at the island’s lycée, where he was awestruck by his teacher, Césaire. He fought against the Germans in the Second World War as a member of the French resistance forces in North Africa and then in Europe, during which he was twice injured and decorated for valor. After a short return to Martinique, where he was active in the successful bid for Césaire’s becoming mayor of Fort-de-France, he went first to Paris to study dentistry and then to Lyon, where he completed his studies in psychiatry. He also studied philosophy in Lyon, where his teachers included Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It was during these years that he married Josèphe-Marie Dublé. His postdoctoral studies earned him the certification of chef de service, which qualified him as supervisor or chief medical officer of any psychiatric facility. His postgraduate training was with François Tosquelles (1912–94), a Spanish exile who grounded his approach to therapy in humanistic social terms. The main thesis of that approach, that there are also social causes of mental illness, became a mainstay of Fanon’s social

thought. After a brief post in Norway, Fanon became Chef de Service of Blida-Joinville Hospital (now Frantz Fanon Hospital) in Algeria. He had written to Senghor in the hope of acquiring such a post in the new Senegalese state, but he had received no reply, so he accepted his first opportunity to return to Africa. His impact on Algerian psychiatry was immediate. He criticized head-on the prevailing “primitivist” view of Africans and Arabs, and he developed a series of initiatives to transform the structure and physical environment of therapy for such patients. His methods proved effective, and he had begun training another generation of young doctors, who included Alice Cherki, the author of the recent Fanon: A Portrait. By 1954 the Algerian war of independence had begun, and Fanon joined the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) that year. His professional work involved his treating both the torturers and the tortured while clandestinely training FLN forces in warfare and psychological techniques for surviving brutal interrogation. He resigned from his hospital post in 1956, moved to Tunisia, and continued work for the FLN as a representative to negotiate support from other African states. A man marked for death in France, he became somewhat of a Robin Hood figure, appearing in unexpected places (such as the Black Writers conferences in 1956 in Paris), while managing to elude assassination attempts, which included bombings and machine-gunning a hospital room, where his demand to be removed afforded him a narrow escape. By 1960, he was ill with leukemia. It was during this time that he wrote his last and most famous book, Les Damnés de la terre, for which he solicited Sartre to write the preface. The meeting in Rome with Sartre and Beauvoir is the stuff of legend. Fanon insisted on their having an unceasing exchange of ideas over the course of two days and was irritated by Beauvoir’s insistence on Sartre’s need for rest. After receiving an unsuccessful prognosis in the Soviet Union, Fanon went to Bethesda, Maryland, to secure treatment. He was detained for several days by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), during which time he developed pneumonia. He died on December 6, 1961, and was buried in Algeria. His widow, Josie Fanon, continued work as a journalist and intellectual in Algeria until her death in 1989.

Four of Fanon’s books, excluding his dissertation, are in print. Each of them is a classic in Africana existential and political thought. In addition to Les Damnés de la terre (1961), the others published in his life time were Peau noire, masques blancs (Black Skin, White Masks) (1952) and L’An V de la révolution algérienne (1959), subsequently available as Sociologie d’une révolution: L’an V de la révolution algérienne. His widow, Josie Fanon, edited Pour la révolution africaine: Écrits politiques (1964).

Les Damnés de la terre is inspired by the Haitian poet Jacques Roumain’s adaptation, in his book of verse Bois-d’Ebene (1945), of the first line of L’Internationale (1871) by Eugène Edine Pottier. Inspired by black struggles in the Caribbean and
Africa, and prefaced by Sartre, the most famous living intellectual at the time, this work eclipsed Fanon’s other writings for nearly twenty years. It took nearly three decades for his earlier thought to acquire appreciation in the English-speaking world, and this was achieved primarily owing to the popularity of postcolonial studies and Homi Bhabha's Lacanian poststructural reading of *Peau noire, masques blancs*, in his famous foreword to the Pluto edition of the text published in London in the 1980s. I shall from this point onward refer to the English title of the text, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

*Black Skin, White Masks* was published in 1952, when Fanon was twenty-seven years old. He had proposed a draft of it three years earlier as his doctoral thesis in psychiatry, which the members of his committee refused to consider. They preferred the “positivist” approach to the study of psychiatry, which called for rooting psychological phenomena in physics and biology. So Fanon wrote on another topic and submitted his dissertation at Lyon in 1951 under the title: “Troubles mentaux et syndromes psychiatriques dans Hérédo-Dégénération-Spino-Cérébelleuse: Un cas de Maladie de Friedreich avec délire de possession” (Mental illness and psychiatric syndromes in hereditary-degeneration-spinal-cerebellum: a case of Friedreich illness with possession delirium). He did not, however, regret rewriting and publishing *Black Skin, White Masks* after achieving his doctorate. As he reflected in the introduction:


[I would have written this book three years ago … But its truths burned in me. Today, they have cooled. These truths don’t need to be shoved in the face of everyone. They don’t need enthusiasm. I don’t like enthusiasm.]

In the Isaac Julien film *Black Skins, White Masks* (1996), Fanon’s brother Joby Fanon recounted being told by his brother’s colleagues that Frantz Fanon was “fireworks on the outside, fireworks on the inside.” Although Fanon claims not to like enthusiasm, he did not appeal to an extinguished flame. The fire cooled in him, but this suggests, as he later makes clear in *Les Damnés de la terre*, a continued flame that threatens eruption. The purpose of his book, Fanon

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*26. For a discussion of Bhabha as well as several other topics addressed in this essay, see the essay by Eduardo Mendieta in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.*

27. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 6, my translation.
announces on the first page, is to respond to the presence of “trop d’imbéciles sur cette terre” (too many imbeciles in the world).

Similarly to many existential writers before him, and in whose genealogy from Nietzsche to Sartre he welcomed affiliation, Fanon challenges the discursive limits of philosophical and other forms of analysis. He writes first as a thinker struggling with a problem instead of from a discipline such as psychology, history, or philosophy, although each joins the chorus of critical reflection. Although Nietzsche, Jaspers, Sartre, and Césaire receive special attention in the text, Kierkegaardian indirection, through the Afro-Caribbean affinities with the mythopoetics of the trickster in slavery and precolonial lore, is evident in Fanon’s constant use of irony. Added are the metareflective and autobiographical aspects of the text, where Fanon is offered as a subject who suffers disintegration while a metanarrator (the critic) toys with him in a systemic and extra-systemic battle. Should the text’s protagonist succeed in his goal, which is no less than complete cohesion with the modern world, the critic, who is an advocate of revolutionary humanistic change, would face failure; but should the situation be otherwise, the demand is for an alternative social system. Crucial in this challenge is the search for agency, for the imposed realities as contingent features of social life. The protagonist, in other words, should be able to succeed precisely because he or she could also fail. He makes this clear at the outset by announcing that not everyone will be at home in the text. It is primarily for the afflicted.

Fanon offers a trenchant critique of the denial of antiblack racism in France and much of the modern world. Although other writers, such as Du Bois, Wright, Sartre, Beauvoir, and Césaire have criticized such denial, there are several unique features of Fanon’s analysis that have made his work endure beyond the twentieth century. First, he observes that the denial is also symptomatic of many black people. Second, he rejects the structuralist thesis, as we have just seen, by admitting the existential one of contingency and exceptions. In other words, Fanon does not make everyone into racists, and he does not make all black people into victims. Third, he explores the problem at its subterranean levels and in so doing brings out its significance for human study. Fourth, he addresses disciplinary questions and problems of domination at the epistemological level, at the level of knowledge, thereby deepening his social critique. Fifth, he offers novel discussions of the dynamics of freedom and recognition at the heart of human encounters. And sixth, he advances a set of rhetorical devices that perform the many ways of addressing the problem.

Fanon achieves all this by first pointing out that racism and colonialism should be understood as socially generated ways of seeing and living in the world. He calls this sociogenesis. This means, for example, that blacks are constructed as blacks by the societies in which they live. There was, in other words, no reason for people in Africa or Australia or other areas of the South Pacific to have
thought of themselves in racial terms. But society, Fanon argues, is not an independent reality. It requires human beings for its existence, although it is transformed in the complex web of intersubjective relations into that which produces the meanings by which human beings live and appear. To understand how such constructions occur, the logical route is to examine language. Language contains the construction of meaning and the promise of recognition; to master language is to put on the identity of a culture. This promise fails in the white-dominated modern world, however, when practiced by blacks, who are analytically structured in that world as the antithesis of language itself. Even when the language of the dominant white world is “mastered” by such blacks, what appears in such society is their illegitimacy; they are in a constant struggle with that language. Many blacks buy into their own illegitimacy and so repudiate their blackness by trying to pass as nonblack and at times, even worse, avowing themselves as opponents of black people. This black antiblack racism exemplifies a form of narcissism in which blacks seek the deception of mirrors that offer white reflection. They literally attempt to look without seeing, or to see only what they wish to see. This narcissism works at many levels. Many whites, who do not regard themselves as racist nonetheless discriminate against blacks in practice.

The question of language also raises more radical questions about its role in making human subjects. Fanon argued that colonization requires more than the material subordination of a people. It also yokes the means by which they are able to express and understand themselves. He locates this expressive and interpretative constraint in language and scientific methodology. This is epistemological colonialism. Early in the text, Fanon announced that he would like to transform the black into an actional being. This is important because of the impediments to freedom in colonial and racist environments. The problem is made acute in the sixth chapter on psychopathology, where Fanon shows that the modern world has no coherent notion of a normal black person or a black adult. Pathological behavior is often presented as “authentically” black. However, should a black not conduct himself or herself as a black person, that black would be considered “inauthentic,” which also amounts to a reassertion of pathology. The effect of this double bind is familiar in the days when grown black men and women were being referred to as “boy” or “girl,” or, in the French language, as tu instead of the impersonal and respectful vous. Fanon challenges the efficacy of therapy without a model of normality. If black psychology amounts to abnormal psychology – that is, if black existence amounts to abnormal existence or, more accurately, nonexistence – the black would cease to be actional because of having nowhere to go. There would be a nihilistic relationship with the social world.

Fanon here addresses the observation from Du Bois in The Souls of Black Folk that most black people, including those in Africa, are obsessed with “fixing” themselves. This obsession, Fanon’s argument suggests, is a function of social
impotence even at the level of meaning. Since to be black is analytically equated with failure, could a black ever fix himself or herself enough to be successful as a black person? The effort yields a contradiction: that black would have to no longer be black. In much of Latin America and the Caribbean, the region of the world from which Fanon came, success by definition meant that an individual must not be black. This notion leads to an interrogation of standards. By what standard could an individual be successful and black? Take, for example, the contemporary association of blacks with athletic ability. There are many famous black athletes. Fanon argues that an athlete proper is a meeting of body and rationality (as, e.g., in the Greek Olympics). But the black athlete is understood as an instinctual creature, and this is reflected in the prevalence of whites occupying leadership roles in athletic venues where black athletes play a significant and even dominant role. The black athlete in this sense is not much above animals who are used for sport such as horses and dogs. Their skills, being supposedly instinctual and linked to their breeding, are entirely in their bodies. The standards, however, are made by the human beings who race them or pit them against each other, who use them for sport. Similar reasoning applies to blacks in music and dance. They live by standards of which they could never be a legitimating source.

Failing to have an impact on the social world, many, if not most, blacks turn inward. They hide from freedom even while seeking it. As Hannah Arendt notes, freedom requires a public, political appearance (the opposite of the confinement and concealment characteristic of prisons and private households), but one can only appear in a world of others. To turn away from the world sets one on a slippery slope that would eventually lead paradoxically to a loss of the self through too much investment in the self, of becoming the solipsistic world of one’s own, for even self-recognition requires posing the point of view of another. This is a difficult truth, which Fanon makes clear by admitting, at the end of his fifth chapter, “L’Expérience vécue du Noir” (The lived-experience of the black; published in English as “The Fact of Blackness”), that he could not face it before having wept. He tells us, through his own offering of tears, that we must wash away our impediments to a courageous engagement with the difficulties of social reality.

Freedom requires a world of others. But what happens when others do not offer recognition? One of Fanon’s provocative challenges to the modern world emerges here. In most discussions of racism and colonialism, there is a critique of alterity, of becoming the Other. Fanon, however, argues that racism pushes a group of people outside the Self-and-Other dialectic, a relationship that is, in European continental philosophy from Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer through to Heidegger and Levinas, the basis of ethical life. The consequence is that nearly everything is permitted against such people, and as
the violent history of colonialism, enslavement, and racism reveals, such license is often acted on with sadistic zeal. The struggle against colonialism and anti-black racism, given Fanon’s argument, then, is not one against being the Other. It is a struggle to enter the Self–Other dialectic of ethical life. That struggle, being a pre-ethical situation, is a political struggle wrought with contingency, which is, in effect, Fanon’s rewriting of Sartre’s famous credo of existence preceding essence, except that the ethical hope could never properly be an essence but a commitment.

Fanon shows, as well, that such a struggle happens not only at the level of social interactions, but also in relation to knowledge and reason. In his words:

La raison s’assurait la victoire sur tous les plans. Je réintégrai les assemblées. Mais je dus déchanter. La victoire jouait au chat et à la souris; elle me narguait. Comme disait l’autre, quand je suis là je n’y suis plus.

[Reason was assured victory on every level. I was ushered back into the human world. But I became disenchanted. That victory played cat and mouse with me and scoffed at me. As the saying goes, when I’m present it is not and when it is present I am no longer.]

To paraphrase, when he walked into the room, reason walked out. Reason, in other words, was being unreasonable; Fanon, here exemplifying the black philosopher’s plight, to which I alluded at the beginning of this chapter, struggles against the unreasonability of reason. We find here the neurotic situation and the melancholy of black people identified by black existential thought in the modern world. To reclaim reason, to seize it, would be to exhibit unreason, even in the face of reason being unreasonable. Fanon, here as the black, must reason with reason. This challenge, to be in effect more reasonable than whites (and Asians) are expected to be, situates the black as having lost before he or she has begun the plea for existence. It signals the melancholia of black existence. In effect, blacks are expected not to have been black in order to legitimate being black. It is an impossible task. Should the black wish for a premodern, or a preblackened state of being, it would require such a contradiction: a black that was not black. Blacks, in other words, face the problem of their relationship to reason and to the modern self. Such a self suffers from melancholia, a loss without which they cannot be what or who they are.

This seemingly dire situation is not, however, a call for pessimism. Fanon reminds us that part of our struggle involves understanding the critical dimensions of questioning, which he exemplifies by closing with a prayer to his own

28. Fanon, Peau noire, masques blancs, 96, my translation.
body to make of him a man who questions. By this, Fanon reminds us that the human being exceeds the bounds of declarations and is also an interrogative. As such, the human being, as a human being, is not a closed subject. This is Fanon’s additional reformulation of the existential credo of human incompleteness.

In *Pour la révolution africaine*, especially the essay on racism and culture, Fanon attacks the blues in favor of written poetry. Yet his reflections in *Black Skin, White Masks* have an unmistakable blues structure. He goes through processes of repetition that lead, as we have seen, to tears through which he is able to face the pathologies of “reality,” and the truth here is that Eurocentric society cannot seem to see black adults and does not seem to know what it means for black people to be “normal.” Blacks seek to become men and women, but they find themselves locked at a level below that status in the white world. In *Les Damnés de la terre*, his search for healthy, active black agents takes the form of his counsel for each generation of blacks to find its mission, which means taking responsibility for humanity’s future.

The theme of reason in an unreasonable world returns, then, in the onus of articulating one’s normality in a world that has defined one as essentially abnormal. Fanon extended this analysis to the seeming allergic response of “reasonable whites” in relation to black people. To paraphrase his reflection in the fifth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, reason takes flight when a black enters a room. Fanon showed, however, that to take flight into unreason would be unreasonable, and that the irony of black existence in the modern world is that blacks are compelled to become the champions of reason for reason’s sake. In other words, reason cannot be forced to stay in the room. It must be persuaded, which affirms, in effect, its necessity. Carried further, the argument reveals a profound melancholic dimension of black existence. For this development of reason is concomitant with the development of the black as a category of reflection. In fact, both are indigenous to that world. That the black must use reason, that which has been used against blacks, in the service of black liberation, and that the black must be critical of the modern world, the world that created the identity with which, and often against which, blacks struggle, reveals a subjectivity – black subjectivity – that emerged from a series of losses from ancestral kidnapping, to the Middle Passage, to marooned existence, to post-slavery racism. Considered from the psychoanalytical perspective of growth through loss, the blues sensibility returns here as a form of generative loss: the loss suffered by blacks in the modern world constituted black subjectivity. Fanon’s response is to think through this loss while searching for an affirmation (a “yes”) to the form of life to live on the one hand and to the establishment of an interrogative (the question) through which that life could claim its humanity.

In *Les Damnés de la terre*, Fanon then returns to the colonial and decolonizing moments to illustrate a chilling point. The colonial condition forces the
colonized to question their humanity. This interrogation occasions alienation of the spirit in the face of loss of land and denigration of mature cultural identity. The decolonization process unleashes an array of violent forces that bring to the surface the many double standards of the colonial system and contingency in a world that once seemed to be absolute and necessary. At the heart of this “hell” is the classic direction of consumed hatred. As Virgil showed Dante’s protagonist two foes, one of whom is so consumed by hatred that he gnaws on the head of his enemy while frozen from the neck down near the cold center of Hell, Fanon presents the horrific implications of being consumed by hatred. There are some attachments, values, of which we must let go, and in so doing, we will find our way outside, where we could emerge, in the words of Dante, “to see – once more – the stars.” This is what Fanon ultimately means when, echoing L’Internationale, he implores us all to “développer une pensée neuve, tenter de mettre sur pied un homme neuf” (to develop new thought, and set afoot a new man).

Fanon offers an ironic twist on L’Internationale here. The connection to L’Internationale, mediated by black struggles in the Caribbean and Africa, challenges a presumption of communist politics, which Césaire affirmed at the end of his Discourse on Colonialism, namely, that the revolutionary class must be the proletariat. By using the line from L’Internationale to discuss people in the Global South, Fanon both advances and challenges Marxist philosophical anthropology.

Many of the themes in Fanon’s thought can be found in the writings of Albert Memmi (1921–). Born in Tunisia of an Italian Jewish father and a Berber (possibly of Jewish descent) mother, his early biography is more like Césaire’s than Fanon’s. He received a French education and studied philosophy in Algeria before completing his studies at the Sorbonne. But where autobiographical reflection for Césaire meant thinking through being black and from a colony of black people, Memmi’s was about being a Jew from a more heavily multi-racial colony and being so with the tensions offered by the additional historic reality of Islam in North Africa. Whereas Césaire looked to Africa after having been immersed in European civilization, Memmi looked eastward to the Middle East from Africa following his European emersion and tried to reconcile all of his disparate cultural perspectives. And like Césaire, and many other existential writers, he drew on aesthetic resources, but in his case it was the novel, not poetry, and the essay that were his preferred conduits. His novel La Statue


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de sel (A statue of salt; published in English as The Pillar of Salt, echoing the biblical story of Lot’s wife) was published in 1953 with a preface by Camus. He is, however, best known for his theoretical essay on colonialism, Portrait du colonisé, précédé du portrait du colonisateur (Portrait of the colonized, preceded by a portrait of the colonizer; published in English as The Colonizer and the Colonized), which was published with a preface by Sartre in 1957. In that work, he makes a distinction between colonized, colonialist, and colonizer. The second, he argues, lives in the colony above the colonized people but below the colonizers. Memmi saw this as his situation as a Tunisian Jew. (He did not comment on the specific differences in situation separating darker African Jews and lighter Sephardic and Ashkenazi [European] Jews living in North Africa.) He argued, however, that the system was Manichaean, which meant that there was no real room for that second category. The dilemma facing him was whether to distance himself from the colonized by pushing himself closer to colonizers or to identify with the colonized, which increased his distance from the former. His conclusion was that such middle groups were in bad faith because they had the option of identifying with them as colonizers. Yet in spite of their bad faith, the social reality was less amenable to ambiguity. The system demanded the polarization of society into colonizers and colonized. Although this argument may appear to affirm Hegel’s master–slave dialectic, Memmi argues that the interdependence of the two poles, colonizer and colonized, conceals more than it reveals. Colonialism, he contended, produces a unique psychology of inferiority, and like Fanon, he argued that the eradication of colonialism was a necessary condition for the transformation of the colonized into active men and women. Given that perspective, Memmi subsequently perceived an increase in agency during times when the colonized assumed leadership roles in decolonization movements and a corresponding decrease in agency following the overthrow of colonialism, in which war, genocide, extreme poverty, infrastructural deterioration, racism, and increased economic dependence continue on under postcolonialism.

II. INFLUENCE

Black existential thought from the 1940s through 1960s had considerable influence on black liberation politics well into the 1970s and several intellectual movements into the present. Black existentialists were a central part of debates in decolonial struggles that linked intellectual debates from Asia through Africa to North America, South America, and Europe. These intellectuals included Angela Y. Davis in the United States, whose “Unfinished Lecture on Liberation – I,” pitted Sartre’s conception of freedom against Douglass’s, and Steve Bantu Biko in South Africa, whose theory of black consciousness drew on Fanon’s thought.
Another South African, Noel Manganyi, also drew on Fanon and Sartre to develop an existential phenomenology of oppression. Black existentialism also influenced black liberation theological and religious thought (e.g. James Cone and William R. Jones), black cultural studies (e.g. Stuart Hall, bell hooks/Gloria Watkins, Manthia Diawara, Achille Mbembe), prophetic pragmatism (Cornel West), black poststructuralism (e.g. Sylvia Wynter and George Yancy), black queer studies (e.g. Jean-Paul Rocchi, Sara Ahmed, David Fryer), and Africana and black existential phenomenology (e.g. P. Mabogo More, Henry, Linda Martín Alcoff, Danielle Davis, and this author), and, of course, the authors in the anthology *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*.

The exemplars in the parentheses are, in many ways, artificially located as such since, in true existential fashion, they also belong with the others and resist neat classification. In each of these developments, however, black existential concerns of philosophical anthropological, liberation, and metacritical questions continue to be explored as these writers pose to human study the centrality of contingency and meaning of human possibility.

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31. Each of these developments is discussed in my *Existentia Africana*, and in the fourth and fifth chapters of my *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. See also Danielle Davis, “A Conversation with Lewis Gordon on Race in Australia,” *The C. L. R. James Journal* 14(1) (Spring 2008).
Along with psychology, sociology, and anthropology, linguistics figures among the human and social sciences established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that have differentiated themselves as disciplines and have achieved widespread intellectual and institutional recognition, particularly since the First World War. Like the comparative grammar that launched modern linguistics in the early nineteenth century, the structuralist paradigm that marked the first half of the twentieth century concentrated on sound in language, and secondarily on morphology. But Ferdinand de Saussure and like-minded linguists such as Émile Benveniste, Louis Hjelmslev, Roman Jakobson, and Nikolai Trubetzkoy concentrated on the relations among sounds, the superstructure to sound, and the superstructures to the superstructure, translating into terms of the entire historical and present day structure of any language.

1. Ferdinand de Saussure (November 26, 1857–February 22, 1913; born in Geneva, Switzerland; died in Château Vufflens near Geneva) was educated at the Universities of Geneva (1875–76), Leipzig (1876–78), and Berlin (1878–79), and received a doctorate from Leipzig (1880). His influences included the Neogrammarians Bréal and Whitney (see below), and he held appointments at the École des Hautes Études, Paris (1881–91), and the University of Geneva (1891–1913).

Trained by Bopp, Michel Bréal (1832–1915) held the Chair of Comparative Grammar at the Collège de France (1866–1905) and also gave courses at the École des Hautes Études as of its founding in 1868. He published on historical linguistics, comparative mythology, semantics, ancient Greek and Latin, educational policy, and orthography reform.

After studying in Berlin and Tübingen, William Dwight Whitney (1827–94) taught Sanskrit and comparative grammar at Yale. He published widely in both fields as well as in general linguistics, and wrote or edited a number of dictionaries, including the Century Dictionary.

2. Born in Moscow, Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy (1890–1938) held academic appointments successively at Moscow University (1915–16), Rostov-on-Don University (1918), Sofia University (1920–22), and Vienna University (1922–38). One of the preeminent intellectuals in the Prague Linguistic Circle and the father of structural phonology, the linguist and philologist also published on folklore, mythology, and politics.
Trubetzkoy redefined their discipline in the spirit of their era’s scientific epistemology, elaborating an explicit theory and methodology, emphasizing a holistic approach, and establishing a synchronic perspective on a par with historical perspectives. While steeped in the cultures and texts of the idioms they studied, most structuralists called for modern linguistics to distinguish itself from the wider philological arts by concentrating on the rigorous analysis of internal linguistic mechanisms. Among the scores of groundbreaking works, Saussure’s 1916 *Cours de linguistique générale (Course in General Linguistics)* has made the biggest impact and generated the most debate, particularly outside linguistics. In modern continental thought, Saussure and structural linguists share certain affinities with Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, the “masters of suspicion” who decenter rationalist and even existentialist models of man focused on the individual’s conscious introspection. Where Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche drew attention to class interest, unconscious mechanisms, and the will to power, these linguists showed how language itself conditions thought and behavior in largely invisible ways, thereby undermining rationalist and Enlightenment thinkers’ confident conjectures about the subject’s ability to progress toward greater understanding and self-knowledge.

Influenced by the methods and principles of structural phonology and general linguistics, postwar intellectuals such as Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, and Claude Lévi-Strauss fostered projects for qualitative “human sciences” based on observation, exacting anal-

Roman Osipovič Jakobson (1896–1982) was one of the most important linguists and intellectuals of the twentieth century. He successively cofounded or helped to found the Linguistic Circles of Moscow (1915), Prague (1926), and New York (1943). A published poet, he also participated actively in Russian and Czech avant-garde artistic movements, cofounding the St. Petersburg formalist poetics society OPOJAZ. Of Jewish origins, he taught at Masaryck University in Brno (1933–39) until Hitler’s expansion forced him to relocate first to Scandinavia, then New York, where he held appointments at the École Libre des Hautes Études (1942–46) and Columbia (1943–49). He joined the faculty of Harvard (1949–67), and, concurrently, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1957–67). A Slavist grounded in philology, Jakobson published on Slavic phonetics, phonology, and morphology and on Russian folklore, literature, and film; he wrote seminal papers on general linguistics, phonology, poetics, language acquisition, and linguistic pathology, and helped launch the new fields of language typology, computational linguistics, cognitive studies, and communication studies.

Louis Trolle Hjelmslev (1899–1965) was the leading figure in glossematics, the Danish School’s structural linguistics. He taught at Århus University (1934–37) and the University of Copenhagen (1937–65) and published on case theory and general linguistics.

Émile Benveniste (1902–76) studied comparative grammar under Meillet, then taught at the École des Hautes Études (1927–37) and the Collège de France (1937–70). He published on comparative Indo-European lexicology and grammar and wrote groundbreaking articles in general linguistics and pragmatics.
ysis, and interpretation.\textsuperscript{3} Taken together, the initiatives sketched a multiform structuralist approach that for a time asserted itself as an alternative to the dominant North American paradigm for the social and behavioral sciences founded on controlled experiments and quantitative data. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, then Paul Ricoeur, engaged modern linguistics and sought to define its relation to phenomenology and to reflexive philosophy, while Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard worked through linguistic structuralism in developing theories of action and symbolic thought outside mainstream logic and metaphysics. After 1968, Saussure increasingly joined the ranks of the \textit{maîtres à penser} to be critiqued and deconstructed by poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida and Foucault, who were skeptical of science and critical of the links between knowledge and power.

I. FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE

Ferdinand de Saussure was born in Geneva into an affluent protestant franco-phone family celebrated for its generations of scholastic achievements. He learned German, Latin, and classical Greek in school, then taught himself Sanskrit. In 1876, he joined the Société de Linguistique de Paris, twelve years after its foundation, and enrolled at the University of Leipzig. There he studied comparative grammar, the most advanced linguistics of the day, with the cutting-edge group of young scholars dubbed the \textit{Junggrammatiker} or “Neo-grammarians.”

Whereas rationalism and pre-nineteenth-century linguistic inquiry present language as a stable intellectual instrument, the comparative and historical linguistics launched by Franz Bopp revealed the dynamic character of idioms and highlighted their material substratum in sound. Introducing the phonological concept of regularity, the Neogrammarians Mathilda Brugmann, August Leskien, Herman Osthoff, and their colleagues in Leipzig showed that sound changes occur in absolutely regular fashion throughout a language, while analogical formations account for apparent exceptions. The Neogrammarians developed a new model of linguistic history: whereas the Romantic founders Bopp and August Schleicher had described the formation of a perfect \textit{Ursprache} that “decayed” and fragmented in Time, the Leipzig scholars contended that like all languages, the Proto-Indo-European they were reconstructing comprised a host of dialects that developed at what was simply one chronological moment

\textsuperscript{3} Essays on Lévi-Strauss and Lacan can be found in this volume. Essays that address Althusser, Barthes, Foucault, and Kristeva, as well as several of the other thinkers mentioned in this paragraph can be found in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6}.
among others. The new generation of linguists asserted strongly antiuniversalist views: whereas the early comparatists considered the historical development of Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin as an evolutionary model valid for all idioms, the Neogrammarians showed that individual languages change in unpredictable and at times idiosyncratic ways. Rejecting the characterization of idioms as natural organisms, they emphasized instead their social character. Adopting a materialist stance, they further argued that the grammatical categories traditionally used to describe classical and archaic tongues represent abstract fictions to be replaced by the more complex and nuanced patterns identified in language-specific analyses of actual forms. Their research produced massive quantities of such data, illustrating the positivist temper of the times. Saussure himself studied with the old master Georg Curtius (1820–85) and with the best young linguist of the day, August Leskien (1840–1916).

After two years in Leipzig, Saussure went to the University of Berlin to complete his training in historical linguistics. Precociously, during his university years he published four articles in comparative grammar in the journal *Mémoires* edited by the Société de Linguistique de Paris. Then in 1878, at the age of twenty-one, Saussure brought out an ambitious, closely argued monograph in the Neogrammatical vein, *Mémoire sur le système primitif des voyelles dans les langues indo-européennes* (Thesis on the original system of vowels in Indo-European languages). The only book he wrote in his lifetime, the *Mémoire* argues that a proper understanding of the “resonants” *l, r, w, y, m, and n*, which function either as consonants or vowels depending on adjacent sounds, illuminates the nature of the syllable, clarifies how words are divided into syllables, and leads to a radically new model of Proto-Indo-European’s entire vowel system. As required by the genre, the study nimbly integrates reams of data on the conjugations, declensions, and morphological categories of a number of archaic languages. Venturing into “the least explored regions” of the field, the essay boldly postulates the existence of two unattested vowels defined by their oppositional and combinatory properties rather than by their actual pronunciation, a move that enabled Saussure to consolidate into one elegant model the early vocalic system that had been viewed as comprising two separate patterns fraught with widespread irregularities.

The groundbreaking proposals in the *Mémoire* inaugurated a new subfield within Indo-European, which soon asserted three unattested laryngeal

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consonants in the place of Saussure’s two vowels, further consolidating the ancient vocalic scheme. The essay quickly established an international reputation for Saussure as a brilliant scholar. Fifty years later, one of the hypothetical sounds predicted by the Mémoire was identified when Sergei Karcewski deciphered Hittite – thus recalling the discovery of Neptune at the place in the heavens where Newton’s laws had anticipated it. Today, the essay is considered a rigorous and prescient analysis whose novel conclusions required scholars two generations to fully comprehend and integrate. Unfortunately for the young Genevan, the scholar who formulated the most forceful and sustained response was Osthoff, the Neogrammarian most focused on generating empirical data, who condemned the revolutionary study as “failed” and “aborted,” as “a radical aberration.” Stung by the attacks, Saussure wrote and defended a short, uncontroversial doctoral thesis and left Germany for France.

In Paris, Michel Bréal assisted Saussure, having the Swiss linguist join him at the École des Hautes Études as a lecturer and work under him at the Société de Linguistique de Paris as its assistant secretary and the editor-in-chief of its journal Mémoires. Instead of collaborating with the Neogrammarian group in the capital, Saussure moved, taught, and published in Bréal’s circle around the École and the Société, which remained open to other currents in the language sciences. Although his translation of Bopp’s magnum opus had introduced comparative grammar to France, Bréal argued strenuously against the approach’s preoccupation with sound changes, its assimilation of linguistics to then-supreme natural sciences, and its concomitant representation of an idiom as an object external to the individual. Instead, his research emphasized that each child learns language anew and that conscious individuals use words and grammar to express ideas, and also introduce changes in an idiom. As of the 1860s, Bréal lectured and published on the relations between mind and language and on linguistic meaning, coining the word semantics (sémantique) in 1883.

At the École des Hautes Études, Saussure taught the comparative grammar of Gothic and Old High German, Greek and Latin, and Lithuanian; his pupils included Antoine Meillet (1866–1936), the next generation’s greatest comparatist. The once prolific student practically ceased publishing, however. Recent research shows that Saussure undertook a book project on phonetics, drafts of which continue the Mémoire’s exploration of the resonants, respond to Osthoff, and broach questions in theoretical phonetics, positing central

principles that later appear in *Course in General Linguistics.* The phonetics essay emphasizes the necessity to define a sound in a language as the convergence of at least three distinct perspectives: (i) “semiological” or “negative,” purely differential; (ii) “acoustic” or in relation to the listener; and (iii) “physiological” or articulatory, with reference to the speaker. The drafts underline the necessity for linguistics to recognize and define with precision such perspectives: “Most of phonetics' objects are beings of reason, existing only by their definition. [He] who studies them … must surround himself with an extremely rigorous system of definitions.” For Saussure, Osthoff’s arguments beg the central questions at stake, and collapse under their own weight if concepts such as resonant and syllable are properly formulated.

In November 1891 Saussure returned definitively to his native city, accepting a Chair in the History and Comparison of Indo-European Languages at the University of Geneva. During his twenty-two years at the school, in addition to an annual course on Sanskrit, he taught a wide variety of subjects in comparative grammar, dialectology, linguistics, ancient inscriptions, and versification. Correspondence with and comments by colleagues indicate that he continued to follow developments in the field closely and reflected deeply on a wide range of linguistic issues. The return to Switzerland only modestly enhanced the linguist’s research productivity, however. He published a few articles on intonation and accentuation in modern Lithuanian, a “conservative” Indo-European language on which he had done fieldwork and geographical dialectology. Scholarship over the past four decades has revealed that during his Geneva years, Saussure pursued an active research program that progressively moved away from comparative grammar and struck out in three new areas: general linguistics, Germanic legends, and “anagrams.”

Saussure researched and gave talks on general linguistics from 1891 to 1894. His first three public lectures at the University of Geneva argue that the young approach called linguistics deserves to be an autonomous science in its own right, distinct from philology and poised between the particular and the general. On the one hand, in the face of the universal perspectives on language advanced by psychologists, logicians, philosophers, and physiologists, linguists must supply the radically sociohistorical perspective that only a positive study of diverse languages, their dialectal variations, and their transformations throughout history can bring. On the other hand, responding to what he considered his generation’s myopic accumulation of minutiae, the lectures

argue that linguists must “constantly endeavor to illustrate the general problem of language … the universal laws and procedures of language.”10 Weeks after his first lectures in Geneva, Saussure began to write a book on general linguistics entitled De l’essence double du langage (On the double essence of language), of which a draft was discovered in 1996. Presaging the Course in General Linguistics in many ways, this text and related writings from the period argue that the linguist’s activity and point of view are constitutive in the study of languages, and that one must distinguish notably between the historical, “diachronic” perspective and the speaking subject’s “instantaneous,” “synchronic” perspective.11 The drafts outline a “semiological” theory of linguistic value based on the differential “signifiers” and “signifieds” that constitute the sign negatively.12 In 1894, for an article on W. D. Whitney, whom, along with the Polish linguists Baudouin de Courtenay and Karcewski, Saussure considered a brilliant pioneer in theoretical linguistics, he reread the American Sanskritist’s works. Apparently Whitney’s novel insights on language as a social institution persuaded Saussure that the existing principles and terminology of the field needed more radical reform than he was capable of crafting, and he lost heart, abandoned his book project, and lost track of the manuscripts. He only returned to the topic when called on to teach it more than a dozen years later. Those lectures generated keen interest on campus among students and colleagues in linguistics, but Saussure discarded each day the scraps of paper on which he scribbled his lecture notes.

From 1903 to 1911, Saussure worked on a book devoted to Germanic legends, producing over 800 pages of material, including polished drafts of sections virtually ready for publication. “The First Kingdom of Burgundy and the German Epic Legend: Contribution to the History of the Nibelungen Epic”13 was to argue that the popular traditional stories then considered the exclusive patrimony of the German Volk were inspired to a significant extent by what the Burgundians did, not when they occupied the Rhineland-Palatinate in the fifth century, but rather when they formed a Franco-Swiss kingdom centered in Lyon a century later – the period in which they bequeathed sundry place names to Savoy, adjacent to Geneva. Consonant with this revisionist history and geography, Saussure sought to demonstrate that the legends incorporate not just Germanic but also

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11. Ibid., 6–9, 17–18, 30, 55.
Romance sources, including the Greco-Roman story of Theseus. The research nourished the linguist’s general reflections on signs:

A legend is composed of a series of symbols … subject to the same vicissitudes and the same laws as all the other series of symbols, for example the symbols which are the words of a language. They are all part of semiology … The identity of a symbol can never be fixed as of the moment at which it is a symbol, that is to say immersed in the social body which establishes its value at each moment … Each of the characters is a symbol … which can vary according to a) name, b) position vis-à-vis the others, c) temperament, d) function, acts.14

Among the sign mechanisms that affect the oral transmission of the legends across the miles and the generations, characters are added or dropped, substituted for one another, split in two, or melded into one – as are words and individual sounds throughout the evolution of a language.

Within the same period, from 1905 until 1909, Saussure also intensively investigated Latin, Homeric, Germanic, and Vedic poetry. Analyzing first funereal and ritual inscriptions, then a wide variety of genres, the linguist became convinced that beyond traditionally observed prosodic devices such as meter and isosyllabism, alliteration and acrostic, early poets respected a “strict arithmetic” of phonetics, systematically using every sound an even number of times, for example, and that they regularly wove into their verse anagrams of the names of personae invoked or implied in the text.15 His analyses filled ninety-nine notebooks, including sustained and publishable expositions.

Saussure fell ill in 1912 and died the following year. Colleagues intimately familiar with his work brought out the Recueil de publications scientifiques, which collects almost all of his published scholarship, as well as Cours de linguistique générale, a college textbook they meticulously prepared from multiple sets of notes, mainly students’, on the Geneva courses that encompassed the topic.

II. COURS DE LINGUISTIQUE GÉNÉRALE

Saussure offered a course that combined comparative Indo-European and general linguistics in 1907, in 1908–9, and in 1910–11. He addressed general

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linguistic issues most amply on the last occasion, when he divided the year into three units: “1. Languages; 2. Language; 3. The language faculty and the individual’s exercise of language.” Unfortunately, summer vacation arrived part-way through the second unit, and the linguist never had the opportunity to develop the last topics. *Course in General Linguistics* presents the principles guiding the historical linguistics of its day, especially the methods of the Neogrammarians and of Friedrich Diez and Hermann Paul; “every part of language is subjected to change … The stream of language flows without interruption … At no time does an idiom have a perfectly stable system of units.” The work innovates by coloring and conjoining these established approaches with three strategies that Saussure adapted from newer trends in linguistics: it outlines and promotes synchronic description, describes language holistically as a *system* constituted by *relations*, and foregrounds the importance of thought and meaning to virtually all processes central to language. Following Bréal, a natural language and the human “linguistic faculty” that informs it represent not an external object but a cognitive phenomenon for a subject: “Synchronic linguistics will be concerned with the logical and psychological relations that bind together coexisting terms and form a system in the collective mind of speakers.” Arguing that in linguistics, “the viewpoint creates the object,” *Course in General Linguistics* highlights the “evolutionary” and “static” points of view, a distinction that organizes the book. Saussure contrasts sound changes and analogy, the two processes by which the Neogrammarians accounted for the evolution of idioms. The former happen unconsciously and over time, altering given phonic sequences, whether they be found in a vocabulary item, a grammatical ending, or a suffix, according to systematic processes specific to pronunciation such as accentuation, aperture, and point of articulation. By such mechanisms, Proto-Indo-European *aiwom* became *aevom* in Latin but *ew* in Old High German, and afterwards *eo* (ever) in modern German, for example. Saussure compares such a development to a game of chess that unfolds according to strict rules but where each move happens by chance, language acting like “an unconscious and unintelligent player.” The evolvement of Latin to French is thus marked by transmutations in vowel qualities and accentuation that disjoined grammatical patterns and dislocated word families (e.g. Latin *decem* [ten] and *undecim* [eleven], but French *dix*.

17. *CLG* 193, 234; *CGL* 140, 171.
20. *CLG* 208–9; *CGL* 152.
21. *CLG* 127; *CGL* 89.
and one), giving French a more lexical and less grammatical basis than Latin. Diachronic research shows that time and perceptible form impinge on an idiom’s signs and their meaning in ways radically foreign to logico-mathematical, analytical approaches to symbolic mechanisms. When sound changes disrupt the sensible bonds that unite the members of a lexical family, the words drift apart semantically, and when linguistic events lead to the coexistence of two or more similar forms for a given concept, either their meanings diverge over time (French chaise and chaire) or one or more of the terms disappears.

In the process of analogy, speakers create new expressions on the model of analyzable existing ones, as French used il chante (he sings), nous chantons (we sing) together with il aime (he loves) as a “construction rule” (il chante : nous chantons :: il aime : ?) to create nous aimons. The less regular existing form nous amons, which played no role in the emergence of the new expression, eventually fell into disuse. Analogy “acts in favor of regularity,” and all but a short list of words in French entail analogical alteration. “Language is a garment covered with patches cut from its own cloth.”

The strategic move of Course in General Linguistics is to say that while cumulatively and over time, “analogy occupies a preponderant place in the theory of evolution” of languages, analogical creations as such illustrate not so much linguistic change but rather the synchronic functioning of language conceived as a virtual system and as en-ergeia, as a complex of “generative forms”: “A newly formed word like in-décour-able already has a potential existence in language … Language never stops interpreting and decomposing the units given to it.” If certain idioms such as Sanskrit and Esperanto evince word formations governed by roots, affixes, and stems, modern Western tongues frequently flaunt grammatical rules, whether historical or contemporaneous, analyzing words instead in multiple fashions; analogy thus ultimately remains unpredictable in its creations and “capricious” in the extent of its propagation. For Saussure, whereas “ideas play no role” in sound changes, analogy entails an “unconscious comparison” and “interpretation” of existing forms as well as “the awareness [conscience] and understanding of a relation” in the actual creation of the new expression.

22. CLG 211–13, 184; CGL 153–5, 134.
23. CLG 167, 222; CGL 121, 162.
24. CLG 221–2, 183; CGL 161–2, 134.
26. CLG 235; CGL 172.
27. CLG 232; CGL 169.
28. CLG 227, 232; CGL 166, 169.
29. CLG 229, 222, 238–41, 258; CGL 167, 162, 173–6, 188.
30. CLG 226–7; CGL 165–6.
Analogy exemplifies the “mechanism of language” that constitutes an idiom as a relational dynamic and as a living instrument for a community at a given time, and the sketch in Course in General Linguistics of a modern linguistic approach to the contemporaneous functioning of a language represents its most influential innovation in linguistics and for the human sciences. More precisely stated, the “idiosyncratic” perspective studies the speech of a social group living in a common space and milieu during a given period. Rather than invoking common linguistic categories, Course in General Linguistics identifies fundamental cognitive processes that function to constitute the signs and general components of any idiom. “Two forms of our mental activity” define syntagmatic and associative relations, respectively. The former designate the relations that terms contract “in discourse … by virtue of being chained together, relations founded on the linear character of language.” Giving examples such as “unpardonable,” “human life,” “God is good,” and “if the weather is nice, we’ll go out,” Saussure emphasizes that in any syntagm, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that “The unit is a product, a combination of … interdependent elements that acquire value only through their reciprocal action in a higher unit.”

Associative relations designate those that an expression entertains with other terms that “are associated in memory” because they “offer something in common.” A word such as delightful evinces associative relations with lexemes such as delight and delighting, but also with delirious and delimited, frightful and careful, lovely and enjoyable, and so on: “the mind creates as many associative series as there are diverse relations.” The syntagmatic relation links successive segments in praesentia, while the associative relation unites terms in absentia, and whereas a syntagm entails a fixed sequence, the “mental associations” do not occur in a definite order. Like the Neogrammarians, Course in General Linguistics analyzes the forms of each particular idiom from the “bottom up”; unlike them, however, Saussure asserts the reality of the symbolic categories which the patterned terms of each language define.

While analogy and “syntagmatic types built on regular forms” exemplify “regular patterns” that can provide a certain motivation for numerous signs in an idiom (and cf. onomatopoeia), comparisons among languages quickly

31. CLG 128; CGL 90.
32. CLG 170–71; CGL 122–3.
33. CLG 170; CGL 123.
34. CLG 170–73, 176; CGL 123–5, 128.
35. CLG 171; CGL 123.
37. CLG 189–92; CGL 137–9.
38. CLG 173; CGL 125.
reveal the extent to which their signs entail an undetermined character: in similar circumstances, speakers say *s’il vous plaît* (please) on one side of the border and *bitte schön* on the other.40 *Course in General Linguistics* echoes Whitney in emphasizing the conventional dimension of languages, which represent “genuine institutions”: like the characters of the Germanic epics, linguistic signs are largely “arbitrary,” fixed at a moment in history through their use by a given community, ever subject to change in the process of their transmission through time and individual speakers.41 Rather than viewing idioms as ordered systems that harbor zones of illogicality, *Course in General Linguistics* inverts the proportion to say that their “naturally chaotic” and “irrational” character is limited or tempered by the “mechanism of language” comprising “syntagmatic solidarities” and “associative co-ordinations.”42 Chinese and English illustrate lexicological languages situated toward the purely arbitrary end of the spectrum, while Sanskrit and Esperanto approximate the opposite, grammatical pole.43

The core of *Course in General Linguistics* ponders how to define a linguistic entity, reality, or identity, in the process underlining the specificity of linguistics as a discipline and the particularity of each language as an idiomatic configuration of sound and sense. In a synchronic perspective, and following Courtenay and subsequent research, Saussure emphasizes that a given physical disparity between two sounds may determine wholly distinct words in one tongue but only personal or regional accents in a second, and that a speaker may pronounce the “same” short phrase with as much phonic variation from one occasion to another as she does for different words in the idiom.44 *Course in General Linguistics* further argues that linguistic meaning varies in similar fashion: the sense of an expression changes from one context to another, and languages exhibit significant semantic diversity in both grammar and vocabulary. English and Slavic verb systems thus make fundamental aspectual distinctions (e.g. *it is raining, it rains, it has rained*) absent from French; Hebrew does not distinguish between past, present, and future tense; and many Germanic and Romance languages observe critical contrasts between familiar and formal second-person pronouns that are lacking in English.45

Whereas psychology may study pure ideas and physics raw sounds, linguistics investigates a phenomenon in which the two interact and condition each other at every turn.46 In order to mark their interdependence, Saussure intro-

40. *CLG* 100–101, 148; *CGL* 67–9, 106.
41. *CLG* 110–11; *CGL* 76.
42. *CLG* 176–7, 182–3; *CGL* 127–8, 133.
43. *CLG* 228, 183; *CGL* 166, 134.
46. *CLG* 144–5; *CGL* 103.
duces a pair of neologisms: the sign comprises the signifier (cf. sound) and the signified (cf. concept), such that the Janus linguistic entity resembles the sides of a single sheet of paper, or “a chemical compound like water, a combination of hydrogen and oxygen; taken separately, neither element has any of the properties of water.”47 Alongside the associative and syntagmatic relations among signs, Course in General Linguistics argues that signifiers are constituted diacritically vis-à-vis other signifiers, as signifieds are among signifieds: “The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it.”48 While an “auxiliary” study can investigate the detailed physiological mechanisms and auditory impressions entailed in the syllable and its component sounds, from the perspective of the language system, “phonemes are above all else opposing, relative, and negative entities.”49 Similarly, in the semantic sphere of an idiom, “synonyms … have value only through their opposition … [they] limit each other reciprocally”; historically, if one disappears, its content goes to its rivals.50 Together, difference and the mechanism of language define synchronic linguistic units and identities through the concept of value, both use and exchange,51 and “the notion of value envelopes the unit, concrete entity, and reality … language is a form and not a substance.”52

Value provides a conception of the sign entirely different from the linear definition central to traditional metaphysics, in which a word symbolizes a universal “affection of the soul” (Aristotle) or in which vox gets its value from conceptus grounded in res, as for Aquinas and the Scholastics (cf. Charles Ogden and I. A. Richards’s triangle Symbol–Thought–Referent53). Instead of saying that a speaker chooses an expression simply “because it signifies what he wishes to express,” Course in General Linguistics emphasizes that the choice depends on the “whole latent system” of a particular idiom; “language is a system all of whose terms are interdependent and in which the value of one term arises only from the simultaneous presence of the others.”54

The diachronic and synchronic perspectives define different linguistic realities. The diachronic identity represents the sequence of transformations that the linguist reconstructs to trace how a term or terms became one or more terms of different function, meaning, and pronunciation at a later time, possibly in other

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47. CLG 145, 155–62; CGL 103, 111–17.
48. CLG 166; CGL 120.
49. CLG 164, cf. 63–95; CGL 119, cf. 38–64.
52. CLG 154, 169; CGL 110, 122.
54. CLG 179, 159; CGL 130, 114.
languages. Synchronic units correspond to all of the terms and only the terms of an idiom that effectively function as components for the members of a given linguistic community.\textsuperscript{55} From a diachronic perspective, French \textit{pas} (not) and \textit{pas} (step) represent the same word, whereas from a synchronic perspective, they designate two distinct signs today, used in different contexts and with different meanings.\textsuperscript{56} Popular but erroneous “folk etymologies” represent false explanations for diachronic linguistics but true associations for synchronic linguistics.\textsuperscript{57} Synchrony by definition involves the \textit{system} of the language, whereas for Saussure, diachronic changes always possess a particular, isolated, spontaneous, nongeneral character.\textsuperscript{58} The \textit{panchronic} perspective, finally, explores the general principles that are always true of any language, similar to the laws of physics or biology.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{Course in General Linguistics} strives to develop a definition of linguistics as a coherent, autonomous, rigorous science positioned in relation to other disciplines.\textsuperscript{60} To this end, it endeavors to identify a “homogeneous,” “integral and concrete object” at its heart around which the field can be organized.\textsuperscript{61} The essay maps out the language sciences using a series of dyads or triads, privileging one term at the expense of the other(s) in each case. In keeping with already established linguistic orthodoxy, the popular spoken idiom trumps the prestige written form, as “internal” structure takes precedence over “external” phenomena tied to anthropology, sociology, political science, and human geography.\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Course in General Linguistics} further distinguishes between an idiom’s \textit{system} and its concrete manifestations, a distinction adopted in one form or another by the majority of linguists in the twentieth century. Among “the heterogeneous mass of facts entailed in \textit{speech [langage]},” the essay abstracts and promotes \textit{langue} (language), “a self-contained whole and a principle of classification,” and contrasts it with \textit{parole} (speaking).\textsuperscript{63} “\textit{Langue …} is a fund accumulated by the members of the community through the practice of \textit{parole}, a grammatical system existing potentially in every brain, or more exactly in the brains of a group of individuals; for \textit{langue} is never complete in any single individual, but exists perfectly only in the collectivity.”\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Parole} in turn comprises notably

\textsuperscript{55.} CLG 128; CGL 90.
\textsuperscript{56.} CLG 129; CGL 91.
\textsuperscript{57.} CLG 238–41; CGL 173–6.
\textsuperscript{58.} CLG 129–34; CGL 91–5.
\textsuperscript{59.} CLG 134–5; CGL 95–6.
\textsuperscript{60.} CLG 13–54; CGL 1–32.
\textsuperscript{61.} CLG 23, 32; CGL 7, 15.
\textsuperscript{62.} CLG 40–43; CGL 20–23.
\textsuperscript{63.} CLG 31, 25, cf. 23–39; CGL 14, 9, cf. 7–20.
\textsuperscript{64.} CLG 30; CGL 13–14.
two activities, “the combinations by which the speaking subject uses the code of langue in order to express his personal thought,” and the “psycho-physical mechanism” of muscular articulation “that allows him to exteriorize those combinations.”65 Langue thus contrasts with parole as social versus individual, virtual versus actual, whole versus part, psychological versus psycho-physical, finite versus infinite, and productive schemes versus realized utterances.66 While Saussure’s 1910–11 lectures finally emphasize the solidarity between langue and parole and envision a linguistics that studies the latter, the Course in General Linguistics editors firmly position langue as the unique rightful object of the discipline. Thus, whereas langue and parole remain “closely connected and each presupposes the other,” and while subjects learn and change their idiom through parole, Course in General Linguistics declares the former “essential” and the latter “accessory,” “accidental,” and “secondary.”67 Focused on the sign and on the mechanism of language as defined in Course in General Linguistics, langue highlights the conventional, contingent character of linguistic symbols, fixed by their use in a community through time. Saussure “assign[s] linguistics a place among the sciences” by describing it as the most typical system described by a new discipline he envisions, “semiology (from Greek semeion, ‘sign’) … a science that studies the life of signs within society,” which would be “part of social psychology and thus of general psychology.”68

More than thirty years after Saussure gave his last class in general linguistics, Jakobson stated of it that “No book in this century has exerted as wide and as deep an influence on international linguistics … almost all of the essential problems of modern linguistics are sketched in this book.”69 Quickly recognized as the principal text of reference for forward-thinking linguists, Course in General Linguistics served as the prime vehicle for the critical discussions in the field for almost half a century. Even after Noam Chomsky’s generative grammar achieved dominance toward the end of the 1950s, Saussure’s clear treatment of fundamental linguistic issues, freely illustrated with colorful metaphors, continued to exert great influence in the human sciences. Scholars welcomed its explicit discussion of theoretical topics and concurred with the centrality of its main principles, even as they bemoaned lacunae and disagreed with many of its precise formulations.

Indeed, the qualities and influence of Course in General Linguistics cannot hide its gaps, problems, and debatable proposals, which hosts of subsequent

65. CLG 31; CGL 14.
67. CLG 30, 37–8; CGL 14, 18–19.
68. CLG 33; CGL 16.
linguists have observed and endeavored to repair. The work never examines predication, parts of speech (e.g. verb, adjective, conjunction), sentence structure, or intonation, and contains only sketchy statements on syntax. It contradicts itself on occasion, including in its arguments for demoting the written language and external linguistics. Each of Saussure’s fundamental paired concepts incorporates several components whose mappings fail to coincide. Thus while the langue–parole distinction has proved highly influential, Jakobson persuasively argues that it amalgamates three separate antinomies: potential and actual, social and individual, and conformity and nonconformity to a norm.⁷⁰ One of the virtues of the book is the clarity with which it articulates its central oppositions, yet that very precision often comes at the expense of nuance and qualification. The dynamism that Course in General Linguistics ascribes to analogy, to the mechanism of language, and to the propagation of innovations thus calls for a subtler interaction between old and new, between rule and event, than that provided for in the generally dichotomous formulations of langue and parole and of synchrony and diachrony.⁷¹ Eugenio Coseriu, Hjelmslev, André Martinet, and Jakobson formulated finer distinctions that mediate langue–parole, and show the extent to which change and system, far from functioning as dichotomies, in fact remain inextricably intertwined. At times, the mere choice of a term has generated confusion: the word “arbitrary” that Course in General Linguistics uses to designate the contingent, historical character of linguistic structures has often been interpreted as slighting the very mechanisms to which it is meant to call attention.

Viewed retrospectively, Course in General Linguistics seems to exaggerate the extent to which linguistics and its object of study can be defined as one, homogeneous, and neatly bounded and situated. The efforts deployed to this end effectively isolate language and its study from the rest of the social and natural world. Thus, after noting that “the linking of a name and a thing” is anything but “a very simple operation,” Course in General Linguistics proceeds to bracket the issue without ever tackling its complexities.⁷² Similarly, while it founds its central “mechanism of language” on fundamental cognitive processes, the essay describes both thought and sound as “amorphous” before language as social convention constitutes each, thereby slighting the incidence of other sensory-motor processes and of mimetic learning.⁷³ Instead of foregrounding the Leipzig psychologist Wilhelm Wundt’s idea of mental “images” of sounds and concepts, Course in General Linguistics might have done better to maintain

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⁷⁰. Ibid., 172.
⁷¹. And see CLG 173, 194; CGL 125, 141.
⁷². CLG 97; CGL 65.
Saussure’s own 1891–94 view that language exists as process and event only, hypostatic representations of its dynamic remaining but didactic expository devices. Course in General Linguistics avoids discussing language as interaction and conversation, which both common sense and scholarship available to Saussure place at the heart of speech, and the book never systematically treats linguistic semantics, although considerable historical research was available, including work by Bréal and Meillet.

III. LINGUISTIC STRUCTURALISM

A number of schools grew up that shared the orientations formulated in Course in General Linguistics even as they amended, extended, and developed its proposals, most notably the Prague Circle (Trubetzkoy, Jakobson, Karczewski) and the Copenhagen Circle (Hjelmslev). Trained in the philology and historical linguistics of a particular language group, these linguists elaborated the methods today called structural linguistics. They in turn inspired a younger generation of scholars, including Benveniste, Coseriu, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Martinet, Bernard Pottier, and Lucien Tesnière, who gave new impetus to structural linguistics after the Second World War, often applying the principles of phonology and general linguistics to syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Returning to the outline that Saussure announced at the beginning of his 1910–11 course, one can say that Hjelmslev and Jakobson further elaborated “2. Language” and broached the investigation of “3. The language faculty,” which Chomsky greatly expanded, while Benveniste founded the linguistic study of “3. … the individual’s exercise of language.”

Hjelmslev, the leading exponent of Danish “glossematics,” adopted the concepts of Course in General Linguistics and its focus on internal structure, but removed the project from the psychological arena, shifting it toward the formal framework of analytical philosophy illustrated by Russell and Carnap. His 1943 Omkring Sprogteoriens Grundlaeggelse (Prolegomena to the Theory of Language) thus translates the cognitive and spatiotemporal associative and syntagmatic relations of Course in General Linguistics into logical disjunction and conjunction, then specifies nine syntactic “functions” among terms corresponding to three forms of implication (mutual presupposition, unilateral presupposition, and simple co-occurrence) obtaining in three modes (disjunctive, conjunctive, and disjunctive-conjunctive). Prolegomena and subsequent

74. Saussure, Writings in General Linguistics, 55.
works formulate a highly abstract but complex and flexible instrument by further applying Saussure’s founding insights on perspective, by analyzing the central paired concepts of *Course in General Linguistics*, and by extending the theory to the whole of science. The point of view adopted in a given analysis determines whether a term functions as signifier or signified in a given context: sensible qualities such as *front*, *rounded*, and *strong* serve as the semantic content of linguistic expressions in one situation, and as the differential characteristics constitutive of phonemes in the next.\(^{76}\) Similarly, *Prolegomena* redefines form and substance as converses determined by positional criteria: the phonologist’s substance becomes the acoustic physicist’s form, as the anthropologist’s form corresponds to the linguistic semanticist’s substance.\(^{77}\) Such reformulations enable Hjelmslev to downplay the focus in *Course in General Linguistics* on the unit sign as a two-sided sheet of paper, and to model instead the relative autonomy of local structures of sound (e.g. syllable) and local structures of meaning that combine in language. The new framework is also able to consider writing and speaking as two “connotators” alongside others such as nation, emotion, genre, and style, each of which may or may not determine a distinct norm within a linguistic system.

The most important and influential development in linguistic structuralism by far, however, was the phonology elaborated by the Prague Circle as of the 1920s. Developed in descriptions of hundreds of idioms, this methodology established the preeminence of linguistics among the human and social sciences of its day, positioning it as a “pilot science” for other disciplines and attracting the emulation of Lévi-Strauss\(^{78}\) and the attention of Lacan, Althusser, and others. Elaborating the focus in *Course in General Linguistics* on value, relations, and system through exacting investigations, Trubetzkoy and his genial protégé Jakobson defined precise methods by which to isolate invariants and variants as well as minimal units and their combinatory rules; they identified levels of phonological analysis, types of relations, and mechanisms by which terms are neutralized in certain environments. The Prague linguists drew a sharp and principled contrast between concrete phonetic segments and abstract phonological models thereof (cf. “-etic” and “-emic” units), and formulated phonological universals and general laws.

The Prague School method was both structural and “functional” or teleological: synchronically, it viewed speech as directed toward definite ends that affected linguistic structure, including referential (communicative), expressive


(social, e.g. regional accent), and appellative (individual, e.g. style) objectives. Following Saussure, it thus distinguished carefully between the phoneme, which models the smallest phonic segment that effects distinctions of meaning in langue, on the one hand, and allophones that function as contextual, regional, or social variants in parole, on the other. Jakobson’s explicit commitment to a concrete, phenomenological, and functional perspective contrasts with Hjelmslev’s formal view that allows for autonomous structures not governed by meaning and intentionality. Diachronically, the Prague functional commitment embraced a Hegelian stance to assert that like all sociocultural phenomena, linguistic changes are “systematic and goal directed.”

Martinet thus demonstrated that phonological economies contain both stable central phonemes and isolated phonemes susceptible to change, and that the schemes evolve in response to twin inverse and competing tendencies, toward concision-least effort, and toward diversification-redundancy that maximizes clarity and thus communication. The Prague linguists strenuously argued against the description in *Course in General Linguistics* of linguistic change as entailing an isolated, unpredictable character, in contrast to the synchronic system; they also further underlined the dynamic character of an idiom and its components.

Jakobson led the way in formulating the current definition of the phoneme as a bundle of distinctive features. Collaborating with Morris Halle and others in the United States, he further differentiated phonology from phonetics by drastically reducing the number of features to a universal set of twelve. Jakobson also convincingly argued that phonological, grammatical, and lexical oppositions are all structured by identical logical binary oppositions in which one of the terms is marked (salient or weighted) and the other unmarked (neutral), thus dispensing with Trubetzkoy’s gradual and multilateral relations, including ternary contrasts among points of articulation (e.g. *p*/t*/k*). Jakobson’s best-known findings in explanatory, universal laws concern the irreversible solidarities that govern how oppositions are distributed throughout idioms, such that if a language possesses nasal vowels, it also has correlative oral vowels, for example. His research in psycholinguistics revealed developmental corollaries: children learn nasal vowels only after they acquire the oral vocalic equivalents. In the late 1960s, Jakobson further investigated such issues when affiliated with the Harvard Center for Cognitive Studies and the Salk Institute for Biological Studies.

The prolific and versatile Jakobson’s inclusive vision of linguistics – he was fond of paraphrasing Terence, “I am a linguist; nothing in language can be alien

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to me” – sought to reverse the mainstream centripetal definition of the field illustrated by the langue of *Course in General Linguistics*. Developing Saussure’s associative and syntagmatic relations as *similarity* (equivalence) and *contiguity* (temporal and spatial proximity), Jakobson posited that the derived operations of *selection* and *combination* performed by the speaker distinguish two phases of language acquisition in psycholinguistics, determine contrasting types of aphasia in linguistic pathology, subtend metaphor and metonymy, respectively, in the field of rhetoric, and alternately inform symbolism and realism in art and literature.80 Going beyond linguists’ focus on internal structure and analytic philosophers’ concentration on reference, he devised and illustrated a six-point model of communication and linguistic functions that also grants prominence to emotional, technological, and poetic dynamics.81 As early as the mid-1930s, seminal articles apply Prague methods to the analysis of grammar and morphology, describing signs for categories such as case and tense as invariant bundles of distinctive semantic features (e.g. singular–plural, masculine–feminine, subject–object) susceptible of contextual variation.82 Jakobson helped initiate the subfield of linguistic typology, or methods for classifying idioms synchronically by shared grammatical features, alongside established diachronic research in linguistic genealogy or shared origins.

Jakobson’s grammatical essays inspired American anthropological linguists to use similar “componential” analysis to describe kinship terminologies and folk taxonomies of flora and fauna, as his work on universal irreversible solidarities led to studies of categories such as color by anthropologists such as Brent Berlin and Paul Kay.83 As of the late 1950s, the studies launched efforts to develop linguistic structural semantics, which matured in the research of Pottier, Coseriu, and Greimas in the 1960s. Exploring the syntagmatic dimension, Greimas posited the concept of *isotopy* or the repetition and continuity of semantic units that provide coherence in discourse, and developed the *constructed sememe* or cognitive unit of meaning, which the listener/reader creates in summarizing extended discourse.84 Like Jakobson, Greimas and his student François Rastier have sought to widen linguistics and indeed to reassert

the philological paradigm that integrates language into a broader study of texts and cultures; the investigation necessarily entails exploring the interpretation of discourse and no longer its mere analysis. These extensions of structuralism into semantics paralleled J. R. Firth’s contextual theory of meaning, and complemented the forays into a structural analysis of syntax elaborated since the early 1950s by linguists such as Tesnière.

Beginning in the 1940s, the Indo-Europeanist Émile Benveniste published influential articles in general linguistics that establish an exploration of parole and thus of pragmatics. Defining Saussurean langue as the “semiotic” mode of language that comprises the virtual system of differential and combinatory signs, Benveniste describes a parallel “semantic” mode whose main unit is the sentence spoken by an individual in a particular context. Language passes from the semiotic to the semantic mode in the speech event, in which “speech [langage] bears reference to the world of objects … in the form of sentences which relate to specific and concrete situations.” If the utterance (énoncé) represents the product of speech, the “enunciation [énonciation] is the very act of producing an utterance.” Benveniste studies enunciative processes by examining the linguistic mechanisms that effect and represent the speech event and its parameters. Pioneering articles thus analyze constructions for what is today called deixis, including personal pronouns, adverbs of time (e.g. now, later, afterwards) and place (here, there, somewhere), as well as the tenses, aspects, and moods of verbal systems. From the foundational I–thou relation spring both speech and the subject; language no longer appears as an external instrument of communication which the individual freely manipulates, but rather as the symbolic and dialogic dimension in which subjectivity and especially intersubjectivity are constituted.

In the human sciences more broadly, structural linguistics is known for having inspired some of the most brilliant minds of the postwar generation in Europe to renovate their field through theoretical reflection and the development of explicit methodologies defined in precise terminologies. Althusser, Barthes, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, and other structuralists sought to elaborate models grounded in formal mechanisms that identify distinct levels of relevance, invariants, minimal elements, and the syntactic rules by which components combine. Investigating social organizations, cultural practices, political

87. Ibid., vol. 1, 128.
88. Ibid., vol. 2, 80.
systems, psychological disorders, film, literature, and advertising, they explored how the phenomena function as systems comprising networks of relations, and searched for general conditions and explanatory principles. The structuralists explored the new conceptions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and the novel views on the relation between mind and matter introduced by the new theory of the sign and of relational systems. They explicitly defined their field and mapped its relation to other disciplines.

American structuralism developed not through Course in General Linguistics but rather through a parallel and contemporaneous adaptation of Neogrammarian methods to the synchronic study of Native American idioms. Franz Boas reworked nineteenth-century Germanic philology into conjoined and complementary descriptive linguistics and anthropology. Maintaining the close alliance between linguistics and anthropology, Leonard Bloomfield and Edward Sapir integrated the Prague School’s phonology, but not its teleological and communicative functionalism, nor its focus on holism, nor its poetics, nor its engagement with semantics; indeed, Bloomfield coated his theory with a veneer of antimentalistic behaviorism, and argued for fail-safe, sign-based discovery procedures that would guarantee the results of field studies. In the 1950s, Zellig Harris became the first American linguist of note to label his descriptive linguistics “structural,” applying the term to his formal, mathematically based methods for studying discourse and for effecting distributional analyses comparable to computer-assisted concordances, the resultant form classes being considered the grammar of the language studied.

As of the late 1950s, Harris’s brilliant student Chomsky began developing methods focused on syntax that continued but significantly transformed his teacher’s approach: generative grammar analyzed individual sentences instead of corpora, employed newer mathematics, and formulated its descriptions as ordered formal processes rather than as taxonomic classes. Further reversing the American descriptive tradition but following Jakobson’s lead, Chomsky explicitly argued against discovery procedures and instead for explanatory analyses; progressively integrated significant semantic analysis; and increasingly focused his theory on linguistic universals. Chomskian grammars and his followers’ variants quickly replaced American structuralism as the leading linguistic paradigm in the United States, and the new issues in syntax and their associated debates in general linguistics either displaced or seriously rivaled continental structural linguistics as the leading approach in other countries.

At the same time, Chomsky engineered the triumph and even the sharpening of key Course in General Linguistics and structuralist principles over the Neogrammarian heritage maintained in American descriptivism: he ushered in an overwhelming concentration on the virtual linguistic system (competence, I[internal]-Language) and a concomitant demotion of actual usage (performance,
E[xternal]-Language); established an exclusive focus on internal linguistics as against external linguistics; and highlighted cognitive processes, emphasizing the affinity between linguistics and psychology while divorcing language from anthropology. Chomskian grammars attribute even more reality to symbolic categories than does *Course in General Linguistics*, to the point of reinstating traditional grammatical categories and dispensing with explicit language-specific bottom-up analyses of forms. Like Jakobson, Chomsky collaborated with Halle in phonology, bringing forward the central Prague project by proposing a small set of universal articulatory distinctive features, while foregrounding a novel generative approach that posits “deep” and “surface” levels. Like Hjelmslevian glossemics, Chomskian grammars grant significant autonomy to formal structures of syntax and of phonology. On the other hand, Chomsky largely maintained the positive stance of the Neogrammarians and American descriptivists, and never sought to model language as a system of interrelated, mutually constitutive terms.

After serving as the chief source of new linguistic ideas and debates internationally for three decades, Chomsky began to share that role with other approaches, especially embodied cognitive linguistics, as of the late 1980s. While the latter enterprise does not resurrect structuralist paradigms, it turns against Chomskian formalism to reassert and revitalize the phenomenological perspectives central to *Course in General Linguistics* and to Jakobson, and to reclaim the centrality of meaning, adopting the Saussurean definition of linguistic constructions and expressions as comprising closely interdependent phonological and semantic facets. On the other hand, the new cognitive linguistics emphasizes continuities between speech and nonlinguistic experience, both in language acquisition and in subsequent daily use, in ways that greatly expand the motivated character of speech and further qualify its arbitrariness. It also specifically foregrounds human phylogenetic factors that impinge on speech, restoring the dialogue between linguistics and the natural sciences, and qualifying the conventional, nonbiological foundations of speech.

**IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON LINGUISTIC STRUCTURALISM: QUESTIONS AND LIMITS**

Today *Course in General Linguistics* remains a historic, significant, and intriguing book, but it was never the comprehensive or definitive work on language

that some nonlinguists took it for in the 1960s–1970s. Like much of modern linguistics, the structural linguistics that it helped to inaugurate concentrated on phonology, devoting far less attention to syntax, semantics, or pragmatics. Structuralism’s initial strategy of tackling the latter areas by transposing the phonological model produced limited results. Structural linguistics wrestled with issues that remain open-ended questions today in the language sciences and indeed throughout cognitive studies, notably how higher-level abstract categories are integrated with lower-level concrete signs, and how general phylogenetic structures are conjugated with particular historicocultural processes.

The establishment of modern linguistics as a rigorous science has so often come at the price of restricting its compass, giving short shrift to the relation between language and rhetoric, communication, texts, society, and the nonverbal world; the narrow focus forms part of the last two centuries’ trend toward increasing specialization and the fragmentation of knowledge. For the postwar scholars who looked to linguistics as a model, the quasi-mathematical character of phonology, its finite inventories, and its direct grounding in a differentiated material substratum project a model of scientific inquiry that cannot be emulated in all other pursuits. Similarly, the focus on internal mechanisms can be limiting, as Greimas’s otherwise powerful semiotics illustrates.

MAJOR WORKS


In retrospect, it seems rather odd to include Claude Lévi-Strauss in a history of continental philosophy. Although he had obtained a degree in philosophy, his turn to anthropology and his travels in the Amazon must be considered a flight from the philosophical tradition with which he was familiar. Moreover, his relation to philosophy was largely disdainful, culminating most notoriously in the violent attack on Jean-Paul Sartre that concludes The Savage Mind. Again, at the end of his massive work on myths, he writes: “I am averse to any proposed philosophical exploitation of my work, and I shall do no more than point out that, in my view, my findings can, at best, only lead to the abjuration of what is called philosophy at the present time.” It is true that, on reading the Mythologiques, one may be left with the impression that the Amerindians were, unbeknown to themselves, very much concerned with philosophical issues. But if Lévi-Strauss can sometimes appear a philosopher in Amerindian disguise, no philosopher has ever read Lévi-Strauss to examine the contents of the myths he discusses. Philosophers read him for other reasons, reasons that now appear based on something of a misunderstanding.

The story begins during the Second World War, when, after brief ethnological expeditions into the Amazon region, Lévi-Strauss, in exile in New York City, met

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss (November 28, 1908–October 30, 2009; born in Brussels, Belgium; died in Paris) was educated at the Sorbonne (1927–32), and received a doctorat d’état there in 1948. His influences included Boas, Durkheim, Jakobson, Mauss, Rousseau, and Saussure, and he held appointments at the University of São Paulo (1935–39), New School for Social Research (1942–45), École pratique des Hautes Études (1950–74), and Collège de France (1959–82).
Roman Jakobson, the leading figure of the Prague School of structural linguistics. By the 1950s, Lévi-Strauss had demonstrated that the method of structural linguistics and, more particularly, of phonology could be applied to cultural domains far beyond that of language proper. By the 1960s, “structuralism” had conquered tout Paris, laying claim to a number of leading intellectual figures. At the time, it appeared as if the key had been found that would allow the human sciences to be truly scientific without having to imitate the natural sciences. To this challenge, almost every philosopher, at least in France, was obliged to respond. Lévi-Strauss himself remained suspicious; he famously said that the only other structuralists in France besides himself were the linguist Émile Benveniste and the mythologist Georges Dumézil, pointedly excluding Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, and others. Moreover, unlike many of the latter, he remained, throughout his intellectual career, faithful to structuralism, understood as a method, and not as an ersatz philosophy. And as method, he had the good sense, at least in his substantive practice, to realize that structuralism was more applicable to certain object domains than others, more particularly to primitive societies and, within the latter, to kinship systems, totemic classifications, and myths. Once structuralism mutated after 1968 into poststructuralism, postmodernism and post-postmodernism, few philosophers still read Lévi-Strauss. By contrast, his anthropological legacy remains palpable (recognizing that his anthropological claims cannot be reduced to structuralism per se).

Lévi-Strauss was the twentieth century’s most famous anthropologist, but his career path was hardly typical of the discipline. He had no formal training in anthropology, and his stay among the Amazonian tribes was quite short. Indeed, his strictly ethnological writings, based on on-site observations, are among his least read and least published works. Admittedly, Tristes Tropiques, which relates his Amazonian peregrinations, was a tremendous success. It represents, however, a sort of “degree zero” of ethnological writing; for it does not recount the positive knowledge gained, but reflects on the “existential” difficulties and moral responsibilities of cross-cultural encounters with doomed, exotic societies. His “positive” contributions would be strictly theoretical, as brilliantly illustrated by his first important work, Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté, a book that revolutionized the study of kinship, and still remains the most important work in its field.

The title clearly refers to Émile Durkheim’s Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse; but the work is better understood as an extension of Marcel Mauss’s classic Essai sur le don.3 As with Mauss, the exchange of gifts is understood not

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*3. Durkheim and Mauss are discussed in an essay by Mike Gane in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
in economic terms, concerned with the individual calculation of profit and loss, but as constitutive of social bonds. Here, the “gifts” exchanged are brides, and the social bonds that result from the circulation of women are kinship relations, seen as the most determinant set of relations in primitive societies. In this manner, Lévi-Strauss shifted the emphasis in kinship studies from the vertical relations of filiation that ensure familial continuity between the generations, to the horizontal relations of alliance between families. When speaking of the simplest, “atomic” structure of the family, he thus includes the “tiers donateur,” the giver of wives (often the maternal uncle). Society supposes, by definition, relations between families, and the circulation of women that ensures such relations supposes the incest taboo. The latter, Lévi-Strauss argues, has no basis in nature; on the contrary, it is directed against natural inclinations, and so marks the movement from nature to culture – hence its universality. Two points should be noted, as they bear on the larger argument. First, the incest taboo is not consequent to the repression of individual desire (as in Freud’s Oedipal complex); it is imposed by the collectivity and, as such, suggests Durkheim’s “conscience collective” or, better, an “inconscience collective” (as it is not devised by conscious accord). Second, the circulation of women supposes what Lévi-Strauss terms “the principle of reciprocity,” that is, families give their daughters (or sisters) to other families because they expect to receive the latter’s daughters (or sisters) in return. Lévi-Strauss views society (or at least primitive society) as essentially échangiste, the exchange of women being completed by the exchange of goods and words. Reciprocity can entail antagonistic relations – insults, blows, vendettas – but antagonistic reciprocity still supposes relative equality. This immediately distinguishes Lévi-Strauss from many of his generation who sought the basic schema of the relation of self to other in that of master and slave. It also helps explain why there is little discussion of power or domination: not just domination within a group, but domination by the group (as, for example, with Durkheim’s discussion of the representation of the collectivity as sacred). Exchange concerns a movement beyond group frontiers, not their establishment or maintenance; and if exchange implies rules, Lévi-Strauss’s concern is with their unconscious functioning, not their conscious justification. As for the question of patriarchy, implied by “the circulation of women” (even in matrilineal or matrilocal societies), it is never really confronted.

The properly structuralist moment of the book concerns the analysis, relative to “elementary kinship structures,” of the terms of the exchange, that is, who is exchanged between whom. By “elementary” structures Lévi-Strauss is not referring to their degree of complexity; he is speaking of kinship systems where the rules concern not just whom one cannot marry (the incest taboo applies to our own “complex” kinship structures) but whom one ought to marry – which is more typical of primitive societies where kinship structures, being
of such commanding importance, are more robustly delineated. Only “elementary structures” provide the restricted number of terms on which structuralist analysis can establish a limited set of possible relations. Lévi-Strauss makes a first distinction between cross-cousins and parallel cousins (cross-cousins being the children of one’s maternal uncles or paternal aunts, parallel cousins those of one’s maternal aunts or paternal uncles), and restricts his analysis largely to the former. Not only is marriage between cross-cousins spread over a more disparate geographical area (thus resisting diffusionist hypotheses), but it better expresses the principle of reciprocity, as the tendency in marriages between parallel cousins is for women to circulate within the limits of a paternal clan. A second distinction is made within cross-cousin marriages between those where one marries the daughter of one’s maternal uncle, and those where one marries the daughter of one’s paternal aunt. Another distinction concerns whether the marriage preference refers to the daughters of, say, one’s maternal uncle’s family or one’s paternal uncle’s clan. And a further distinction distinguishes between “restricted exchange,” where families or matrimonial classes exchange brides directly, and “general exchange” where the exchanges are indirect (group A gives daughters to group B, which gives daughters to group C, while group A receives its brides from group D). In effect, Lévi-Strauss begins with a limit number of terms: father, mother, maternal aunt, paternal aunt, son of maternal aunt, and so on. These terms can be combined in different ways to form a limited number of different combinations, although sometimes the combinations prove quite complicated, and one has to resort to pencil and paper or even mathematical formulas to understand their inter-generational functioning. Some combinations are more common than others, presumably because they respond better to the problem that the principle of reciprocity seeks to resolve, that is, the maintenance of families in continuous relation with each other so as to form a coherent society. But the reason why a given society “chooses” a given combination, although not unaffected by local conditions, is ultimately arbitrary, and all the more arbitrary because “unconscious.” To be sure, a given “choice” may have tremendous “sociological” implications (as already suggested by the effects of parallel cousin marriages on clan formation). Structural analysis, however, is less interested in the analysis of these implications than in uncovering the underlying rules. The supposition of such an analysis is that all societies must respond to the same exigencies (as implied by the incest taboo), using the same range of “materials” (as given by the family’s atomic structure). In contrast to how most anthropologists and sociologists understand the term “structure,” it is viewed here as a model that shapes empirical reality, and not as part of that reality. In effect, one can deduce the possible combinations that form the different kinship structures before, and even without, finding empirical equivalents. Moreover, the empirical equivalents will always be messier than their models; matrimonial
rules can never be fully prescriptive, if only because the demographic facts do not always cooperate.

The next major work after the study on kinship (excluding *Tristes Tropiques* and the essays collected in *Anthropologie structurale*) was *Le Totémisme aujourd’hui*, which Lévi-Strauss claimed was an introduction to *La Pensée sauvage*, which can itself be considered an introduction to the multivolume *Mythologiques*. Totemism had been a key concept in anthropology, although one subject to considerable controversy since the 1920s. It was generally defined as the identification of an individual or group (usually a clan) with a totemic animal that, being deemed an ancestor of the individual or group, is considered sacred, and subject to a number of prohibitions. The problem is that the different elements do not always cohere: the totem need not be an animal (it can be a plant or household article); it can be an object of identification without being considered sacred, or can be considered sacred without being an object of identification. For Lévi-Strauss, the theory of totemism sought to include at once too much (a theory of primitive religion) and, more importantly, too little. Once denied a relation to the sacred, the totemic phenomena can be understood from within a larger, “epistemological” perspective, although this supposes the totems be considered, relative to a given society, in terms of their differential relations (and not individually). They will then be seen to form a classificatory system whereby different animal species are distinguished according to, say, different elements (such that turtles are associated with water, eagles with air, etc.), which system can be applied to establish, organize, and render intelligible social differences, notably in terms of clan distinctions. In this manner, the totem appears not as the object of a cult, but as a conceptual tool, an “*opérateur logique*,” by which the natural world, the social world, and the relations within and between the two, are rendered meaningful.

The work on totemism marks a shift in emphasis from institutional practices (as with bridial exchanges) to a concern with the operations of the “savage mind.” This should not be confused with a shift from a materialist to a mentalist perspective. Kinship structures entail a “mental” element relative to both its invisible rules and their visible effects on language (e.g. with marriage to cross-cousins, parallel cousins will likely be considered as brothers or sisters). This shift does, however, suggest a cognitivist turn, and promises to say something provocative about “thinking,” particularly as it places “thinking” in relation to the unconscious and the symbolic. As the use of these terms is not always clear, it is worth considering each in turn.

In his earlier works, Lévi-Strauss gestures to Freud and Marx when speaking of the unconscious, but such references are soon dropped. As noted, unlike the Freudian unconscious, Lévi-Strauss’s unconscious is collective, not individual. Moreover, although it is inclusive of the incest taboo, it is not particularly
associated with the repression of drives, sexual or otherwise. Similarly, if he speaks, on occasion, of myths as being ideological, he does not correlate the unconscious with a desire to avoid facing certain truths. The “unconscious” does not concern desire, but is strictly mental. The model remains phonology: when speaking, one is “unconscious” of phonemes and their differential relations, although one could neither speak nor, by implication, think without them. And what applies to the “material” level of signifiers or phonemes, also applies to the “mental” level of signifieds or “lexemes.” If one then pushes the analysis beyond the differential relations between specific signifieds and examines the different forms that these relations take independent of their content, the “unconscious” need no longer be tied to a specific code or culture. The “unconscious” becomes the inventory of all the forms that underwrite the content of all possible consciousness: the underlying structure of the human mind in its universality. This is why Lévi-Strauss is able to say that “man has always been thinking equally well.” And it is at the basis of Paul Ricoeur’s much quoted claim that Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism represents a “Kantianism without a transcendental subject,” with the proviso that Lévi-Strauss is referring not to the \textit{a priori} abstract categories necessary to human reason, but to the set of “logical” operations that are prior to any distinction between rational and irrational thought. Lévi-Strauss does not believe that one can uncover such a structuralist unconscious by an act of introspection; one must examine a mind that is spontaneous and undomesticated, a mind associated with the origins of thinking – in short, a “savage mind,” largely, if not entirely, identified with primitive peoples. At this point, two qualifications need to be made, first a minor, then a major one.

One may think that the relation between signified and referent (here the outside, natural world) is completely arbitrary, as the unconscious forms are capable of underwriting multiple possible contents, which are then imposed on a passive, formless world. One may even claim that such arbitrariness is a condition of culture, and of the plurality of cultures, in opposition to nature. However, Lévi-Strauss believes that nature is not entirely without structure and, therefore, lends itself to certain distinctions that will continuously repeat themselves in different cultural areas. He even speculates that certain affinities between the structure of the mind and that of nature may help account for the technological breakthroughs of the “Neolithic revolution.” This raises a larger question: does the unconscious lie on the side of nature or culture? With the hard sciences increasingly discovering codes in nature, notably the genetic code, Lévi-Strauss


tends to come down on the side of nature. At another level, however, his entire corpus can be said to revolve around the distinction between nature and culture, how it arises, and how it is represented.

The major qualification concerns the impression one might have that the forms do not think, but exist anterior to thought, as its condition or instrumentality. This would suppose that the forms are without activity, but for Lévi-Strauss the unconscious mind thinks, spontaneously as it were. What motivates such activity? One wants to say: the need to make sense of the world. Perhaps, but it is a curious sort of sense-making; for it appears devoid of intentionality, and exists in excess of the world it would make sense of. It is as if the mind ran by itself, with an independent will to poesis, not satisfied with attaching a specific content to a specific form, but seeking to continuously modulate the content in the most fantastic ways in order to explore the possibilities entailed by the form. It is such spontaneous mental activity that lies at the heart of the debate about “humanism.” When Lévi-Strauss famously claimed that “les mythes se pensent entre eux” (poorly rendered in English as: “how myths operate in men’s minds without their being aware of the fact”), the implication is not simply that “men” are unaware of the underlying structures when thinking mythically, but that it is the structures, not the men, doing the thinking. Mythical thought is without a subject and without subjectivity; it is a completely objective, prerelative, unthinking form of thought. Such, at least, is the methodological claim. It need not be confused with the more substantive claim that the mind is identical to its unconscious structures, or that certain societies think without thinking. The person narrating a myth, no doubt, is largely unconscious of its underlying structures. He is, nonetheless, conscious of what he is narrating; he probably has a sense of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of any elements he might add. He may even have his own interpretation of what the myth “really means” – although Lévi-Strauss would have us ignore the latter, as it plays no role in the actual construction of the myth.

Consider now the idea of the symbolic. Lévi-Strauss states that society is not at the origin of the symbolic, but the symbolic is at the origin of society. The symbolic would then be understood as all the systems of differential relations constituted on the basis of the mind’s unconscious activity, and which one associates with the idea of culture in its largest, most general sense. There is, however, also room for a more restricted understanding of the symbolic, an understanding best approached through an article entitled “The Effectiveness

of Symbols,” which examines a shamanic cure for a difficult childbirth. The shaman’s chant, recited in the presence of the woman in labor, populates her uterus with good and bad spirits who struggle over the child’s progress down the birth canal. What is of interest here – without entering into the controversies the article has sustained – is the suggestion that the symbols employed by the savage mind cannot be equated with just any sign system and, by implication, the symbolic with just any culture. First, note that the symbols are insufficiently separated from percepts and affects to be considered concepts, the distinctions between ideas, sense impressions and feelings – and thus between the inner and outer world – being far more porous than we are accustomed to. Second, such porosity aids in the movement between diverse levels or codes – here between a psychic level (the different, battling spirits) and a physiological level (the movements of the uterus) – which constitutes the symbolic’s operationality. Such movement is constitutive not just of rituals, but also myths, although the latter remain purely mental phenomenon, unconcerned as to their “real effects.” The movement in myth is more akin to that discussed in totemism, with its move from differential relations between animals to those between clans; although in myth the movement between different strata or codes is infinitely more varied. Finally, the symbolic content saturates the world with sense. In the case of our woman in labor, her pain would make far less sense if she relied on a strictly scientific explanation; moreover, whatever the outcome of the cure, it will find a meaning within the shamanistic universe. The “domesticated mind,” because it would control sense-making in accord with a limited number of largely conscious rules, lacks the creative vivacity of the savage mind that, like the bricoleur, can draw on its material from numerous domains in order to fill all empty spaces. The symbolic order here concerns the “operativity” of sense, and not the sense of sense, which implies reflection.

After *La Pensée sauvage*, Lévi-Strauss dedicated all his efforts to the study of the myth, understood as exemplifying the spontaneous exuberance of the savage mind. The result was the four volumes of the *Mythologiques*, followed by three shorter works. Despite being termed an “Introduction,” the *Mythologiques* are a vast, sprawling, even obsessive work that tries the patience of its readers. Lévi-Strauss is interested in constructing a system of myth, which requires breaking myths down to their individual narrative elements, their mythemes, in view of establishing relations of similarity and difference between these elements both within a given myth, and between variations of that myth as it circulates not just in the tribe, but across different tribes and different linguistic groups. For example, the mythemes in the “bird-nester” myth are: son refuses initiation in big house/son rapes mother/father sends son to scale high cliff in search of

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eagle eggs / father removes ladder / stranded son is covered in bird excrement, and so on. One might note that the act of incest between generations and the scaling of the cliff both involve vertical relations. The significance of this parallel becomes evident when one realizes that, in a variation of the myth where the incest is “horizontal” (between brother and sister), a “horizontal” mytheme must be substituted for the scaling of the cliff. In effect, one looks for paradigmatic and syntagmatic changes, and their corresponding adjustments, which enable one to link different myths into larger mythical cycles. Most often the variations involve inversions, but other transformational relations are common (substitutions, permutations, symmetry, etc.). Sometimes these variations respond to local conditions (e.g. a tribe lives in an area without high cliffs); sometimes to the desire of one tribe to differentiate itself from other tribes; and sometimes simply to the different “logical” possibilities that inhere in a given mythical structure – that structure consisting, in principle, of all its possible transformations. Such variations are particularly relevant to the movement across different codes, whereby, say, zoological differences are related to climatological differences, which, in turn, are “translated” into different manners of cooking. The movements across different codes can give rise to whole new sets of transformations within or between different mythical cycles.

By tracing the variations and transformations across several, cross-cutting mythical cycles, Lévi-Strauss moves, in the course of the Mythologiques, from one initial reference myth (the bird-nester myth at the beginning Le Cru et le cuî) to over six hundred myths in both North and South America. The starting-point is arbitrary; the bird-nester myth does not constitute an Ur-myth. The transformations usually appear localized between neighboring tribes; but sometimes a mythical cycle appears with remarkable consistency throughout the Americas (such is the case with the bird-nester myth), causing Lévi-Strauss to speculate at times about archaic paths of diffusion, and at other times about transcultural associations presumably rooted in the circuits of the brain. Note that the analysis is not, and cannot be, complete, for there can be no closed mythical totality. The latter, in effect, would have to include every myth that is known, has been lost, or could have been created had the myth-creating societies survived.

What is the sense of the often exceedingly detailed analysis of this mythical corpus? Lévi-Strauss is not interested in myth in terms of, say, a theory of the sacred in primitive societies. If he sometimes claims that myths have a function – to blunt the effect of real contradictions by their progressive, imaginary mediation – this is not borne out by the bulk of his analysis. Nor does he seek the meaning of myth in its general characteristics (e.g. the absence of the distinction between efficient and ideal causality to describe the difference between the natural and human worlds), in its characteristic themes (e.g. the representation
of the difference between nature and culture, despite the titles of some of the books), or its characteristic characters (e.g. the trickster). He does not care to discuss the content of myth at this level of generality, but prefers to construct the sense of myths through their internal analysis. At the level of individual myths, it is clear that many of them seek to explain origins, for example how mountains were created, or how humans first came to use cooking fire. Such meanings, however, are too obvious to interest Lévi-Strauss; he searches for meaning in larger systems of similarities and differences. He is far more interested when, for example, a myth about the origin of fire contrasts terrestrial fire (domestic fire for cooking) with celestial fire (lightning), which is then related to terrestrial water (lakes and rivers) and celestial water (rain) – which suggests that a myth about the origins of domestic cooking is also about the opposition between heaven and earth. But it is not so much a matter of what such an opposition might mean, as of how it is made to signify in a way that produces new myths. Ultimately, Lévi-Strauss is not really interested in what myths mean, but how they come about, and what, relative to other myths, they can do. When he does speak of the meaning of myths, he tends to privilege their formal or, better, morphological content, thus presenting them with an apparently philosophical significance, as when he writes: “it is clear that the myths I am comparing all offer an original solution to the problem of the changeover from continuous quantity to discrete quality.” More generally, however, his analysis is not interpretive, but generative, as it seeks to demonstrate how myths, as a symbolic order, operate. As such, this work would seek to remain very close to the savage thought it describes, even as it seeks to orchestrate its own performativity. This is not really a theory of myth; rather, the science of myth, Lévi-Strauss writes rather impishly, is “a myth of mythology.”

The materials of myth, and the possible content that results from the operations performed on these materials, are seemingly limitless, a trait that immediately distinguishes the analysis of myth from that of kinship, not to mention from phonological analysis proper. What appears limited, by contrast, are the operations that give form to the endless array of mythical narratives. Even before the *Mythologiques*, Lévi-Strauss presented what he claims is the canonical formula of mythical thinking: \( F_x(a) : F_y(b) :: F_{x-1}(y) \). This formula describes a transformation in terms of a relation of equivalence between the elements of two myths (the double colon distinguishes between the two myths; while the single colon marks the syntagmatic articulation of the elements in each myth): the function \( x \) of term \( a \) is to function \( y \) of term \( b \) as function \( x \) of term \( b \) is to

10. Ibid., 12.
an inversion of both the term and function of \( a \) and \( y \). Whether this formula constitutes the ultimate “grammar” of myth is highly debatable, although Lévi-Strauss makes occasional use of it until the very end. What it illustrates is the desire to move the analysis to the level of what he terms “general mythology,” a level of analysis so abstracted of all content that it would be inclusive of all myths. If the latter was to be the culminating moment of the project on myth, finally revealing the modus operandi of the human mind in its original state, suspended between nature and culture, this project came to appear increasingly hollow. For, at this level, it became evident that the analysis would result in an empty formalism, the endless illustration of the same, endlessly repeated operations. Moving the analysis down a notch to include content, if only at the level of form, proves potentially more rewarding. Thus in his last work on myth, Lévi-Strauss ends with a comparison of the Amerindian with the European mind. The comparison involves the question of difference in the same as illustrated by myths about twins. The native American myths suggest that no two terms can ever be exactly the same, the implication being that the Amerindians were more capable of accepting and incorporating difference.\(^{12}\)

Lévi-Strauss always claimed to be engaged in the elaboration of a science. Yet there was always an interest in aesthetics, which was to become increasingly prominent, his last book being exclusively dedicated to such matters. Throughout his œuvre, one finds structuralist analysis of works of art, both primitive and modern, and, consonant with the latter, a critique of modernist painting and music. The temptation is to search for the materials to develop a specifically Lévi-Straussian theory of aesthetics; but such a theory could not just be a theory of aesthetics as there is, in his work, a continuous criss-crossing of the realms of art with those of myth and (structuralist) science. Sometimes this takes the form of the establishment of differential relations, as with the claim that “art lies half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical … thought.”\(^{13}\) Sometimes art and science seem to bleed into each other, the scientific analysis of the Mythologiques being organized in terms of musical metaphors, with the “finale” including a long discussion of how myth resembles music more than language. Such movements are possible only on the basis of deeper affinities. Art, myth and science are all concerned with the sensual qualities of objects (art and myth in an immediate sense, science at the end of its elucubrations); all three evince a concern with form and, therefore, privilege relations over terms; and they are all susceptible to analysis in terms of “double articulations,” whether


between different axes of meaning or between the different senses. One can go further: art, myth, and science articulate structure and event (myth employs events to produce structure; science seeks the structure behind events; while art is sensitive to the structure in the event); all three seek to work up nature by placing it under the discipline of form (science in an effort to master nature, with myth and, traditionally, art being more contemplatively inclined); and they all, in their different domains and different manners, would point to human invariants. Ultimately, for Lévi-Strauss, the arts are a form of knowledge, one that entails an education of the senses, an appreciation of craft, and an appeal to what makes us most human, our cultural creativity as borne by – and here he differs from the individualizing heritage of Kantian aesthetics – the resonance of the underlying “psychological,” and even “physiological” structures on which communication depends.

Beyond the aesthetic moment, there is a strong moral moment, which accounts for some of the attraction of Lévi-Strauss's work, although it confounds the conventional categories of left and right. This latter moment is rooted in a sympathy for, even an identification with, the primitive peoples among whom he sojourned. Thus he does not simply think about these peoples; he bears them an intellectual debt and would think with them, at times against his own society. Structuralism, one could say, bears an affinity with the statics of “cold societies” (societies that refuse to see themselves in historical terms), and Lévi-Strauss is horrified at their fate consequent to the “invasion” of America. Instead of being a representative of a colonialist or imperialist culture, the anthropologist is to be a witness to the terrible destruction wrought by our own “hot societies.” As such, he cannot be entirely at home within his own culture, even as he cannot be entirely without, and instead moves with genuine pathos between the modern and the primitive. Lévi-Strauss values diversity: all societies have their value because they cannot be measured against a single standard. What he abhors is the “ontological violence” of our own society, which, in the name of human progress, so arrogantly and pitilessly places itself at the center of the universe, resulting in an unparalleled destruction of peoples and cultures in their diversity, the prelude to the destruction of the diversity of nature. Lévi-Strauss sees himself as a “bearer of ashes,” sifting through the debris, seeking to preserve, as faithfully as possible, what is and has been lost. In a famous early essay, “Race and History,” originally written for UNESCO in 1952, he attacks all forms of ethnocentrism, upholding a vision of a new world civilization based on increasing cross-cultural communication, which would relativize the West.14 In a later essay, “Race and Culture,” he despairs of such communication, claiming

that it serves to eliminate difference, and pleads instead for the maintenance of a distance between cultures, going so far as to honor the absolute xenophobia of primitive cultures, which refuses a human status to all cultures but their own.\textsuperscript{15} In this most Rousseauist of gestures, he pictures a time of origins prior to the catastrophe that is history, where humanity, stripped of all pretensions, still remains fully human, still lives in equilibrium with nature, and proves capable of surviving tens of thousands of years largely unchanged.

It is difficult to speak of Lévi-Strauss’s philosophical legacy. He was the foremost exponent of structuralism, and when French intellectual life passed through its structuralist and poststructuralist phases, those influenced by such trends drew considerable inspiration from his work. It was, however, always difficult to speak of a specifically structuralist (if not a poststructuralist) philosophy.\textsuperscript{16} Lévi-Strauss himself spoke of structuralism as a science, one that would redeem the scientificity of the “human sciences” because tailored to the specificity of the study of the human mind. As such, structuralism was widely felt to represent a challenge to philosophy, particularly the dominant, phenomenologically oriented philosophy of the time, with its critique of scientific objectivism. This would only be confirmed with the publication of \textit{La Pensée sauvage}, with its blistering critique of Sartre, who was accused of turning history into myth, reproducing the closure of the West relative to its others, and reviving the Cartesian distinction between subject and object (with the distinction between analytic reason, applied to things, and dialectical reason, applied to historical events understood as the aggregate projects of free individuals).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who was deeply uncomfortable with the Sartrean opposition between things that, in themselves, are meaningless, and persons who alone confer meaning on the world, was intrigued by Lévi-Strauss’s anthropology.\textsuperscript{17} He saw in it, as well as in Saussurian linguistics, a way to thicken what he termed the “inter-monde” between subject and object, although from the perspective of structuralism this inter-monde cannot be adequately described through the experience of the living subject.\textsuperscript{18} Ricoeur also recognized that, with structuralism, individual sense (the \textit{parole}) is possible only because, at a deeper level, beyond all questions of intentionality, there lies a largely autonomous order of differential relations and their transformations (the

\textsuperscript{16} Patrice Maniglier argues for a \textit{philosophical} legacy of structuralism in his essay in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7}.
\textsuperscript{17} For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4}.
In effect, structuralism pushes the analysis of cultural productions beyond hermeneutics, by extending the domain of an objectifying explanation into that of inter-subjective understanding (to employ Wilhelm Dilthey’s classic distinction). While recognizing that structuralism has its uses, Ricoeur sought to retain a place for philosophical hermeneutics considered as “a part of self-understanding and of the understanding of being.” Ideally the two approaches can be conjoined, assuming each recognizes its own limits. Nonetheless, structuralism is deemed better suited to the study of societies whose myths are classificatory and synchronic, and hermeneutics to societies whose myths would narrate a common history, which entails traditions with reservoirs of meaning open to continuous reinterpretation. Moreover, hermeneutics appears better suited to societies whose traditions we share, while structuralism is more appropriate to the study of societies outside our hermeneutic circle. Still, there is one difference that cannot be subjected to an intellectual division of labor: where for Lévi-Strauss meaning is immanent to structures, for Ricoeur, meaning or, better, meaningfulness, the sense of sense, requires a relation to an interpreter.

Jacques Derrida sees in anthropology a decentering of the West, and in structuralism, with its infinite play of substitutions, a decentering of the subject, the origin, the telos, the arché, and so on. In effect, Derrida sees Lévi-Strauss as also engaging in a critique of metaphysics, although like all such critiques, it too must borrow concepts from the tradition that it criticizes (e.g. those of nature and culture). One can, however, rigorously question these concepts and their history, or one can, like Lévi-Strauss, simply treat them, in the manner of the bricoleur, as momentarily useful, if not as ontologically valid. The danger with this second approach is that, while claiming to leave philosophy behind, one reintroduces, unknowingly, rather naive philosophemes. The most egregious of the latter concerns the presence of an unsullied, originary “presence.” With its infinite play of substitution, structuralism should reject the latter; yet Lévi-Strauss retains a nostalgia for an archaic innocence, and a remorse for lost origins. If one must borrow from metaphysics, Derrida would prefer, to Lévi-Strauss’s melancholic science, an affirmative, “gay science.”

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21. Ibid.
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari contrast the indefinite repetition of static structures in the earlier Lévi-Strauss to the theory in the *Mythologiques* “of primitive codes, and of codings of flows and of organs, that goes beyond the exchangist conception on all sides.”\(^2^4\) Not only would this latter theory resist all limits, while refusing to be bounded by a notion of reciprocity, but it would suggest that Lévi-Strauss was a poststructuralist in spite of himself, even as *Anti-Oedipus*, as a generative, performative text, would exemplify a contemporary *pensée sauvage*.

Without the encounter of philosophy with Lévi-Strauss (and it was an entirely one-sided encounter), there could never have been the move to poststructuralism. And yet there was something “malencontreux” about this encounter, because it was often based on a misunderstanding. In retrospect, structuralism appears no more a science than a philosophy. Instead it is better understood as a method, even a heuristics, more applicable to some objects than others, and capable of genuine insights, but not hard truths. Once the turn to poststructuralism had been made, Lévi-Strauss ceased to excite the same interest or controversy among philosophers. This is not to say that, in recent years, there have not been a number of important, philosophically informed studies of his work,\(^2^5\) but the days since his work was seen as holding an incisive challenge to philosophers’ self-understanding are over.

The anthropological legacy of Lévi-Strauss is much more assured, particularly in France. There are no orthodox Lévi-Straussians; but many an anthropologist finds himself employing one aspect of Lévi-Strauss’s thought against another, in an implicitly or explicitly critical fashion. Thus, to provide some of the more salient examples: Françoise Héritier seeks to rewrite Lévi-Strauss in a feminist mode;\(^2^6\) Maurice Godelier questions the *échangiste* basis of society, while positing a theory of the imaginary based on objects that do not circulate;\(^2^7\) Marshall Sahlins, to provide an American example, demonstrates the uses of structuralism for historical analysis through a study of Captain Cook in Hawaii;\(^2^8\) Dan Sperber, while developing a critique of the structuralist method,\(^2^9\) still seeks to uncover the formal mechanisms of the mind, but by drawing on the cognitivist

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sciences of a more Anglo-American provenance,30 while Philippe Descola, in an important work, takes up the nature–culture distinction, rejecting the search for the fundamental structures of the human mind, in order to develop a structuralist analysis of four fundamental “ontologies” by which different cultures comprehend their relation to the nonhuman, natural world.31 One might say that Lévi-Strauss’s anthropological legacy not only lives, but lives as it were, dialectically. And there is much in this legacy, although it remains much more modest than some of Lévi-Strauss’s more programmatic claims, which can still be of interest to philosophy broadly considered.

MAJOR WORKS


I. BRIEF STATEMENT ON LACAN AND PHILOSOPHY

Jacques Lacan\(^1\) stated in 1964 that psychoanalysis is “governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject,” thereby allying psychoanalysis to one of philosophy’s central concerns since modernity.\(^2\) But by adding that psychoanalysis “poses this notion in a new way, by leading the subject back to his signifying dependence,” Lacan in fact makes the subject into a point of contention between philosophy and psychoanalysis.\(^3\) Despite multiple and persistent uses of philosophical concepts in his works, Lacan ultimately holds that something about philosophy renders it constitutively unable to think the dependent and “split” subject that is the focus of psychoanalytic theory and practice.

Philosophy’s failure to think the subject proper to psychoanalytic theory lends it a necessarily illusory or ideological function. This is why Lacan can be thought of as an antiphilosopher, saying once that “Je ne fais aucune philosophie, je m’en méfie au contraire comme de la peste” (I don’t do philosophy at all, I

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1. Jacques Lacan (April 13, 1901–September 9, 1981; born and died in Paris) was educated at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne (1927–31) and received a doctorat d’état in psychiatry at the Sorbonne (1932). His influences included Freud, Hegel, Heidegger, and Saussure, and he was affiliated with the Société psychanalytique de Paris (1934–40), Société française de psychanalyse (1953–64), and L’Ecole Freudienne de Paris (1964–80).
Yet he would not be the first philosophically inclined thinker to take a strongly negative view of philosophy itself: on this point he was in agreement with many twentieth-century philosophers. What is it that makes philosophy constitutively blind to the psychoanalytic insight into the subject? Lacan stated his views on this on numerous occasions. In reply to a question from some philosophy students about his views on consciousness, he stated: “I say that philosophical ‘consciousnesses’ have no other function but to suture the abyss of the subject.” It is philosophy’s tendency to make consciousness not just a central but an often constitutive feature of human experience that Lacan finds dubious; according to him, it is an attempt to flee from a more fundamental truth about the subject (its opacity to itself) that, he feels, psychoanalytic theory is able to articulate.

It is worth keeping in mind that Lacan’s writings and oral teachings were primarily concerned with training psychoanalysts, and with laying out the theoretical foundations of psychoanalytic practice. They were not trying to chime in on philosophical questions. For a long time even his publications were not read by a philosophical audience. Indeed, they were not widely read outside the relatively small psychoanalytic school under whose auspices they were printed until they were bundled together and republished as the *Écrits* in 1966.

Yet philosophers and key philosophical concepts were of constant and significant help to Lacan in his battle over the Freudian legacy, which he touted as a “return to Freud.” This return involved purging some of the biologism out of Freud’s theory, in favor of what is, originally at least, a more philosophical approach. Later on, Lacan would affirm Freud’s “scientism” in his own attempt to “mathematize” psychoanalytic theory. References to philosophers are few and far between in Freud’s works themselves. Freud was no doubt eager to defend the scientific status of his new discipline, and he would have wanted his theory to be as uncorrupted by the metaphysical musings of philosophy as possible. For Lacan, things were quite different. Indeed, the works of philosophers are important supports for him whenever he is trying to work out the details of some concept for which he had not yet developed his own language. For instance, in the initial articulation of his theory of desire, he samples heavily from Hegel and Alexandre Kojève; in some of his initial attempts to express the claim that the

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6. For a discussion of Freud’s work and its appropriation by philosophers in the twentieth century, see the essay by Adrian Johnston in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.
unconscious is structured as a language, he refers to Heidegger; when addressing
the nature of the psychoanalytic cure he would sometimes speak of it in terms
of being-towards-death. A close reading of Plato’s *Symposium* is instrumental
to Lacan when he is trying to understand the role of the analyst’s desire in the
psychoanalytic cure, and for clarifying the status of the “object-cause” of desire
in psychoanalysis. Yet Lacan used philosophers primarily as mediators only:
his view seems to have been that philosophers were sometimes working on
issues similar to issues in psychoanalysis, but the latter would ultimately have to
develop its own vocabulary because of philosophy’s essentially mistaken ori-
tention, positing the primacy of consciousness rather than the primacy of the
unconscious.

**II. PHENOMENOLOGY, DIALECTICS, AND DESIRE**

Lacan’s introduction to psychoanalysis in the 1930s required a break from
certain aspects of his medical training. He wrote that the psychiatrist Gatian
de Clérambault had taught him to pay attention to the “subjective text” of the
patients he was treating at St. Anne. This attention entailed a rejection of an
exclusively biological study of the symptoms and psychological problems he
was treating, an approach that is evident in Lacan’s earliest publications, which
were usually coauthored and published in medical journals such as *La Revue
neurologique* and *L’Encéphale*.

By the time he wrote his doctoral thesis, this interest in the “subjective text” of
his patients became primary. In his study of a patient he called Aimée, who had
stabbed a famous actress and was subsequently institutionalized, Lacan argues
that the near murder was just as much an attempted suicide, since Aimée was
striking at a woman who was her ideal self. With its close attention to the char-
acter of Aimée, her identifications and desires, the thesis reads like a psycho-
analytic case study without much in the way of psychoanalytic vocabulary. A
phenomenological orientation is just as present in this work as a Freudian one,
and its writing drew from Karl Jaspers and Edmund Husserl.

So initially, phenomenology and psychoanalysis are co-present in Lacan’s
thought. Yet an increasing interest in language would draw Lacan into other
fields. In an essay a few years later, in what he describes as a “phenomenological
description of psychoanalytic experience,” he claims that language-use is the

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    Press, 1999), 49.
central thing about that experience. Lacan notes that while much of what is said during an analytic session might not “want to say anything,” the fact that the analysand says it takes on an independent importance, he asserts, because in the analysand’s address to the analyst, the latter can discern how what is said is being said from a specific place or point of view. Lacan writes of this as an “intention,” which may consist of a demand, an accusation, a bit of aggression, and so on. This intention, which is something like the position from which a statement is made, may furthermore be operating without the analysand’s conscious knowledge. The use of language in psychoanalysis thus reveals intentions of which the speaker is not aware, intentions that can be read between the lines of what is said, as it were: “intention thus turns out to be unconscious.”

Lacan began his own analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein in 1932, and started to see patients under supervision in 1934. In this very Freudian decade for Lacan, he also began to attend Kojève’s famous seminar on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The influence of Kojève’s reading of Hegel on Lacan is clear in an essay he wrote at the end of the 1930s on the “family complexes,” and in many essays that followed. For example, Lacan’s account of identification in the famous essay on the “mirror stage” from 1936 is informed by dialectics. There, identification is described as a dialectical process in which the infant “assumes” a “specular image,” which is initially other to the infant. In this process the infant takes herself to be the image/other, and is yet alienated by this identification because of the gap that remains, that is, because the infant is still not the image or other in question. Identity therefore is not only relational, and thus alienating (we identify with that which we essentially are not), but also a fragile thing, always threatened with dissolution. Consequently, identity itself is a major cause of aggression.

One other way in which dialectics informs Lacan’s thinking about psychoanalytic theory and practice is found in his theory of desire. Desire is a major concept in Lacan’s work, and its place may fairly be said to owe more to the philosophical tradition than to Freud, for desire is not a major Freudian concept. Lacan’s philosophical resources for the concept come from Kojève’s reading of Hegel too, although Lacan had also been interested in Spinoza’s work as a youth.

12. Ibid., 83.
13. Ibid.
and was familiar with the philosopher’s famous claim that desire is the essence of being human.

Kojève took desire in Hegel to be a desire for recognition by others: the pursuit of recognition of oneself as a free, self-conscious being by other free, self-conscious beings. Yet it also becomes a desire to be desired (thus, a desire “for” the desire of others) as well as a desire for what others desire: thus, desire is essentially intersubjective – it is something in which identities and objects get inexorably mixed up with each other and exchanged. Hence Lacan’s fondness for an ambiguous definition such as “le désir, c’est le désir de l’Autre” (desire is the Other’s desire), pointing out that the “de” should be understood as both the subjective and objective genitive. Thus, desire is for the Other (to be recognized by the Other, for example) and equally so a desire to desire as the Other, which entails an identification with the Other’s desire – both with what it desires, and how the Other desires.

Since desire seems to involve, essentially, a relation to others, Lacan also found it helpful for shedding light on two crucial aspects of the psychoanalytic cure: the transference and the temporal structure of the cure itself, or its process. In 1951, affirming that “psychoanalysis is a dialectical experience and this notion should prevail when raising the question of the nature of transference,” he commented on a series of “dialectical reversals” in Freud’s case study of Dora. Each reversal (she recognizes her own libidinal investment in her troubles; she sees that she has identified with the one she professed to hate) is accompanied by a further advance on the path of her truth, which is attained with the recognition of her desire. In his seminar, Lacan spoke of the analytic process as a kind of see-saw, involving a series of flips and inversions that are ultimately spiraling toward a kernel, which would be the truth of the subject’s desire as a desire for recognition, or as a desire for the Other’s desire. At this time, Lacan’s general view of the cure in fact is that “the subject should come to recognize and to name his desire.”

III. THE STRUCTURALIST TURN

The influence of Kojève’s reading of Hegel is found not only in the role of dialectics and desire in Lacan’s theory but also in his early views on language. Lacan noted the importance of language in Hegel as a source of negation: “thus the

symbol first manifests itself as the killing of the thing, and this death results in the endless perpetuation of the subject's desire. After the war, Lacan became more and more interested in the composition of language itself and the role that its structure plays in making us into the “speaking beings” we are. He would call language the “cause of the subject” in an essay from 1960.

His reflections on language led him to develop the famous thesis that the unconscious itself is “structured like a language.” This claim should not be taken to mean that the unconscious is language, or that language is unconscious, or that the structure of the unconscious is identical to that of a linguistic structure. Rather, it means that there is an unconscious because there is language, because we are beings on to whom language is grafted, as it were. And furthermore, the way that the unconscious works – its creations of dreams, puns, fantasies, slips of the tongue, parapraxes, and so on – is due to the structure of language itself; in particular, by what Lacan finds to be the primary meaning-generating operations in language – metaphor and metonymy.

For Ferdinand de Saussure, from whose work Lacan draws, the basic linguistic unit was the “sign,” conceived as a unity of a signifier (a sound-pattern) and a signified (the concept, roughly). The two together would make up the sign’s meaning. Distinct from this, and more important, is a sign’s value. It is the sign’s difference from and relation to other signs that gives a sign its value. Thus, a sign’s value cannot be discerned without an awareness of the overall linguistic system in which it is placed. Meaning, according to Saussure, is a function of the intrinsic link between a signifier and a signified; value is a function of the sign’s overall position in a linguistic system.

Lacan gives differentiation an even more important status in language than Saussure does by giving the signifier priority over the signified, such that it is only by being linked up with other signifiers (in a signifying chain) that any particular signifier is able to take on something that should rightly be called not a signified but only a meaning- or signified-effect. Thus, Lacan severs the unity posited in the Saussurean sign. Borrowing from a study by Roman Jakobson, Lacan’s name for the basic way in which the essentially elusive signified-effect is generated is metonymy, a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to refer to the whole. This mirrors the structure of any signifying chain, since it is never the case that we really “have” the whole chain before us, but only parts at any given time. Lacan argues that desire’s very structure is metonymic too,

20. Ibid., 830.
making it the case that the object of desire remains structurally out of reach. Consequently, desire ends up always being a “desire for something else.”

The other primary linguistic operation is metaphor, which differs from metonymy primarily by generating a signifier that acts a bit more like a classical Saussurean sign. Although signified and signifier are still not really knit together by it – indeed, a signified is always just another signifier – metaphor makes it seem as if this happens. This way, Lacan highlights the enigmatic status metaphors can have, working to convince us that there is a precise signified somehow contained in the metaphor, even though it is ungraspable (whence also the inexhaustibility of interpretation). He associates metaphor not with the creation of desire but with the creation of the subject-effect itself and the process of identification.

Lacan’s early views on identification were shaped by dialectics and phenomenology. Now a linguistic operation, metaphor, becomes the model for thinking about identification. This affects his understanding of the Oedipus complex and other basics about Freudian theory. For Lacan, then, not only is the unconscious structured like a language, but the formative stages and complexes posited by Freudian theory seem to be as well.

Crucial for the resolution of the Oedipal conflict, Lacan felt, is the role of the symbolic father, or the “name of the father.” This name or function substitutes for the child’s early relation to the mother’s desire in what Lacan calls the “paternal metaphor,” a metaphor that generates as an enigmatic signified-effect the phallus. In Lacan’s account, the phallus is primarily a symbolic function, but there is also an imaginary version of it insofar as it is taken to be an object lost owing to castration, or an object of which one is deprived. The (symbolic) phallus turns out to be the signifier of the signified of the mother’s desire; in other words, it is the stand-in, the answer, as it were, to the child’s wondering about what the mother desires. This is different from an imagined object (the imaginary phallus), and of course different from a real object (the penis) too.

IV. THEORY OF THE SUBJECT

Lacan’s thesis that the unconscious is structured like a language also implies that the unconscious is autonomous and machine-like. This shapes quite strongly his view of the subject. The subject of psychoanalysis is seen by Lacan as an effect or product of the circulation of signifiers. Lacan wrote that game theory should therefore be of interest to analysts, since it “takes advantage of the thoroughly

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calculable character of a subject strictly reduced to the formula for a matrix
of signifying combinations.\textsuperscript{24} This “calculable” subject “must be as rigorously
distinguished from the biological individual as from any psychological evolution
subsumable under the subject of understanding.”\textsuperscript{25} In other words, this subject is
not the subject of philosophy, if that is understood to mean a conscious, autono-

mous agent. Lacan calls his subject the “subject of science”: a subject stripped of
qualities, yet one that, despite its opposition to the philosophical subject, is still
rooted in a Cartesian insight.

Indeed, Lacan expresses his ultimate understanding of the subject through
a series of revisions of the formula for the Cartesian cogito. Early in his career,
Lacan announced the need for a return to Descartes.\textsuperscript{26} But this should not be
misunderstood: the return consisted of a very unorthodox reading of Descartes,
in which the cogito is stripped down to its bare minimum. This “subject of
science” is not the constituting subject of idealism or phenomenology but a
subject without qualities – the subject able to do nothing more than assert that
it is thinking “therefore I am”: “in the test of writing I am thinking: ‘therefore I
am,’ with quotes around the second clause, it is legible that thought only grounds
being by knotting itself in speech where every operation goes right to the essence
of language.”\textsuperscript{27} In other words, this revision of the Cartesian cogito makes the
assertion of being by thought into simply a “thought of being.”

But what does the Lacanian subject have to do with thinking anyway, if it is
not the subject of consciousness? In an early revision of the “cogito ergo sum,”
Lacan wrote “I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not
thinking,” and “I am not, where I am the plaything of my thought; I think about
what I am where I do not think I am thinking.”\textsuperscript{28} The point of these rewrites is to
register the effects of what Lacan takes to be one of Freud’s basic claims about the
unconscious: that it thinks. Thus, there is a thinking (in or of the unconscious)
in which, or with respect to which, the I of consciousness does not situate or
find itself. For Lacan, it should be clear, something crucial about our being is in
the unconscious: it is the site of our most fundamental desires, identifications,
fantasies, enjoyments, and so on, and since there is something like thinking that
goes on there, it is also the case that we “think about what we are” there in the
unconscious where we “do not think we are thinking.”

With these revisions, Lacan can contrast his theory of the subject not only
to the Cartesian cogito but to Hegelian philosophy as well. On this view, any

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, 860.
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, 875.
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, 163.
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, 864–5.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, 517.
\end{itemize}
becomes suspect: “The promotion of consciousness as essential to the subject in the historical aftermath of the Cartesian cogito is indicative, to my mind, of a misleading emphasis on the transparency of the I in action at the expense of the opacity of the signifier that determines it.” As Lacan said in 1964, leading the subject back to its “signifying dependence” is at the root of the difference between a philosophical approach to the subject and a psychoanalytic one. The subject dependent on signifiers, caused by signifiers, is opaque to itself, and is not leading the charge as far as psychic organization goes. Thus, the Lacanian subject is properly seen as a split subject, as the gap or difference between these two ways of thinking about the unconscious and consciousness.

V. THE REAL, SEXUALITY, GENDER

Yet this is just one way to address how the subject is split. To put it briefly, this first way of discussing it posits the split subject as the aftermath of the inscription of the symbolic (which is not just language but also what Claude Lévi-Strauss had in mind with social structures) on the human individual, which renders us opaque to ourselves. But there is another way to express the split, and this is equally due to symbolic inscription or insertion, yet it involves what one would assume is important to any psychoanalytic orientation: the real and sexuality.

It is common to periodize Lacan’s work according to the three basic categories – the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real – that he uses to understand symptoms and many other things about psychic life. It is oversimplified to describe his work this way, but in some sense the early Lacan focused on the imaginary, the middle on the symbolic, and the late on the real. He first articulated these three terms and their interrelations in a paper given in 1953, right at the beginning of his seminar project. These terms can also be used as an easy way to think about the differing philosophical orientations Lacan had throughout his career, with the imaginary corresponding to his phenomenological period, the symbolic to his structuralist period, and the real corresponding to a period whose name is perhaps yet to be determined (poststructuralist would not be quite right for it, not least because it is not a term Lacan ever used for his thinking).

The imaginary in Lacanian theory should not be understood as a reference to imagination. Rather, it refers to images and their influence on consciousness and perception. The imaginary tinges psychic life with a kind of transitivity, a blurring of the boundaries between self and other. Yet it is also in the imaginary that others are seen as rivals as well as others with whom we identify. The symbolic,
by contrast, is obviously affiliated with language, but also social structures and institutions. It tends to have more dialectical and individuating connotations.

Lacan’s thinking about sexuality is found in his discussions of a notion that ultimately prevents his theory from being characterized as a kind of linguistic idealism: the real. As a general heading under which a variety of different concepts can be placed – such as the Thing, the drive, jouissance (which is not simply enjoyment and pleasure, but more like a displeasurable pleasure or a pleasurable displeasure) – the real marks an insistent, obtrusive element in psychic structure. The real is something like what is left over from symbolic inscription, yet it too is modified by and influenced by language. For this reason, some commentators have argued for a distinction between the real that precedes language and the real that persists after the onset of language, as an “insistence” and as an impasse in and for signifiers.

One of Lacan’s early forays into this dimension is found in a discussion of what he called “the Thing.” The Thing is described as the “first outside” and as the “absolute Other of the subject.” It becomes the object pursued by desire, and yet it is not exactly a lost object: “although it is essentially a question of finding it again, the object indeed has never been lost.” It is not exactly a lost object because of the structural place it possesses in the psyche. Lacan spoke of the intimate exteriority or ‘extimacy,’ that is the Thing,” an extimacy he initially thought of along the lines of a vacuole in cellular biology: an empty space, originally part of the outside, that is included in the structure. Lacan continues to work with this idea in subsequent seminars, through more complicated figures such as tori, cross-caps, Klein bottles, and Möbius strips, and even the empty set in set theory. All of these are intended to model a psychic structure in which inside and outside are mutually implicated in each other, which is supposed to reflect the way in which the real itself is included/excluded in psychic organization.

Understanding the strange status of the real in psychic structure is critical for understanding the nature of the drives and sexuality in Lacanian theory. Lacan hypothesizes that the earliest experiences with sexuality are traumatic, in large part, because of their resistance to or otherness to symbolization. It is interesting to note that according to Lacan there is no subject of jouissance (which is arguably a sexual satisfaction). It is an “acephalic” enjoyment, which can be understood in a few different senses. For one thing, there is no consciousness involved in it; but for another thing, it is something that is not “subjectified” – the subject does not come to be there where jouissance is. Nevertheless, symbolic repair

31. Ibid., 58.
32. Ibid., 139.
work is needed with respect to it, and this occurs in a variety of ways, such as the development of a “fundamental fantasy” and also in the form of sexuation. What this will mean is that sexual difference itself is an attempt to, roughly, make sense of the impasse that sexuality itself represents for psychic structure.

On the topic of gender (often called sexuation by Lacanian theorists), Lacan is a nonessentialist. Masculine and feminine subject-positions are independent of biology. They are defined by their relation to the phallus, which, again, is symbolic and not real. The masculine subject-position identifies with possession of the phallic signifier: having, rather than being, the phallus. This position is also defined by what Lacan calls a “phallic jouissance,” a jouissance focused on the sexual organ: again, this is a subject-position that may obtain for both males and females. The feminine subject-position relates not only to the phallus as a signifier (identifying with “being” it rather than “having” it) but also to what Lacan writes as the signifier for the Other’s desire. This double relationship opens up for the feminine subject a dimension of jouissance that is not phallic. Lacan calls this a “feminine” or “Other” jouissance. Consequently, Lacan calls woman “not all,” in the sense that “not all” of her enjoyment is phallic; there is, additionally, an enjoyment that involves a different relation to language and the symbolic in general.

VI. MODELS OF THE CURE

Lacan’s early discussions of the cure portray it in Heideggerian and Hegelian terms as much as Freudian ones: either as a confrontation of the individual with his or her being-toward-death or as a recognition or realization of desire; finding oneself in an identification that was disavowed, or in a desire that was not acknowledged. In the early 1960s, after his initial arguments for the primacy of the signifier for psychic structure had been worked out, Lacan’s view of the cure starts to change. In a discussion of Sophocles’s Antigone that has been widely commented on, Lacan argued that Antigone remains a figure of fascination for audiences because of her status “between two deaths,” her impending real death and her “symbolic” death (in the sense that she is condemned and as it were symbolically excluded from the community, and not yet really dead). The appeal of her persistence in her desire to bury her brother despite Creon’s orders not to gets Lacan thinking about desire, transgression, betrayal, guilt, and their roles in the cure. A slogan from the end of this seminar has been taken by many

commentators to be an adequate expression of Lacan’s ethic at this time: do not cede on your desire. Yet it is questionable whether this was meant to express the ethic of psychoanalysis and the goal of the cure. Lacan claims rather that the feeling of guilt, so common in neurotics, is connected to having ceded on desire. Antigone is fascinating then precisely because she is someone who has not ceded on her desire (to bury her brother, and/or to remain faithful to her family’s curse), thus making her into an attractive figure of transgression, and hence an ideal to neurotics.

For this reason, her position is not necessarily the position to be attained at the end of analysis. Lacan finds that another model for the ethic of the cure (for neurosis anyway) is found in a series of plays by Paul Claudel (1868–1955) called the Coûfontaine trilogy, which tracks the history of an aristocratic family in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The initial character, Sygne, clearly does give way on her desire, by marrying the man who destroyed her family. The symbolic burden of this sacrifice is not resolved until we meet her granddaughter Pensée de Coûfontaine, whom Lacan speaks of as a “thought of desire.” Blind, and apparently an object-cause of desire for many, she has identified with lack and loss, and in this manner provides a model for the end of the psychoanalytic cure.

A later view of the cure that has had an influence on philosophers, especially in ethical, social, and political theory, is Lacan’s articulation of the psychoanalytic act in the mid-1960s. If the subject’s relative determination by signifiers is understood in terms of the fundamental fantasy – a basic orientation or grid that structures relations to others, objects, and enjoyment itself – then the psychoanalytic cure could be thought of as the progressive uncovering of the fantasy, leading the analysand to the point where a choice can be made with respect to it: perhaps an identification with the fantasy, or a “traversing” of the fantasy in what Lacan calls the psychoanalytic act. This notion has been attractive to scholars in ethics and political philosophy because of its resemblance to the topic of authenticity in existential philosophy, and also because of its proximity to ideology critique, according to which the act resembles a classic revolutionary gesture.

VII. LACAN AND PHILOSOPHY

References to philosophers are widespread in Lacan’s seminars and writings, and the following discussion is inevitably incomplete. Lacan’s references to Pascal’s wager are a regrettable absence. Major discussions of Plato’s Symposium in his

eighth seminar and Aristotle’s ethics in his twentieth are also noteworthy for philosophers, but omitted here. The following will focus only on Lacan’s relations to Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.36

In 1956, Lacan translated the first part of Heidegger’s “Logos” essay and published it in his school’s journal. Heidegger’s text is about the famous Greek concept, which could be taken to refer to language or “the word,” yet Heidegger reads it in such a way that it means letting beings be as they are: a rephrasing of the famous phenomenological principle “to the things themselves!” Heidegger’s essay also discusses listening, and this might account for Lacan’s interest in publishing it for analysts in training: listening is, of course, something an analyst is expected to do well. Here, the lesson to be gained from Heidegger’s text would be learning to listen to the text of the analysand’s speech, or letting that text speak itself without presumptuous interpretations, prejudices, and so on.

Considering this translation, as well as Lacan’s modeling of the cure as a realization of being-toward-death in his 1953 Rome Discourse, and scattered, passing references to Heidegger’s idea that humanity inhabits language, rather than vice versa, it would seem that Heidegger was a major influence on Lacan. Lacan even visited Heidegger, accompanied by Jean Beaufret (1907–82), in 1955, and invited Heidegger to stay at his country house during the 1955 Cerisy conference on Heidegger that Beaufret and Kostas Axelos (1924–2010) had organized.37 But apart from what seems to have been a genuine respect for the philosopher, there does not seem to have been much in the way of real influence. Once Lacan had developed a vocabulary of his own for the expression of his key concepts, he no longer couched them in Heideggerian terms. Thus, in retrospect, Lacan’s use of Heideggerian terminology was perhaps simply faute de mieux. He did make several references to Heidegger’s view of truth as alētheia, which informs his own view that truth can only ever be “half-said.” Yet this is arguably also a Hegelian or Freudian insight.

Lacan’s references to Sartre are usually unflattering, yet there seems to have been something more of an influence in this case, albeit of a negative kind. Sartre’s notion of a subject transparent to itself (for Sartre, consciousness was always also self-consciousness) was antithetical to Lacan’s orientation, and many of Lacan’s statements about the subject of psychoanalysis are articulated on purpose as strong contrasts to what Sartre posits. It would seem that Sartre represents for Lacan the pinnacle of the basic philosophical error about the subject. Also, Sartre’s vigorous defense of freedom was held up for ridicule by Lacan. He

*36. Heidegger is discussed in essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volumes 3 and 4; Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are discussed in essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.

wrote that “I am not one of those recent philosophers for whom confinement within four walls merely helps us attain the ultimate in human freedom.” And in 1956 he linked the “discourse of freedom” – probably thinking of Sartrean existentialism – to delusion. However, Lacan did find Sartre’s discussion of the gaze helpful for setting up his own theory of the gaze as one mode of “object a” in his eleventh seminar.

After the publication of the Écrits, Lacan would be asked in interviews about his relation to Sartre, and he was usually vexed by this question, protesting that there was no relation. Sartre had been critical of what he called Lacan’s “decentering” of the subject, and raised concerns about the possibly ahistorical theory Lacan was developing, a concern Sartre had about structuralism in general. Lacan in turn pointed out that “Sartre’s entire philosophy wants the subject and consciousness to be indissolubly linked. Well, in Freud this connection is broken.”

Lacan was generally less critical of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy than of Sartre’s, finding more room for the unconscious in it. A rather detailed discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s late texts “Eye and Mind” and The Visible and the Invisible is found in Lacan’s eleventh seminar. Lacan also wrote an essay on Merleau-Ponty for publication in a special issue of Les Temps modernes. It seems that Lacan, while appreciative of Merleau-Ponty’s more nuanced view of consciousness, still found him to be essentially a philosopher, which again for Lacan means someone for whom consciousness was still too central, someone who was inclined to underplay the primacy of the signifier in psychic life.


41. Interview, Le Figaro Litteraire (December 29, 1966).
The situation is slightly different for philosophers who emerged in the 1960s. In an essay called “Freud and Lacan” from 1964, Louis Althusser was drawn to Lacan’s promotion of psychoanalysis as a “science of the unconscious” rather than a hermeneutics. The return to Freud by Lacan was also taken by Althusser to be much like his own return to Marx: a return, as he puts it, to the “maturity” of the thinker apart from early influences. Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) attended Lacan’s seminars for several years, although he later professed that he did not get much out of them. When his *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* was published, Lacan was dismayed to find that his work did not receive more attention in it.

Gilles Deleuze (1925–95) credits Lacan in *Difference and Repetition* for providing a helpful way of thinking about the distinction Deleuze was making between real objects and virtual objects. In *Logic of Sense*, there is a similar discussion of Lacan’s work, referring this time to something Deleuze calls “Lacan’s paradox,” in which it is possible for an object to “lack in its place.” According to Deleuze this means “the paradoxical entity is never where we look for it, and conversely … we never find it where it is.” Of course, Deleuze would later be rather critical of psychoanalysis in general, and even though Lacan is still extended some credit in *Anti-Oedipus* for having “saved psychoanalysis from the frenzied oedipalization to which it was linking its fate,” Lacan’s frequently unnamed “disciples” are strongly criticized. In what is often thought to be a very anti-Lacanian text, it is even said there that “it is certain that he [Lacan] does not enclose the unconscious in an Oedipal structure.” And in fact Lacan “was the first … to schizophrenize the analytic field.” Michel Foucault (1926–84) attended a few sessions of Lacan’s seminar in 1966 after the publication of *Les Mots et les choses* (translated as *The Order of Things*). Lacan had taken up his own study of the painting by Velazquez, *Las Meninas*, at the time and was giving his own spin on it, inspired by Foucault’s discussion.

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*44. For discussions of the work of the French philosophers mentioned in the following paragraphs, see the essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.  

Luce Irigaray’s (1930– ) discussions of Lacanian psychoanalysis in such works as *This Sex Which Is Not One* and *Speculum of the Other Woman* are concerned with the adequacy of Lacan’s attention to sexual difference, especially in Lacan’s claims about the status of feminine *jouissance* and women in general. Irigaray finds Lacan’s discussions of feminine sexuality rather patronizing in her “Così Fan Tutti,” especially for positing her enjoyment as unspeakable and inscrutable.55 Her project of uncovering a language specific for each gender is nevertheless heavily influenced by Lacanian theory. Julia Kristeva’s (1941– ) work is also very significantly informed by Lacanian theory. She has questioned Lacan’s emphasis on the symbolic over what she calls the semiotic, and his neglect of the importance of the pre-Oedipal stages.

When his seminar started to be held at the École Normale Supérieure, Lacan found a different audience, and his impact on intellectual life in Paris became much greater. A group of students, many of whom were contributors to the journal *Cahiers pour l’analyse*, took Lacan’s work in a different direction, linking it to ideas in set theory and Marxism. Thinkers such as Alain Badiou (1937– ), Jacques-Alain Miller (1944– ), and Jean-Claude Milner (1941– ), whose works would not strongly influence anglophone readings of Lacan until the 1980s, were members of this group.56

Lacan travelled to the UK after the war, visiting a clinic run by Wilfred Bion (1897–1979), which inspired him to write a paper on groups.57 But his influence on intellectual life in anglophone countries really began in the 1970s, with

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56. For a discussion of these and other thinkers associated with *Cahiers pour l’analyse*, see the essay by Patrice Maniglier in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.*
some of the first studies of his works coming from literary and film theorists and continental philosophers. Early translations of Lacan’s works focused on selections from the *Écrits*, a few selections from Seminar XX and other later seminars, and Seminar XI. Lacan made two trips to the US. He was invited to speak at a conference on structuralism at Johns Hopkins University in 1966, and he spoke at Yale University and Columbia University in 1975. With the ethical turn that much of continental philosophy took in the 1980s and 1990s, Lacan’s reading of Antigone, and related topics on desire and identity, were influential. In the 1990s, readings of Lacan emerged that began to take note of the centrality of clinical experience for his theory. Departing somewhat from the early emphasis on Lacan’s readings of literary texts, his accounts of gender also received closer study, and his work began to be appropriated into social and political theory, for example by Slavoj Žižek (1949–) and Ernesto Laclau (1935–).

Lacan’s work has a strange status for philosophers. It attracts philosophical inquiry because of the presence of obviously philosophical themes in it, yet it also repels such inquiry because of its completely nonphilosophical and nonacademic goals, which are to develop a doctrine for the training of psychoanalysts and models for the psychoanalytic cure. From a philosophical perspective, it is also hard to discern whether his work offers, on the one hand, a very flexible and inventive set of concepts that gives a unique and important perspective on contemporary psychic life, or whether, on the other hand, it is a more rigid system, pigeonholing the multiplicity of human life into strict types (neurotic, psychotic, perverse) in very simplistic, reductive terms (real, symbolic, imaginary). In addition, the potentially universalizing and ahistorical aspects of the theory may seem to render it insensitive to cultural and historical differences, unless the formalism of the theory is precisely its strength, allowing it to be applicable to a variety of contexts. It is fair to say that there may turn out to be something reminiscent of Hegel about Lacan’s status and legacy for philosophers (Badiou has even called Lacan “our Hegel”), at least in the following sense: just as readings of Hegel’s work are still divergent (is it an atheistic philosophy or not, for example), the status of Lacan’s work will probably be similarly up in the air for some time to come. Aspects of Lacanian theory have already proved useful to philosophers of different stripes. The precise challenge Lacan thought psychoanalysis presents to philosophy – namely, its alternative theory of the subject, one whose status would have to fall outside the legacy of philosophical idealism – is still to be thought through.

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*58. For a discussion of this ethical turn, see the essay by Robert Eaglestone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*. 

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MAJOR WORKS


Developments in Anglo-American philosophy during the first half of the twentieth century closely tracked developments that were occurring in continental philosophy during this period. This should not surprise us. Aside from the fertile communication between these ostensibly separate traditions, both were responding to problems associated with the rise of mass society. Rabid nationalism, corporate statism, and totalitarianism (Left and Right) posed a profound challenge to the idealistic rationalism of neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian philosophies. The decline of the individual – classically conceived by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment as a self-determining agent – provoked strong reactions. While some philosophical tendencies sought to reconceive the relationship between individual, society, and nature in more organic ways that radically departed from the subjectivism associated with classical Cartesianism, other tendencies sought to do just the opposite. This is one way of putting the difference between the two major movements within Anglo-American philosophy that I shall be discussing in this essay.

American pragmatism, which achieved the pinnacle of its popularity prior to 1940, traces its lineage back to empiricism as well as German idealism. With the exception of William James, who is best known for his defense of radical empiricism, the other two important twentieth-century pragmatists, John Dewey (1859–1952) and George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), embraced a post-metaphysical version of Hegelian dialectics that was starkly antithetical to both Cartesian rationalism and atomistic empiricism. By contrast, logical positivism, which maintained a lively hold on Anglo-American thought as late as the 1960s, reacted against Hegelian philosophy in all its forms, and accordingly resurrected both the Cartesian method of conceptual (logical) analysis as well as its atomistic ontology.
In this respect, positivism is closer in spirit to Husserlian phenomenology and French structuralism, while pragmatism is closer in spirit to Heideggerian existentialism and its French progeny (the outstanding exception being Sartre’s early Cartesian existentialism). As a general rule, the pragmatists’ embrace of methodological holism served as counterpoint to the positivists’ endorsement of methodological individualism. However, in contrast to their continental counterparts, pragmatists and positivists shared the naturalistic approach to philosophical explanation that had been the hallmark of Anglo-American philosophy since Francis Bacon.

I. PRAGMATISM

In order to understand the complex relationship between Anglo-American philosophy and continental philosophy during the interwar years, we would need to trace the genealogy of logical positivism and American pragmatism back to their late-nineteenth-century continental antecedents. This dimension has been so thoroughly explored by others that little need be said here about this fascinating chapter in Western philosophy.1 Aside from some notable exceptions – such as Husserl’s positive reaction to some of William James’s earlier ideas concerning experiential psychology (including James’s notion of an experiential “fringe,” which Husserl credits as a precursor to his own notion of “horizon”) – the reception of American pragmatism by English, German, and French philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century was clouded by a prejudicial misunderstanding that was partly abetted by the very philosopher who gave this movement its name. The German translation of James’s Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (1907) by Wilhelm Jerusalem in 1908 catapulted pragmatism into the central topic of discussion at the World Philosophical Congress held at Heidelberg that very same year. James’s assertion in that book that “the true … is only the expedient in the way of our thinking”2 – led many of his German contemporaries to dismiss this “new fad in philosophy … from the land of the dollar” as (in the words of one critic) a degradation of “the truth to the level of expediency, just as in days gone by, a similar way of thinking was imported to us from the land of shopkeepers [i.e. Britain] preaching the reduction of morality to utility.”3 The crassest misrepresentations

of pragmatism spawned by this untimely reception have been the subject of a withering critique by Hans Joas. These include the view that pragmatism reduces truth to utility; endorses Cartesian subjectivism; and represents a mishmash of Ernst Mach's empirico-criticism, Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectivalism and will to power, and German Lebensphilosophie.

These misconceptions about pragmatism continued to inform German philosophy for the next four decades, as can be seen from Max Scheler’s and Max Horkheimer’s unsympathetic comments. Strikingly absent from this reception is any mention of the profound impact of Charles Sanders Peirce on James’s thought. Indeed, Peirce’s signal contribution to the social philosophies of James’s most prominent successors in the pragmatist tradition (most notably Mead and Dewey) consists in his anti-Cartesian, antiphenomenalist linkage of meaning and knowledge to action. More precisely, it was Peirce’s genetic linkage of instrumental action undertaken by a single intelligent being to social action undertaken by a community of knowers that would later inspire the progressive politics of Mead and Dewey. So central to the thought of Mead and Dewey (and, to a lesser extent, Karl Popper) is this linkage of reflective natural adaptation and social community that it would later ground their view that free and fully inclusive democracy is central to the full development of the kind of creative intelligence that is so necessary for progressive problem-solving of any kind.

Peirce expressly derived his notion of “pragmaticism” from Kant’s use of pragmatisch in the Critique of Pure Reason (II, ch. 2, sec. 3) and the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (sec. II), where Kant equates it with instrumental (prudential) action guided by hypothetical (conditional) rules, in contrast with

4. Joas, Pragmatism and Social Theory, 99.
5. In his book “Erkenntnis und Arbeit” (1926), Scheler reduced pragmatism to a “knowledge of productivity,” which he distinguishes from a knowledge of culture (Bildungswissen) and a knowledge of redemption (Erlösungswissen). More tellingly, he equated this knowledge of productivity with a “knowledge of domination” that in his mind was largely indistinguishable from the kind of narrow instrumentalism that characterized positivism. Scheler’s interpretation of pragmatism served as the dominant reference point for Horkheimer’s dismissive treatment of Dewey’s philosophy in Eclipse of Reason, written almost twenty years later. Although Horkheimer takes note of the “many schools of thought” that have criticized pragmatism, he himself cites only Hugo Münsterberg’s Philosophie der Werte and Scheler’s “Erkenntnis und Arbeit,” in Scheler’s Die Wissenformen und die Gesellschaft (Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason [New York: Oxford University Press, 1947], 42).
moral (practical) action guided by categorical (unconditional) imperatives. Peirce himself was mainly interested in showing how the meanings of many if not most general ideas (or signs) could be interpreted in terms of general (counterfactual) conditionals. Such conditionals prescribe the performance of an indefinite number of instrumental (experimental) actions that achieve definite consequences. Thus, the meaning of “this diamond is hard” would be explicable by a statement of the sort “If one were to scratch, illuminate, etc., this substance, then consequences such as failure to scratch, darken, etc. would occur.”

Especially important for later pragmatists is the way in which Peirce connects this account of meaning to an account of knowledge, truth, and logical probability. According to Peirce, the meanings of our words are constant because they signify fixed beliefs. These beliefs are acquired and confirmed in experimental situations in which the outcomes are at best statistically probable but not absolutely certain. Probability, in turn, designates a relative frequency, the average deviation from which diminishes in proportion to the number of trials. The upshot is that the constancy of a sign’s meaning is also relative to experimentally confirmed statistical frequencies produced over time. Indeed, so is truth. For on Peirce’s account, it is the experimental method – not tenacity, authority, or a priori reasoning – that enables us to approximate a lasting consensus in the fixation of belief and thereby eliminate deviations that produce doubt. More importantly, it is the experimental method as applied by an indefinite ideal community of inquirers that gradually enables us to approximate (if not reach) a true and lasting consensus over time regarding all of our beliefs, moral as well as cognitive.

Peirce’s insights regarding knowledge and meaning proved seminal for Dewey and Mead. Dewey began his career as a Hegelian. During the period from 1890 to 1900, his embrace of Hegelian idealism, with its notion of conceptual holism and conceptual dialectic (or development) traversing stages of contradiction (analytic opposition and distinction) and resolution (synthetic unification and identification), underwent a profound naturalistic transformation. Under the influence of Darwin’s theory of evolution, Dewey translated this dialectic into the idiom of biological organism and growth as a progressive process of environmental adaptation and change. His deeper exposure to Peirce’s and James’s pragmatism around the turn of the century added a third element to this equation: instrumentalism (or “experimental idealism” as he then formulated it). As we shall see, Dewey’s instrumentalism bears a striking resemblance to certain aspects of Martin Heidegger’s existential phenomenology in its emphasis on the holistic and situational nature of human understanding (or inquiry, as Dewey dubbed it). For Dewey, human understanding involves an embodied attunement to an environment that is already meaningful (circumscribed by language and community) but never determinately so, thereby calling forth an ongoing
process of active interpretation (reconstruction) in light of new questions, new problems, and new possibilities.

While Dewey was interested in working out the implications of instrumentalism for a theory of democracy and education, Mead was chiefly preoccupied with applying Peirce’s anti-Cartesian insights about the communal genesis of knowledge and meaning to the new fields of developmental and social psychology. As with Dewey’s pragmatism, Mead’s symbolic interactionism, which he also called social behaviorism, owes a great deal to Hegel’s dialectical philosophy, especially its account of self-certainty, conceived as a process of acquiring recognition from (internalizing the viewpoint of) another. For Mead, one becomes a full self – an “I” who as subject can reflectively relate to itself as object, or “me” – only in the course of proceeding through progressive stages of social and symbolic interaction. As socialization proceeds, so does individuation. Ultimately, the capacity of the self to internalize the impersonal and abstract linguistic perspectives of first-, second- and third-person – signified by the human community (or generalized other) – enables the self to critically free itself from the particular social roles constitutive of itself as a nexus of social habits (or “me”), thereby enabling it to become a uniquely creative inventor of its own values and beliefs – in short, of its own identity as an “I.”

II. GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

Mead’s entire career was informed by the Hegelian insight that “the whole is more concrete than the part.”8 The rather meager corpus of essays and fragments that constitute Mead’s oeuvre, most of which have been posthumously published in various collections, repeatedly attest to the power this idea had on his thought. Once again, it is Peirce’s notion of a community of interpretation as pivotal for understanding meaning and belief that links this idealistic notion to an account of social behavior. Darwin’s Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals provided Mead with an evolutionary model for understanding the

7. George Herbert Mead (February 27, 1863–April 26, 1931; born in South Hadley, Massachusetts; died in Chicago) received his BA from Oberlin College (1879–83) and began doing graduate work at Harvard in 1887, although he never wrote a dissertation. In 1893 he was appointed professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, where he served in that capacity until his death. His main intellectual influences included Darwin, Hegel, and Adam Smith. Among his most important books are The Philosophy of the Present (1932); Mind, Self, and Society (1934); Philosophy of the Act (1938); Selected Writings: George Herbert Mead (1964); and The Individual and the Social World: Unpublished Work of George Herbert Mead (1982).

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rudimentary social psychology of animal behavior. Meanwhile, Dewey’s im-
portant work on the reflex (stimulus response) arc, which in many ways anticipated
Gestalt psychology as well as the phenomenology of perception and behavior
developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty a half-century later, provided him with
a nonatoministic (nonmechanistic) model of organic behavior, understood as an
interpretative response that internalizes and reconstitutes a stimulus within a
learning arc.⁹

Mead is chiefly concerned to show how mind and self emerge in the course of
traversing logical phases in the development of social and symbolic interaction.
The most primitive phase – “the conversation of gestures” – can be observed
in animals, as when a dog growls in order to ward off another dog. Darwin
regarded such gestures as expressions of inner emotional states, not as forms
of social interaction. For Mead, the gesture possesses significance for the dog
toward whom the gesture is directed. The gesture’s capacity to stimulate behavior
causally depends on its being significant to its recipient. As with Dewey, the stim-
ulus becomes effective only by being constituted and interpreted as significant.
Here, however, the significance in question is established socially, as a type or
pattern of response (coordination) that comes to be shared.

So construed, there need not be anything like a “consciousness of meaning”
on the part of the dogs in question regarding the significance of their growling.
Meaning and language first emerge when the gesture becomes a “significant
symbol.” That happens when the dogs learn how to use their growling gestures
purposefully. The gesture of growling becomes mutually meaningful once each
dog “internalizes” the fact that growling calls forth a specific behavior in the other
dog. In order for this to happen, each dog must take the attitude of the other dog
toward his own behavior. That is, as a dog I imagine myself being the other dog.¹⁰

In imagining myself thus, I learn to respond to my own act, to reflect on myself.

Mead’s fascinating account of infantile role-playing connects the interactive
genesis of meaning with the social, moral, and cognitive development of the self.
In play a child imagines herself playing the roles of her parents or other signifi-
cant others. She conducts a conversation with herself, playing different roles,
the meaning of which she herself more or less freely constitutes (albeit, with the

⁹. In 1942 a committee of seventy psychologists named Dewey’s “The Reflex Arc Concept in
Psychology,” Psychological Review (1896) the most significant contribution ever published in
the journal.

¹⁰. Mead’s reference to the act of seeing oneself through the eyes of the other not only paraphrases
Hegel’s famous account of self-consciousness in the Phenomenology but also recalls Adam
Smith’s belief that in moral matters “[w]e suppose ourselves spectators of our own behavior,
and endeavor to imagine what effect [our own passions and conduct] would, in this light [i.e.
as regards our feelings of approval or censure] produce upon us” (Adam Smith, The Theory of
guidance of some incipient models). When play becomes a game involving other children, the child has less freedom to improvise, for here the roles have to be negotiated and agreed on. In order to do this, the child has to learn to take up the attitude of all her playmates. The game of tag, for example, only works if the child who is "it" simultaneously adopts the attitude of all the other players (in effect, playing out their assumed roles in the interiority of her mind).

It is this reflexive role-playing and attitude-taking competence that founds the ability to participate in all other social groups, from the most local of neighborhood clubs to the most all-inclusive humanity. In becoming social, the child learns to adopt the standpoint of the \textit{generalized other}. Ultimately, it is by internalizing the attitude of the community in which she belongs that she internalizes the moral responses of that community and becomes a “principled” person. But the self does not lose its individuality in becoming so socialized. On the contrary, the capacity to adopt an abstract point of view (that of the community or of humanity at large) enables one to critically objectify and freely distance oneself from the multitude of particular roles one has internalized as “me.”

Individuals, then, are the outcome of freely reconstituting and reinterpreting the various habituated social roles within their repertory. \textit{Qua “me,”} the individual is a unique (and in that sense individual) confluence of sedimented social roles that one can recall to memory (as a part of one’s already scripted autobiography). However, once recalled to memory and made an object to oneself through adopting the attitude of a \textit{second-person}, the “me” can be set in dialogue with a more abstract aspect of the self, which is formed by taking the role of a \textit{third-person} observer: the \textit{generalized other} (representing the attitude of the social group taken as a whole).

In contrast to the “me,” which is the unconscious repository of social norms, the “I” represents that part of the self who reacts almost impulsively against (or toward) the attitude of the community and tries to change it. Unlike the “me,” the “I” cannot be reflectively known as an object from the perspective of the second-person. Instead, as a kind of instinctual or imaginative spontaneity, it deploys the critical admonitions of the conventional generalized other (the superego, in Freudian parlance) and projects these on to the image of an ideal, utopian community in which the “I” along with all other “I”s achieves perfect freedom and fulfillment. So construed, the “I” is the source of two kinds of moral demands: a demand for \textit{moral autonomy}, which finds expression in the individual’s assertion of its rights against the conventional norms and laws of the community, and a demand for \textit{self-realization}.

In sum, the self is a dialectical movement, in that it becomes increasingly free and individuated only to the extent that it expands the circle of recognition from the second-person to the third-person, and from the conventional third-person to the ideal (universal) third person. In this respect, individuation
and socialization mutually condition one another through the inextricable identity linking social dependency and individual autonomy. Society and individual realize one another.

III. JOHN DEWEY

Although logic and epistemology form the core of Dewey’s pragmatism, they acquire a distinctive social and political significance in his writings that recall Mead’s analysis of the ideal trajectory of socialization and individuation, embeddedness and emancipation. For Dewey, inquiry necessarily involves a process of critical evaluation that engages all aspects of our social being. As with Peirce, experimental inquiry is a communal activity whose full potential is realized only in democracy, understood as a critical, egalitarian communication of the experimental inputs of each and every member of the community. So construed, community and democracy primarily function as social instruments for problem solving.

A brief glance at some of Dewey’s major works – Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1938), Art as Experience (1934), Democracy and Education (1916), Experience and Nature (1925) – confirms this assessment. What Dewey means by logic is a general theory about the rules governing the formation of concepts, judgments, and inferences in experimental situations; it is a complete theory of human thought and reasoning conceived in instrumental terms. From an evolutionary point of view, instrumental activity is the means by which humans adapt to and change their environment (and thereby change themselves). Phenomenologically speaking, humans are not just spatially inserted into the world as if they were things. Rather, they constitute the world they inhabit; that is, their interests and concerns provide selective reference points for interpreting their surrounding situation as a contextual, meaningful whole. Inquiry is initiated when the situation no longer presents itself as a determinate and coherent whole. Biologically speaking, the human organism experiences a disruption of adaptive functioning, a disequilibrium with respect to its environment as well as with respect to itself. Re-establishing harmony requires reconstituting the situation (and therewith

11. John Dewey (October 20, 1859–June 1, 1952; born in Burlington, Vermont; died in New York) received his BA from the University of Vermont (1875–79) and received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 1884. He was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan until 1894, when he accepted an appointment at the University of Chicago. He finished his career at Columbia University in New York City (1905–39). Peirce (whose lectures on logic he attended while at Johns Hopkins) and the neo-Hegelian idealism of George Sylvester Morris were early influences during his graduate studies. Later influences included James and his colleague at the University of Chicago, Mead.
oneself and one’s experience) in a logical succession of developmental stages. Stage one involves reinterpretation (thoughtful redescription) of a problematic situation that determines what might or might not be relevant; stage two consists in formulating solutions to the problematic situation that take the form of instrumental hypotheses; stage three concretizes (further determines and delimits) the range of possible solutions by sifting through factual observations that in turn suggest new “ideas” or ways of resolving the problem; stage four deploys “reasoning” to articulate and define ideas in relationship to one another by means of propositions and inferences; and the fifth and final stage culminates in an experimental testing of the ideas so developed. If they prove successful, then we are warranted in asserting them as “true” judgments just so long as they continue to effect an operationally successful (existential) correspondence between the questions posed by the situation and the answers posed by the inquirer.

The nature of inquiry not only incorporates critical evaluation of what, in a problematic situation, is important to us – relative to our needs, desires, feelings, and interests – but also provides a mechanism for reconstituting these very concerns. In other words, inquiry constitutes the very contents of our moral life, and it constitutes them within a continuous process of education and growth. The reference to growth has teleological import: indeed, for Dewey, “growth itself is the only moral ‘end.’”12 The proper aim of education is thus to facilitate growth, by enabling the formation of intelligent habits of thought and behavior. These, in turn, are teleologically directed toward the resolution of conflicts – social as well as natural. While complete integration with one’s environment is never achievable, it does point to the importance of joining with others in peaceful democratic community in furthering the social and political conditions that conduce to mutual growth. Social and political arrangements that are premised on a false individualism (or false totalitarianism) violate these conditions; as do any arrangements that generate social inequalities and conflicts (or authoritarian solidarities).

Dewey’s own faith in a new liberalism reconstructed along the lines of a democratic and scientific socialism recalls Mead’s discussion of the “emancipatory” trajectory of genuine socialization. In many respects, Dewey’s liberalism – as developed in Liberalism and Social Action (1935) and Individualism: Old and New (1929) – harks back to John Stuart Mill’s appeal to Wilhelm von Humboldt’s romantic paean to “individuality,” which in turn recalls the Feuerbachian Hegelianism of the young Marx that proved so compelling to members of the Frankfurt School of critical theory. Central to this understanding is a belief that traditional liberalism and theoretical science are caught up in a “dialectic of enlightenment,” to use Theodor Adorno and Horkheimer’s

expression. According to Dewey, the classical liberalism of Locke emancipated the individual from absolutist forms of government, but only at the expense of dissolving the individual into an “atomistic” ego, whose liberty was seen as an innate endowment cut off from society. Such atomistic individualism informed the second, utilitarian wave of nineteenth-century liberalism, where, following Bentham’s teachings (adopted from Adam Smith), it entrenched itself in the form of *laissez-faire* economic liberalism. The result, correctly diagnosed by Marx, was a contradiction between a socially and scientifically organized form of industrial capitalism, on one side, and an individualistic legal conception of private property, on the other. Here, the individual is but an alienated, fragmented, and truncated self: a mere cog in a capitalist machine that operates according to an equally one-sided (socially detached and anarchic) instrumental rationality, dominated by scientific, technological, and managerial specialists who have no connection with the “social whole.”

In Dewey’s opinion, the emergence of a new corporate (industrial) capitalism signals a crisis of liberalism, in which the full flowering of liberalism’s own ideals of freedom, individualism, and reason run up against a new form of economic, political, and social domination. Exit from this crisis will come from neither piecemeal reform nor violent revolution. Salvation, for Dewey, will rather come from harnessing the older method of democratic discussion to the newer method of scientific experimentation, now conceived as an all-inclusive activity of social intelligence. Properly conceived, social science does not merely discover and apply timeless social laws for purposes of prediction and control, but clarifies concrete social problems with the aim of critically evaluating and altering existing social patterns. Its criticism of social ideologies (old habits and prejudices) serves to raise social consciousness and enlighten transformative democratic practice. Reconstructed as a radical social(ist) democracy, the new, scientifically enlightened liberalism will critically integrate and reconstitute the material needs of producers and consumers in the direction of fulfilling higher-order social and spiritual needs.

**IV. POSITIVISM**

Given Rudolf Carnap’s dismissal of Heidegger’s philosophy and Bertrand Russell’s negative caricature of German philosophy *in general* (not to mention his sharp criticism of James’s philosophy), we might be forgiven the all too easy temptation to oppose logical positivism and analytic philosophy to pragmatism.13

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Yet, despite the fact that positivism and pragmatism have somewhat different pedigrees (British empiricism versus German idealism), methods (individualism versus holism), and projects (analyzing abstract concepts with universal scope versus interpreting concepts against the background of concrete historical practices, establishing the indubitable certainty/truth of beliefs versus describing their social and historical genesis), their respective practitioners share much in common. Both embrace some form of naturalism; preferring scientific and logical approaches, they disdain the use of transcendental methods of philosophical introspection that proved so indispensable to their continental counterparts. They also incline towards experimentalist accounts of meaning and knowledge. Given this convergence, we should not be surprised that positivist and post-positivist thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Popper, Wilfrid Sellars, Nelson Goodman, and W. V. Quine characterized themselves (or were characterized by others, such as American pragmatist Charles W. Morris) as pragmatists. Indeed, Dewey himself coedited a book with several noted logical positivists and even contributed an article to that volume;14 and as they migrated to the United States, logical positivists tried to enlist Dewey’s philosophy in their own cause.

Logical positivism is an expression coined by Herbert Feigl and A. E. Blumberg in 1931 to describe the ideas of the Vienna Circle, whose most important associates – including Carnap, Feigl, Otto Neurath, Hans Reichenbach, and Gustav Bergmann – later immigrated to England (where they were sympathetically received by the reigning analytic philosophy made popular by Wittgenstein, Russell, and A. J. Ayer) and the United States (where they transformed or undermined the prevailing pragmatist ethos). Logical positivists were strongly motivated by a quest for logical clarity and epistemic certainty. These logical and empirical concerns were brought together under a single program: the so-called “verificationist” theory of meaning that had been advanced by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* (1921). Wittgenstein intended his theory as a criticism of any philosophy that deviates from the narrow logical task of “showing” how our language means, or “pictures,” a world of “atomic facts,” but its immediate effect was to condemn all nonfactual propositions (propositions whose truth or falsity could not in principle be verifiable by observation) as “meaningless.” The results were deeply disturbing and paradoxical: not only were the evaluative and expressive statements of ethics, religion, metaphysics, and aesthetics suddenly consigned to practical irrelevance, but (as Wittgenstein ironically noted) so were the propositions of philosophy that asserted the verificationist theory of meaning. Indeed, the specter of Hume’s skepticism regarding induction that the school had sought to exorcise reappeared with a vengeance once it became clear that the general

lawlike propositions of science whose truth, as pragmatists had taught, could never be fully verified, were equally meaningless on this account.

Despite the challenges that verificationism posed to philosophy and science (see below), logical positivists believed that the nomological method of causal explanation and the inductive method of causal discovery were, taken together, the only methods for grounding knowledge and meaning. Consequently, they subscribed to a reductive, unified view of knowledge that sharply contrasted with the logical distinction between natural and human sciences that neo-Kantians such as Dilthey had popularized a generation earlier. In short, positivists maintained that the historical, sociological, and psychological sciences must not deviate from the experimental and nomological (or “covering law”) methods of causal explanation exemplified by the natural sciences on pain of being rendered totally “unscientific” and meaningless.

Verificationism and reductionism – the two shibboleths of logical positivism – would eventually come under attack from philosophers, such as Wittgenstein, Popper, Sellars, Goodman, and Quine – who had considered themselves to be sympathetic to some aspects of the positivist cause. Carnap and Neurath had argued (against Moritz Schlick) that scientific laws were not merely inferential rules connecting singular factual statements but were themselves factual claims subject to potential verification or falsification. But how? Were such generalizations verified (falsified) by experience, as many positivists thought? As Neurath (followed by Sellars and Quine) pointed out, only a proposition can verify (justify) a proposition. Were such generalizations then translatable

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15. Wilfrid Sellars (1912–89) firmly rejected epistemological foundationalism. One of the first philosophers to integrate Anglo-American analytic philosophy and Austro-German logical positivism with American pragmatism and Hegelian thought, he devoted much of his life to reconciling the naturalist, “scientific image” of reality with the common-sense (or “manifest”) image of the same held by average persons. Key to this attempt was his distinction between the (naturalistic) space of causal experience and the (linguistic or propositional) space of belief formation and reasoned justification.

Nelson Goodman (1906–98) made significant contributions to mathematic logic, the theory of induction, and aesthetics. He held, against Hempel, that causal (lawlike) generalizations could not be distinguished from accidental generalizations (thereby reformulating the Humean problem of induction), at least in everyday contexts in which the use of predicates is not sharply fixed by formal stipulation. Finally, Goodman’s most famous work – in the area of aesthetics – showed how art and the aesthetic could be understood as creating new ontological worlds (or vocabularies for perceiving and describing reality) in a way that converged with Heidegger’s own views about the ontological import of the work of art.

Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000) is most famous for attacking the analytic–synthetic distinction and, with it, the verificationist theory of meaning, the two pillars of logical positivism (see below). His most important books include From a Logical Point of View (1953), Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (1969), and The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays (1976).
as sets of first-person observation statements (protocol statements), as Carnap suggested? If these statements were formulated as dated observations of physical objects, such as tables and rooms, then such reports would be an unreliable basis for confirmation or falsification, since it might be doubted whether these observations were veridical. On the other hand, if they were formulated as dated observations of private sensory experiences (“here, now, blue” as Schlick insisted), then their subjective certainty would be purchased at the cost of their untranslatability into objective statements.

V. POST-POSITIVISM

For post-positivists such as Quine and Popper, the paradoxes surrounding verificationism were best resolved by jettisoning the theory. Like the pragmatists, they argued that scientific generalizations are not constructed out of particular experiences (induction) but are experimental hypotheses formulated by prior theories, which are themselves the products of imagination. Quine’s attack on the analytic–synthetic distinction in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951) was especially effective in undermining the positivist distinction between necessary (analytic or identity) statements concerning logical meaning and contingent (synthetic or empirically informative) statements concerning experience and behavior, a distinction Dewey himself had vigorously criticized many years earlier in his 1938 *Logic*, where he observed that “[w]hen a linguistic form is separated from the contextual matter of problem inquiry it is impossible to decide of what logical form it is the expression.”16 Accordingly, the dogma of a theory- (concept- or meaning-) independent experience that could stand as an independent standard for constructing and testing a theory was laid to rest.

VI. KARL POPPER

For his part, Popper held that induction could not confirm scientific hypotheses because (as Peirce had seen) they refer to an indefinite number of counterfactual tests. The “necessary connection” that distinguishes causal relations from non-necessary but relatively invariant correlations of past events – the problem of induction diagnosed by Hume – can be articulated only when such hypotheses are formulated as counterfactual conditionals of the form: “Had y not happened, z would not have happened.” Because scientific hypotheses are counterfactual, they cannot be definitively verified by past and present experiences (events) but

can be falsified only with reference to present and future experiences. Hence, for Popper, the true test for the meaningfulness of a scientific theory is its capacity to generate potentially falsifiable hypotheses. But this attempt to save positivism – by replacing verification with falsification – also fails, since as Quine later argued (and Popper himself conceded), disconfirming tests do not suffice to falsify a given hypothesis so much as place in doubt a system of interconnected supporting hypotheses. Which hypothesis we choose to eliminate in order to restore coherence is thus not determined exclusively by our observations. Our epistemic commitments – for instance, how central a hypothesis is within the web of our otherwise workable belief system – also play a role. This pragmatic insight would later inspire Thomas Kuhn’s conception of scientific revolutions, in which changes in scientific paradigm are stimulated by anomalous test results only when a potentially more fruitful (if inarticulate and as of yet unconfirmed) paradigm has gained support from most of a scientific community.

Popper’s criticism of verificationism did not extend to positivism’s other defining postulates: unificationism and fact–value dualism. Along with Carl Hempel, he insisted that the historical and social sciences yield meaningful hypotheses only insofar as their explanation of events and actions are capable of being framed in terms of general (or statistical) laws of behavior. Such causal explanations could be useful to the formation of public policies aimed at piece-meal social reform. In contrast with these hypothetical technical predictions, the grandiose revolutionary experiments undertaken by such totalitarian movements as fascism and communism are not guided by scientific knowledge, despite contrary claims offered by their proponents.

Popper’s two-volume magnum opus *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), and his shorter treatise *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957), link this narrow scientific claim to a broader conception of morality, action, and politics in a manner that merits closer scrutiny. To begin with, Popper argues that the laws of historical development and social evolution that defenders of total revolution advocate – what he referred to as “historicism” – are ultimately meaningless, since they do not yield falsifiable hypotheses. Such laws as inform Marx’s historical materialism, which ostensibly postulates an inevitable progression of social formations (modes of production) culminating in communism, Plato’s views about the inevitable decline of well-ordered polities into tyranny, or fascist doctrines about the fateful struggle and victory of master races are all examples of unscientific (and

18. Popper’s notion of historicism must not be confused with the concept of historicism that was used by Husserl, Dilthey, and other (mainly neo-Kantian) thinkers at the turn of the century, for whom the term referred to a kind of historical relativity in the understanding of distinctive historical epochs and cultural worldviews.
irrational) ideologies. The architects who use such ideologies to construct their revolutionary societies cannot allow any actions that deviate from the predicted outcome, so they insist on totalitarian controls that transform modern societies that are otherwise open, liberal, and democratic (or on the cusp of becoming so) into societies that are primitive, closed, and tribal.

According to Popper, the critical rationalism inherent within science demands an open society. Persons must be free to imagine new hypotheses; ultimately, the values (moral and nonmoral) that guide the inventive formulation of hypotheses are themselves the outcome of existential decisions that are entirely unpredictable. The fact that the consequences and meanings of actions transcend the intentions of actors and that the latter are themselves critically generated and revised within the context of multivocal and open-ended conversations means that the predictions of predetermined outcomes made by revolutionary social engineers must come to naught. As another contemporary Kantian, Hannah Arendt, astutely noted in her criticism of totalitarianism, the revolutionary spirit underlying utopian moral idealism inevitably shatters against the hard fact of moral freedom.

VII. THE CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN PRAGMATISM AND LOGICAL POSITIVISM

As I noted earlier, once logical positivism became transplanted on to American soil by German and Austrian émigrés fleeing Nazi Germany it was vigorously promoted as a more analytically rigorous – and ostensibly superior – way of doing philosophy than its pragmatist counterpart. Hence the virtual disappearance of pragmatism in major PhD-granting philosophy departments during the 1950s and 1960s. There is also some anecdotal evidence, assembled by John McCumber, that political motivations may also have contributed to this change.19 Although positivists such as Carnap and Neurath had left-wing sympathies, their philosophy had the distinct merit of being untainted by the left-leaning, social progressivism that marked Mead’s and Dewey’s pragmatism. Limiting philosophy to the singular task of conceptual clarification and epistemological foundationalism, logical positivists eschewed normative ethics altogether in favor of metaethical ruminations on the meaning of “ought,” “good,” and the like. As a worldview that promoted skepticism of any holistic or global historical (or totalizing) understanding of social and economic structures, even

Popper’s critical rationalism could at best promote piecemeal reform of a system that was largely taken for granted.

During the McCarthy era, Popper’s relatively weak vision of an open society of free inquirers was not to be found among American philosophy departments. Yet despite the near total eclipse of pragmatism, post-positivist tendencies that drew from (or otherwise replicated) ideas developed by pragmatist philosophers gradually supplanted positivist shibboleths. The Anglo-American world was thus well prepared for the renaissance of neo-pragmatist thought that was ushered in by Richard Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* in 1979 and alternatively taken up by such notable philosophers as Hilary Putnam and (more recently), John McDowell and Robert Brandom.²⁰

Oddly, despite the affinities between pragmatism and continental philosophy – notably Heideggerian phenomenology and Frankfurt School neo-Marxism – there was virtually no productive interchange between these currents of thought until the 1970s. I mentioned the utter failure of Horkheimer and other first generation critical theorists to read the works of Dewey seriously.²¹ Therefore, in concluding this essay, I would like to recall how the Frankfurt School’s own struggle with positivism led it to eventually recover the legacy of American pragmatism well before it became fashionable in the English-speaking world.

The positivist postulates of scientific unificationism and fact–value dualism were strenuously resisted by philosophers influenced by the linguistic philosophy of the late Wittgenstein and, on the continent, by critical theorists. Critical

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²⁰. These developments are discussed in several essays in the following volumes. See the essays by David R. Hiley in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*, José Medina in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*, and John Fennell in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.

²¹. Dewey is the philosopher most often mentioned by Horkheimer in *Eclipse of Reason*. Yet James Schmidt (“The Eclipse of Reason and the End of the Frankfurt School in America,” *New German Critique* 34 [Winter 2007]) points out that Horkheimer’s discussion of Dewey and pragmatism in the second of the Columbia University Lectures he gave in 1944 that would later form the core of his book was an afterthought. Indeed, Horkheimer was prompted to correct the interpretation of pragmatism contained in the lecture only when he wrote his manuscript, which was critically reviewed by C. Wright Mills, who believed that Horkheimer had grasped pragmatism “in a rather vulgar form” and without apparent familiarity with the primary texts. Although Horkheimer told Leo Löwenthal that he felt he had become “an expert” on American pragmatism, having read “not a few of these native products” (M. Horkheimer, Letter to Löwenthal, December 21, 1944 [Folder 20], bMS Ger 185 [47]; from the Leo Löwenthal Papers, Houghton Library of Harvard University; cited by Schmidt, “The Eclipse of Reason,” 65), his belief that pragmatism and positivism were virtually indistinguishable, save for the latter’s “phenomenalism” (“sensualistic idealism”), belies this judgment. In Horkheimer’s opinion, pragmatism, no less than positivism, identifies philosophy with scientism, which by its very nature is subjectivistic in that “true judgments on objects, and therewith the concept of the object itself, rests solely on ‘effects’ upon the subject’s action” (Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, 45).
theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer saw positivism (including Popper’s critical rationalism) as fundamentally uncritical and reactionary. The positivist dismissal of evaluative language, its insistence on defining truth and meaning in terms of correspondence with atomic facts or subjectively given sense experiences – in total abstraction from the broader historical, economic, political, and sociocultural context conditioning perception, thought, and language – struck them as a false and ideological affirmation of the status quo. While they did not deny the epistemic value of predictive and technically useful knowledge within the behavioral sciences, critical theorists regarded such knowledge as but a subordinate aspect within social science taken as a whole, the proper aim of which, they maintained, was not instrumental prediction and control of human behavior but the critique of “naturalizing” ideologies that depict society as a realm of rigid, unchanging laws.

The so-called “positivist dispute” of the early 1960s that pitted Popper and his followers against Adorno and his former assistant Jürgen Habermas brought the issue of “critical social knowledge” into stark relief. Popperians defended a unified scientific method as the only empirically responsible approach to social critique and impugned the holistic hermeneutical methods of critical theorists as an uncritical recrudescence of Hegelian dialectical metaphysics. Critical theorists responded that social scientists could not causally explain human behavior without first interpreting it as meaningful and norm-governed in a way that referred to interests, ideas, and utopian ideals that simultaneously corresponded to and conflicted with the laws of capitalist accumulation. Furthermore, they briddled at the fact–value distinction upheld by the Popperians, which consigned critical evaluations to the irrational status of existential decisions. This was a “decisionism,” they believed, that could all too easily degenerate into a resolute acquiescence to the powers that be, as exemplified by the illustrative fate of Carl Schmitt and Heidegger.

Habermas enlisted none other than Wittgenstein himself in arguing against the unified science postulate maintained by the Popperians. Wittgenstein’s late philosophy of language, the most mature of expression of which is expounded in his posthumous work Philosophical Investigations (1953), develops a pragmatist account of meaning that is completely antithetical to the positivist view he had earlier developed in the Tractatus.22 In the mature work, Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of language is holistic and contextual (syncategorematic) and linked to observable use rather than to ostensive reference. Language games comprise speech acts that, in the parlance of Wittgenstein’s follower John Austin, accomplish illocutionary (social-action-oriented) aims and have perlocutionary

*22. For a discussion of Wittgenstein’s turn against his own earlier views in the Tractatus, see the essay by Bob Plant and John Fennell in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
(behavior-modifying) effects. Such games, in turn, circumscribe rule-governed “ways of life” that are inherently public and shared.

As developed by Peter Winch in his pioneering manifesto *The Idea of Social Science* (1958), the implication of this Wittgensteinian theory of meaning for explaining human action was nothing less than momentous, in that it reaffirmed the dualism between natural and human science that formerly had been defended by neo-Kantians. According to Winch, meaningful action is distinguished from brute behavior in being essentially structured and identified by the intentions of the actor. Such intentions are therefore not discrete psychic causes that precede physical action as Popper, Hempel, and other advocates of the so-called “covering law” model of social and historical explanation had maintained. On the contrary, intentional actions cannot be causally explained with reference to social laws but can only be understood and interpreted within the context of a rule-governed language game, or way of life. More precisely, the intentions of the actor – what it is he or she intends to do by his or her action – implicitly refers to norms of speaking and acting. To explain an action is therefore to understand it as a meaningful instance of a norm that could, in principle, be creatively applied or even violated.

The Wittgensteinian revolution in philosophy of language proved pivotal for the development of later critical theory. It enabled the most notable exponents of this theory, Karl-Otto Apel and Habermas, to recover the lost insights of the pragmatist tradition, above all Peirce’s operationalist theory of meaning and Mead’s social behaviorist account of mind, in the 1960s and 1970s – well in advance of the renaissance of Anglo-American neo-pragmatism. This appropriation of classical pragmatism has continued apace under third generation critical theorists Axel Honneth and Joas, whose use of Dewey and, above all, Mead, to develop new theories of recognition and democracy has taken critical theory more deeply into the heart of social progressivism.

In the hands of Habermas and Apel, pragmatism was used to construct a transcendental theory of knowledge-constitutive interests as an alternative to positivist “objectivism.” Following Habermas’s formulation of this new program

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23. Apel’s epochal introduction of American pragmatism (principally Peircean semiotics) to the German public appeared in his two-volume study *The Transformation of Philosophy* (1973), which also displays a great debt to the neo-Kantian tradition of Dilthey and the post-positivist philosophy of the late Wittgenstein. Habermas’s indebtedness to Peirce is evident in his earlier work, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), while his use of Mead later appears in the second volume of his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981).

24. For discussions of these developments in the second and third generations of critical theorists, see, respectively, the essays by Christopher F. Zurn and James Swindal in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*, and Amy Allen in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.
of critical pragmatism, different interests that have emerged in the course of the natural history of the human species determine distinctive frameworks of action and knowledge. Corresponding to a technical interest in controlling nature-like processes is instrumental action – articulated in experimental methods – that serves to stabilize successful beliefs about cause and effect. Corresponding to a practical interest in understanding ourselves and (reaching) understanding (with) others is communicative action – articulated in historical interpretative methods – that serves to stabilize right beliefs about identities, norms, values, and ends. Corresponding to an emancipatory interest is critical reflection – articulated in psychotherapeutic methods combining causal explanation and holistic understanding – that serves to expose distortions in self-understanding caused by the effects of domination.

Since the late 1970s, Habermas’s critical theory has evolved into a full-blown theory of communicative action whose debt to pragmatism – especially to Mead and Wittgenstein – is evident in the name he gives his philosophy of language: universal pragmatics. If anything, the newer generation of critical theorists has sought to wrest the materialist spirit of pragmatism even further from the Kantian dualisms that still define Habermas’s theory. Needless to say, all of this testifies to the continuing impact of pragmatism on the future of German critical philosophy.
## CHRONOLOGY

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<td>1637</td>
<td>Descartes, <em>Discourse on Method</em></td>
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<td>1641</td>
<td>Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em></td>
<td>Rembrandt, <em>Nightwatch</em></td>
<td>English Civil War begins</td>
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<td>1642</td>
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<td>1651</td>
<td>Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em></td>
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<td><em>Logique du Port-Royal</em></td>
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<td>1665</td>
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<td>Newton discovers calculus</td>
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<td>John Milton, <em>Paradise Lost</em></td>
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<td>1670</td>
<td>Pascal, <em>Les Pensées</em> (posthumous)</td>
<td>Leibniz discovers calculus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spinoza, <em>Tractatus theologico-politicus</em></td>
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<td>1675</td>
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<td>Spinoza, <em>Ethics</em></td>
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<td>Newton, <em>Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica</em></td>
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<td>1689</td>
<td>Locke, <em>A Letter Concerning Toleration</em></td>
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<td>(–1690) Locke, <em>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Two Treatises of Civil Government</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1695</td>
<td>Bayle, <em>Dictionnaire historique et critique</em>, vol. I</td>
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<td>1714</td>
<td>Leibniz, <em>Monadologie</em></td>
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<td>1739</td>
<td>Hume, <em>A Treatise of Human Nature</em></td>
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<td>1742</td>
<td>Handel, <em>Messiah</em></td>
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<td>1748</td>
<td>Hume, <em>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em></td>
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<td>1751</td>
<td>Diderot and D’Alembert, <em>Encyclopédie</em>, vols 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>1755</td>
<td>Rousseau, <em>Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes</em></td>
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<td>1759</td>
<td>Voltaire, <em>Candide</em></td>
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<td>Rousseau, <em>Du contrat social and Émile ou de l’éducation</em></td>
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<td>1776</td>
<td>Death of Hume</td>
<td>Adam Smith, <em>Wealth of Nations</em></td>
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<td>1781</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em></td>
<td>American Declaration of Independence</td>
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<td>1783</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</em></td>
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<td>1784</td>
<td>Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”</td>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</em></td>
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<td>US Constitution</td>
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<td>1788</td>
<td>Birth of Arthur Schopenhauer</td>
<td>Gibbon, <em>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</em></td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1790</td>
<td>Death of d’Holbach</td>
<td>Adoption of <em>La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen</em></td>
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<td>1791</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der Urteilskraft</em></td>
<td>French Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic</td>
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<td>1792</td>
<td>Edmund Burke, <em>Reflections on the Revolution in France</em></td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft, <em>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</em></td>
<td>Mozart, <em>The Magic Flute</em></td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Tom Paine, <em>The Rights of Man</em></td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Creation of the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Robespierre</td>
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Volume 5
### CHRONOLOGY

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<td>1795</td>
<td>Schiller, Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen</td>
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<td>1797</td>
<td>Schelling, Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft</td>
<td>Hölderlin, Hyperion, vol. 1</td>
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<td>1798</td>
<td>Birth of Auguste Comte</td>
<td>Thomas Malthus, Essay on the Principle of Population</td>
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<td>1800</td>
<td>Fichte, Die Bestimmung des Menschen Schelling, System des transcendentalen Idealismus</td>
<td>Beethoven’s First Symphony</td>
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<td>1804</td>
<td>Death of Kant</td>
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<td>Napoleon Bonaparte proclaims the First Empire</td>
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<td>1805</td>
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<td>Publication of Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau</td>
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<td>1806</td>
<td>Birth of John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Goethe, Faust, Part One Reinstatement of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university</td>
<td>Napoleon brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end</td>
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<td>1807</td>
<td>Hegel, Die Phänomenologie des Geistes</td>
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<td>1812</td>
<td>(–1816) Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik</td>
<td>Jane Austen, Emma</td>
<td>Battle of Waterloo; final defeat of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1815</td>
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<td>Ricardo, Principles of Political Economy</td>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>Hegel, Encyclopedia</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</td>
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<td>1818</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Marx</td>
<td>Byron, Don Juan</td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</td>
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<td>Death of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1823</td>
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<td>Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>(–1842) Auguste Comte, Cours de philosophie positive in six volumes</td>
<td>Stendhal, The Red and the Black</td>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, The Hunchback of Notre Dame</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Clausewitz, Vom Kriege</td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey</td>
<td>Pushkin, Eugene Onegin</td>
<td>Abolition of slavery in the British Empire</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<td>1837</td>
<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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| 1841 | Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*  
Kierkegaard, *On the Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates* | R. W. Emerson, *Essays: First Series* | |
| 1842 | Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle) | | |
| 1843 | Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling*  
Mill, *A System of Logic* | Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo* | |
| 1844 | Marx writes *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts* | | |
| 1846 | Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* | | |
| 1847 | Boole, *The Mathematical Analysis of Logic*  
Helmholtz, *On the Conservation of Force* | | |
| 1848 | Publication of the *Communist Manifesto* | Beginning of the French Second Republic | |
| 1851 | Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*  
Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*  
The Great Exhibition is staged at the Crystal Palace, London | | |
| 1852 | | Napoleon III declares the Second Empire | |
| 1853 | | (–1856) Crimean War | |
| 1854 | H. D. Thoreau, *Walden*  
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* | | |
| 1856 | Birth of Sigmund Freud | | |
| 1857 | Birth of Ferdinand de Saussure  
Death of Comte | Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*  
Gustav Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* | |
| 1859 | Birth of Henri Bergson, John Dewey, and Edmund Husserl  
<p>| 1861 | Johann Jakob Bachofen, <em>Das Mutterrecht</em> | Tsar Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia | |
| 1863 | Birth of George Herbert Mead | Édouard Manet, <em>Olympia</em> | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Mill, <em>Utilitarianism</em></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>(-1869) Leo Tolstoy, <em>War and Peace</em></td>
<td>Surrender of General Robert E. Lee signals the conclusion of the American Civil War</td>
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<td>1866</td>
<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Crime and Punishment</em></td>
<td>The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1867</td>
<td>Marx, <em>Das Kapital, vol. I</em></td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>Birth of Émile Chartier (&quot;Alain&quot;)</td>
<td>Birth of W. E. B. Du Bois</td>
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<td>1869</td>
<td>Mill, <em>The Subjection of Women</em></td>
<td>Completion of the Suez Canal</td>
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<td>1870</td>
<td></td>
<td>(-1871) Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1871</td>
<td>Lachelier, <em>Du fondement de l’induction</em></td>
<td>Paris Commune</td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>Death of Mill</td>
<td>End of German Occupation following France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>Birth of Max Scheler, Émile Boutroux, <em>La Contingence des lois de la nature</em></td>
<td>Birth of Karl Kraus</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<td>1878</td>
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<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Frege, <em>Begriffsschrift</em></td>
<td>Henrik Ibsen, <em>A Doll’s House</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Thomas Edison exhibits his incandescent light bulb</td>
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<td>Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Jaspers and José Ortega y Gasset</td>
<td>Death of Wagner</td>
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<td>Death of Marx</td>
<td>Cantor, &quot;Foundations of a General Theory of Aggregates&quot;</td>
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<td>Dilthey, <em>Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften</em></td>
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<td>(–1885) Nietzsche, <em>Also Sprach Zarathustra</em></td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>Frege, <em>Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik</em></td>
<td>Mark Twain, <em>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</em></td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>Birth of Gaston Bachelard and Georg Lukács</td>
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<td>1886</td>
<td>Nietzsche, <em>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</em></td>
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<td>Nietzsche, <em>Zur Genealogie der Moral</em></td>
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<td>1888</td>
<td>Birth of Carl Schmitt and Jean Wahl</td>
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<td>Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein</td>
<td>Birth of Siegfried Kracauer</td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Birth of Antonio Gramsci</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>Birth of Walter Benjamin</td>
<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>Frege, &quot;Über Sinn und Bedeutung&quot;</td>
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<td>1893</td>
<td>Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1894</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of projected motion pictures</td>
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<td>Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1896</td>
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<td>Athens hosts the first Olympic Games of the modern era</td>
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## Chronology

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<td>Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1898</td>
<td>Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
<td>Zola, article &quot;J'accuse&quot; in defense of Dreyfus</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Birth of Nietzsche and Félix Ravaission (1901) Husserl, <em>Logische Untersuchungen</em></td>
<td>Planck formulates quantum theory</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Popper</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavaillès</td>
<td>Du Bois, <em>The Souls of Black Folk</em></td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>(1905) Weber, <em>Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus</em></td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
<td>Law of separation of church and state in France</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor</td>
<td>The Dreyfus Affair ends when the French Court of Appeals exonerates Dreyfus of all charges</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Hyppolite Bergson, <em>L'Evolution créatrice</em></td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d'Avignon</em></td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. Quine</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>(1913) Whitehead and Russell, <em>Principia Mathematica</em></td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article on Husserl, &quot;Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d'une Logique pure,&quot; in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<td>1914</td>
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<td>Germany invades France</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Publication of Saussure's <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Death of Durkheim</td>
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<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Birth of Louis Althusser</td>
<td>Death of Georg Cantor and Lachelier</td>
<td>Proclamation of the Weimar Republic First World War ends</td>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>Lukács, <em>Die Theorie des Romans</em></td>
<td>German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) founds the Bauhaus School</td>
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<td>1922</td>
<td>Lukács, <em>Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein</em> Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded</td>
<td>Kahil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<td>1924</td>
<td>Birth of Jean-François Lyotard Sartre, Raymond Aron, Paul Nizan, Georges Canguilhem, and Daniel Lagache enter the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>André Breton, <em>Le Manifeste du surréalisme</em> Thomas Mann, <em>The Magic Mountain</em></td>
<td>Death of Vladimir Lenin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze, and Frantz Fanon</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>The Trial</em> First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Birth of Michel Foucault Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl’s phenomenology: <em>Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</em></td>
<td>The film <em>Metropolis</em> by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin The Bauhaus school building, designed by Walter Gropius, is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Sein und Zeit</em> Marcel, <em>Journal métaphysique</em></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, <em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
<td>CULTURAL EVENTS</td>
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| 1929 | Birth of Jürgen Habermas  
Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* and *Was ist Metaphysik?*  
Husserl, *Formale und transzendentale Logik* and “Phenomenology” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*  
Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*  
Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne | Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*  
Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* |  |
| 1930 | Birth of Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Félix Guattari, Luce Irigaray, and Michel Serres  
Levinas, *La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* | (-1942) Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities* |  |
| 1931 | Death of Mead  
Heidegger’s first works appear in French translation: “Was ist Metaphysik?” in *Bifur*, and “Vom Wesen des Grundes” in *Recherches philosophiques*  
Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*  
Husserl’s *Ideas* is translated into English | Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*  
Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems |  |
| 1932 | Birth of Stuart Hall  
Bergson, *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion* | Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*  
BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK |  |
| 1933 | University in Exile is founded as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research  
Arendt and Horkheimer emigrate to the US  
(-1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études | André Malraux, *Man’s Fate*  
<p>| 1934 | Frankfurt Institute moves from Geneva to Columbia University | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHILosophical events</th>
<th>CULTural events</th>
<th>POLitical events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fromm and Marcuse emigrate to the US</td>
<td>Penguin publishes its first paperback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Husserl, <em>Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie</em></td>
<td>Death of Karl Kraus Benjamin, &quot;The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction&quot; First issue of <em>Life Magazine</em></td>
<td>(-1939) Spanish Civil War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sartre, &quot;La Transcendance de l’égó&quot; in <em>Recherches philosophiques</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous Death of Gramsci</td>
<td>Picasso, <em>Guernica</em> (-1941) Theodor W. Adorno is Music Director of the Radio Project social research project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of Husserl Adorno emigrates to the US</td>
<td>Sartre, <em>La Nausée</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium Founding of <em>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</em> (-1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em> Alfred Schutz emigrates to the US</td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em> John Steinbeck, <em>The Grapes of Wrath</em></td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3)</td>
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<td>Death of Benjamin Richard Wright, <em>Native Son</em></td>
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<td>Death of Bergson Marcuse, <em>Reason and Revolution</em></td>
<td>Arthur Koestler, <em>Darkness at Noon</em> Death of James Joyce</td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and US enters the Second World War Germany invades the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of <em>Les Temps modernes</em></td>
<td>George Orwell, <em>Animal Farm</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sartre, <em>L’Existentialisme est un humanisme</em></td>
<td>Bataille founds the journal <em>Critique</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus”</td>
<td>Kracauer, <em>From Caligari to Hitler</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Adorno and Horkheimer, <em>Dialektik der Aufklärung</em></td>
<td>Thomas Mann, <em>Doctor Faustus</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beauvoir, <em>Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heidegger’s <em>Existence and Being</em> is translated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Institut für Sozialforschung returns to Frankfurt</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Althusser appointed agrégé-répétiteur (“caiman”) at the École Normale Supérieure, a</td>
<td>Debut of <em>The Ed Sullivan Show</em></td>
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<td>position he holds until 1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Birth of Axel Honneth</td>
<td>Adam Miller, <em>Death of a Salesman</em></td>
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<td>Beauguioir, <em>Le Deuxième sexe</em></td>
<td>George Orwell, 1984</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss, <em>Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté</em></td>
<td>Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort found the revolutionary group and journal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heidegger’s <em>Existence and Being</em> is translated</td>
<td><em>Socialisme ou Barbarie</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Institut für Sozialforschung returns to Frankfurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl’s <em>Ideas I</em></td>
<td>Adorno et al., <em>The Authoritarian Personality</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Death of Alain and Wittgenstein</td>
<td>J. D. Salinger, <em>The Catcher in the Rye</em></td>
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<td>Arendt, <em>The Origins of Totalitarianism</em></td>
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<td>Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”</td>
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Volume 5
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France</td>
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<td>1953</td>
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<td>Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20) Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lyotard, <em>La Phénoménologie</em> Scheler, <em>The Nature of Sympathy</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td>Aldous Huxley, <em>The Doors of Perception</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Marcuse, <em>Eros and Civilization</em> Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
<td>Vladimir Nabokov, <em>Lolita</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Adorno, <em>Prismen</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hungarian Revolution and Soviet invasion The French colonies of Morocco and Tunisia gain independence Suez War</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sartre’s <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em> Founding of Philosophy Today</td>
<td>Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em></td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
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<td>1956</td>
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<td>Charles de Gaulle is elected president after a new constitution establishes the Fifth Republic</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Thé Sorbonne’s “Faculté des Lettres” is officially renamed the “Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines”</td>
<td>Thé Tin Drum</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Thé Battle of Algiers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Günter Grass, The Tin Drum</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Gillo Pentecorvo, The Battle of Algiers</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>Death of Camus</td>
<td>Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
<td>Erection of the Berlin Wall</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode</td>
<td>First issue of the journal Tel Quel is published</td>
<td>Bay of Pigs failed invasion of Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Sartre, Critique de la raison dialectique</td>
<td>The birth control pill is made available to married women</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Death of Fanon and Merleau-Ponty</td>
<td>Joseph Heller, Catch 22</td>
<td>France grants independence to Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, with a preface by Sartre</td>
<td>Alain Robbe-Grillet and Alain Resnais, Last Year at Marienbad</td>
<td>Cuban Missile Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Foucault, Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Heidegger, Nietzsche</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Death of Bachelard</td>
<td>Rachel Carson, Silent Spring</td>
<td>Imprisonment of Nelson Mandela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Deleuze, Nietzsche et la philosophie</td>
<td>Ken Kesey, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest</td>
<td>Assassination of John F. Kennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Heidegger, Being and Time appears in English translation</td>
<td>Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook</td>
<td>US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss, La Pensée sauvage</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1961</td>
<td>First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Die positivismusstreit in der Deutsche Soziologie (pub. 1969)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Death of Arendt</td>
<td>Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>Eichmann in Jerusalem</td>
<td>The first artificial heart is implanted</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>The Beatles appear on The Ed Sullivan Show</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>Barthes, Eléments de sémiologie</td>
<td>Lacan founds L’École Freudienne de Paris</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man</td>
<td>The Beatles appear on The Ed Sullivan Show</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHILosophical events</td>
<td>CULTural events</td>
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<td>1966</td>
<td>Foucault, <em>Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines</em></td>
<td>Johns Hopkins Symposium “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” introduces French theory to the American academic community</td>
<td>by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Lacan, <em>Écrits</em></td>
<td><em>Star Trek</em> premieres on US television</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Derrida, <em>De la grammaïologie, La Voix et le phénomène</em>, and <em>L’Écriture et la différence</em></td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em></td>
<td>Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall, first African-American Justice to the US Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition</em> and, <em>Spinoza et le problème de l’expression</em></td>
<td>The Beatles release the White Album</td>
<td>Events of May ’68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Kurt Vonnegut, <em>Slaughterhouse-Five</em></td>
<td>Neil Armstrong is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
<td>Tet Offensive</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Woodstock Music and Art Fair</td>
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<td>Stonewall riots launch the Gay Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Paulo Freire, <em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em></td>
<td>Neil Armstrong is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
<td>Shootings at Kent State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>First Earth Day</td>
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<td><strong>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</strong></td>
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<td>1970 Husserl, <em>The Crisis of European Philosophy</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
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<td>Ricoeur begins teaching at the University of Chicago</td>
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<td>Founding of the <em>Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology</em></td>
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<td>Foucault elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France</td>
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<td>1971 Death of Lukács</td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>End of the gold standard for US dollar</td>
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<td>Lyotard, <em>Discours, figure</em></td>
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<td>Rawls, <em>A Theory of Justice</em></td>
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<td>Founding of <em>Research in Phenomenology</em></td>
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<td>1972 Death of John Wild</td>
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<td>Watergate break-in</td>
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<td>Bourdieu, <em>Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique</em></td>
<td>President Richard Nixon visits China, beginning the normalization of relations between the US and PRC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 1. L’Anti-Oedipe</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Derrida, <em>La Dissémination, Marges de la philosophie, and Positions</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Radical Philosophy</em> begins publication</td>
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<td>Colloquium on Nietzsche at Cerisy</td>
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<td>1973 Death of Horkheimer</td>
<td>Thomas Pynchon, <em>Gravity’s Rainbow</em></td>
<td>Chilean military coup ousts and kills President Salvador Allende</td>
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<td>Lacan publishes the first volume of his <em>Séminaire</em></td>
<td>Roe v. Wade legalizes abortion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Derrida, <em>Speech and Phenomena</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kristeva, <em>La Révolution du langage poétique</em></td>
<td>Creation of the first doctoral program in women’s studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous</td>
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<td>1975 Death of Arendt</td>
<td><em>Signs</em> begins publication</td>
<td>Death of Francisco Franco</td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1975</strong></td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison</em></td>
<td>The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales</td>
<td>Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize</td>
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<td>Irigaray, <em>Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un</em></td>
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<td>Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War</td>
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<td>Derrida begins teaching in the English Department at Yale University</td>
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<td>First US–USSR joint space mission</td>
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<td>Foucault begins teaching at the University of California, Berkeley</td>
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<td>Foundation of GREPH, the Groupe de Recherches sur l’Enseignement Philosophique</td>
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<td><strong>1976</strong></td>
<td>Foundation of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature</td>
<td>Death of Mao Zedong</td>
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<td>Death of Heidegger and Bultmann</td>
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<td>Uprising in Soweto</td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La Volonté de savoir</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Barthes is elected to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France</td>
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<td><strong>1977</strong></td>
<td>240 Czech intellectuals sign Charter 77</td>
<td>Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel</td>
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<td>Death of Ernst Bloch</td>
<td>The Centre Georges Pompidou, designed by architects Renzo Piano (1937– ) and Richard Rogers (1933– ), opens in Paris</td>
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<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Anti-Oedipus</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>Lacan, <em>Ecrits: A Selection</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>Death of Kurt Gödel</td>
<td>Edward Said, <em>Orientalism</em></td>
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<td>Arendt, <em>Life of the Mind</em></td>
<td>Birmingham School: Centre for Contemporary Culture releases <em>Policing the Crisis</em></td>
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<td>Derrida, <em>La Vérité en peinture</em></td>
<td>Louise Brown becomes the first test-tube baby</td>
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<td><strong>1979</strong></td>
<td>Francis Ford Coppola, <em>Apocalypse Now</em></td>
<td>Iranian Revolution</td>
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<td>Death of Marcuse</td>
<td>Edgar Morin, <em>La Vie de La Vie</em></td>
<td>Iran Hostage Crisis begins</td>
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<td>Bourdieu, <em>La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement</em></td>
<td>The first cognitive sciences department is established at MIT</td>
<td>Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister of the UK (the first woman to be a European head of state)</td>
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<td>Lyotard, <em>La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir</em></td>
<td>Jerry Falwell founds Moral Majority</td>
<td>Nicaraguan Revolution</td>
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<td>Prigogine and Stengers, <em>La Nouvelle alliance</em></td>
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<td><strong>1980</strong></td>
<td>Lacan officially dissolves the École Freudienne de Paris</td>
<td>Death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito</td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>The History of Sexuality, Vol. One</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td>Cable News Network (CNN) becomes the first television station to provide twenty-four-hour news coverage</td>
<td>Solidarity movement begins in Poland</td>
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<td>Death of Lacan</td>
<td>First cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US</td>
<td>Release of American hostages in Iran</td>
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<td>Habermas, <em>Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em></td>
<td>Debut of MTV</td>
<td>François Mitterrand is elected as the first socialist president of France’s Fifth Republic</td>
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<td>Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
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<td>Confirmation of Sandra Day O’Connor, first woman Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<td>Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
<td>Debut of the Weather Channel</td>
<td>Falklands War</td>
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<td>Alice Walker, <em>The Color Purple</em></td>
<td>Assassination of Indira Gandhi</td>
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<td>Founding of Hypatia</td>
<td>Year-long strike of the National Union of Mineworkers in the UK</td>
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<td>Sloterdijk, <em>Kritik der zynischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>Death of Foucault</td>
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<td>Lloyd, <em>The Man of Reason</em></td>
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<td>Irigaray’s <em>Speculum of the Other Woman</em> and <em>This Sex Which Is Not One</em> appear in English translation</td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>Love in the Time of Cholera</em></td>
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<td>First complete translation into French of Heidegger’s <em>Sein und Zeit</em></td>
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<td>Death of Beauvoir</td>
<td>Art Spiegelman, <em>Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale</em> (–1989) <em>Historikerstreit</em></td>
<td>Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR</td>
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<td>Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines</td>
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<td>Derrida begins his appointment as Visiting Professor of French and Comparative Literature at UC-Irvine</td>
<td>Toni Morrison, <em>Beloved</em></td>
<td>In June Gorbachev inaugurates the perestroika (restructuring) that led to the end of the USSR</td>
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<td>Discovery of Paul de Man’s wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America</td>
<td>The First Intifada begins in the Gaza Strip and West Bank</td>
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<td>Heidegger, <em>Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)</em></td>
<td>Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska</td>
<td>Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland</td>
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<td>Žižek, <em>The Sublime Object of Ideology</em></td>
<td>Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web</td>
<td>Fall of the Berlin Wall</td>
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<td>Butler, <em>Gender Trouble</em></td>
<td>The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases</td>
<td>Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing</td>
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<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the Human Genome Project headed by James D. Watson</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela is released from prison</td>
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<td>Guattari, <em>Chaosmose</em></td>
<td>The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet</td>
<td>Reunification of Germany</td>
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<td>Habermas, <em>Fakticität und Geltung</em></td>
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<td>Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars</td>
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<td>Honneth, <em>Kampf um Anerkennung</em></td>
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<td>Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland</td>
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<td>1992</td>
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<td>The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases</td>
<td>Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union</td>
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<td>Guattari, <em>Chaosmose</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the Human Genome Project headed by James D. Watson</td>
<td>Dissolution of the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Gilroy, <em>Black Atlantic</em></td>
<td>Death of Ralph Ellison</td>
<td>Dissolution of Czechoslovakia; Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Death of Popper</td>
<td>The Channel Tunnel opens, connecting England and France</td>
<td>Genocide in Rwanda</td>
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<td>Grosz, <em>Volatile Bodies</em></td>
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<td>End of apartheid in South Africa; Nelson Mandela is sworn in as president</td>
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<td>Publication of Foucault’s <em>Dits et écrits</em></td>
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<td>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1992, goes into effect</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze and Levinas</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>YEAR</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>End of Bosnian War</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>Cloning of Dolly the Sheep (died 2003)</td>
<td>Death of Mitterand</td>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Death of Lyotard</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Iris Murdoch</td>
<td>Introduction of the Euro</td>
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<td>Antiglobalization forces disrupt the WTO meeting in Seattle</td>
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<td>Kosovo War</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Death of Quine</td>
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<td>Negri and Hardt, Empire</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>Completion of the Human Genome Project</td>
<td>Start of the Second Gulf War</td>
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<td>Beginning of conflict in Darfur</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Death of Blanchot and Davidson</td>
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<td>Madrid train bombings</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Death of Derrida</td>
<td>Asian tsunami</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Death of Ricoeur</td>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>Bombings of the London public transport system</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Death of Jean Baudrillard and Rorty</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Death of Lévi-Strauss</td>
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THE HISTORY OF
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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition’s complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s On Bentham and Coleridge (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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INTRODUCTION
Alan D. Schrift

The 1960s was a period of social and cultural transformation in many areas of the world: the erection of the Berlin Wall (1961), the end of the Algerian War for independence (1962), the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), the assassinations of John F. Kennedy (1963), Robert Kennedy (1968), and Martin Luther King (1968), May '68 in Paris, the Prague Spring (1968), student unrest throughout the US and Europe, the Vietnam War and Chinese Cultural Revolution. It was also a period of significant transformation in continental philosophy, marked in France by the end of existentialism, the emergence and decline of structuralism as a dominant philosophical position, and the beginnings of a new post-structuralist philosophy that would dominate continental philosophy for the remainder of the twentieth century. In Germany, the 1960s saw a changing of the guard and the emergence of two dominant philosophers – Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas – who would continue while at the same time transforming the hermeneutic and critical theory traditions heretofore most closely identified with Martin Heidegger and Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

The years on which this volume focuses – 1960 to 1984 – are for many, especially in the English-speaking philosophical world, the “golden years” of continental philosophy. During this period, both classic and contemporary works of French and German philosophy began to appear in English translation with increasing frequency. Journals devoted to the dissemination of continental philosophical scholarship were founded, and professional societies such as the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy\(^1\) (SPEP, whose

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\(^1\) SPEP was the brainchild of John Wild (1902–72), who, armed with a commitment from the Provost of the university and Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the
first meeting took place October 26–7, 1962, at Northwestern University) and the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL, established in 1976) were created. It was also a period where a new generation of significant philosophical thinkers came to the fore, as Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, Bourdieu, Irigaray, Serres, Ricoeur, Habermas, and Gadamer joined Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty as major figures in continental philosophy.

The goal of this volume is not only to discuss many of these important thinkers individually, but also, as with the other volumes in this History of Continental Philosophy, to highlight certain themes that operate throughout the period and to situate the work of these and other thinkers with respect to these themes. To that end, in addition to the essays on individual philosophers, this volume includes essays that examine: the emergence of Nietzsche as a philosophical reference in France; the “linguistic turn” in continental thinking; developments in philosophical hermeneutics in France and Germany; the influence of and reflection on psychoanalysis; the emergence, especially in France, of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference; the renewal of the critical theory tradition in Germany; the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory; and, in the figure of Richard Rorty, the first significant attempt to bridge the gap between the analytic and continental philosophical traditions. The aim of this introduction is more humble: to provide some historical context for the emergence of the broad themes that dominate this period, and to highlight several of those themes that can be seen at work in a wide range of thinkers: sustained reflection on the relationship between language or discourse and thought; renewed attention to history and thinking the event; rethinking the question of the subject; and the attention to difference.

Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, left Harvard University in 1961 to become Chairperson of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern. Wild’s interest in continental philosophy dates back to his Guggenheim Fellowship in 1931, which he spent at Freiburg University attending lectures by Husserl and Heidegger. He returned to Harvard and introduced courses on their philosophies, the first time that such courses had been taught at Harvard. Wild had already discussed with his colleagues and graduate students at Harvard the need for a new society devoted to the examination of continental philosophy, and at Northwestern he set up an organizational committee with his colleagues William Earle and James Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern), to establish such a professional society. At that first SPEP meeting at Northwestern, Wild and Aron Gurwitsch were the dominant figures, arguing for an existential phenomenology and a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Other topics presented for discussion at that first meeting included the phenomenology of perception (indicative of the rising interest, at the time, in Merleau-Ponty), Husserl’s return to the Lebenswelt, Sartre on human emotions, and existentialist aesthetics. I would like to thank Calvin Schrag, Edward Casey, and Robert Scharff, all of whom were at Northwestern at the time, for sharing their recollections of the formation of SPEP.
In both France and Germany, one of the striking features of philosophical discourse in the 1960s is its engagement with developments in the human or social sciences. In France, the emergence of structuralism as a dominant intellectual paradigm in the late 1950s was in part a response to the existentialist emphasis on subjectivity and individual autonomy – personified in the work and person of Jean-Paul Sartre – and in part a reflection of the rising influence of research in the human sciences. There are a number of stories that might be told about the rise of structuralism, but I would like to highlight one: namely, that structuralism rose in popularity proportionate to the fall from hegemony within the French academic and intellectual world of philosophy as the master discourse. For many, two events in 1960 serve iconically to mark the year that existentialism came to an end as a living philosophy in France: Albert Camus’s death in a car accident on January 4, and the publication by Sartre of *Critique de la raison dialectique*, a work Sartre himself described as a “structural, historical anthropology.” But the hegemony of structuralism as the dominant epistemological paradigm was already well established by 1960, in part through the influence of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who was arguably the most influential philosopher in the French academy. Merleau-Ponty’s untimely death in 1961 contributed further to the waning influence not just of existentialism but of philosophy in general. Another factor, of no small significance, was the establishment in 1958 of an independent degree program in sociology in the French universities, which allowed both undergraduates and doctoral students to work outside the disciplinary constraints of departments of philosophy.

The emergence of structuralism as a dominant intellectual force can be tied to many factors, not least a number of political and historical events – the end of the Second World War and the beginnings of the Cold War, the Soviet invasion of Hungary (1956), colonial unrest in Vietnam and Algeria – that left many politically active students dissatisfied with the relatively ahistorical and other-worldly reflections of the academic philosophers. Some, following a path taken

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2. Some of what follows is adapted from my *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).
3. For a much more detailed account of the rise of structuralism, which holds to the same basic chronology as I do, see François Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, Deborah Glassman (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
5. For a discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s role in the introduction of structuralism in France, see my *Twentieth-Century French Philosophy*, 45–7.
6. According to Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, ten years after the creation of the licence (undergraduate degree) in sociology, there were “in Paris as many students registered for this new degree … as there [were] candidates for the Degree in Philosophy” (“Sociology and Philosophy in France Since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy Without a Subject,” *Social Research* 34[1] [1967], 193).
earlier by Claude Lévi-Strauss, left philosophy altogether. Others, intrigued by the seminars and figure of Lacan, thought a psychoanalytic understanding of language and the unconscious could make better sense of events than traditional philosophical reflection.

In addition, there was also an important philosophical development that facilitated the emergence of structuralism in France, one that had its analogue in the previous emergence of existentialism in the 1930s and 1940s. Just as the discovery of three German philosophers – Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger – prompted the transformation from spiritualism to existentialism in the 1920s and 1930s, a philosophical opening for structuralism was provided by the rediscovery of three other German thinkers, those named by Paul Ricoeur in 1965 the “masters of suspicion”: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. While these thinkers are more commonly associated with French philosophy after structuralism, it was really the structuralists’ desire to locate the underlying structures of kinship, the unconscious, or society that led them to read Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud as kindred spirits who sought to decipher the superstructural world in terms of underlying infrastructural relations of economic forces and class struggle, relations of normative forces and wills to power, and relations of psychic forces and unconscious libidinal desires, respectively.

What united structuralist theorists such as psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–81), anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), literary theorist Roland Barthes (1915–80), and philosopher Louis Althusser (1918–90) was less a shared set of philosophical theses than a shared set of methodological assumptions and a willingness to work with the concepts of Saussurean linguistics. Drawing on the four binary oppositions central to Saussurean linguistics – signifier (signifiant) and signified (signifié), langue and parole, synchronic and diachronic, infrastructure and superstructure – and privileging in their analyses the former term in each binary pair, the structuralists were able to develop theories that diminished the role of the individual subject or agent while highlighting the underlying relations that govern social and psychic practices. In particular, the methodological privileging of structure – the underlying rules or “general laws” – over events led the structuralists to place emphasis on synchronic relations rather than historical developments. The social scientific emphasis on

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9. Saussurean linguistics is discussed in the essay by Thomas F. Broden in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. 
structures also led the structuralists to downplay the role of consciousness, which figured so prominently in existentialism and phenomenology, and this deflation of the importance of consciousness and subjectivity – the so-called “death of the subject” – can be seen in all the structuralists’ work.10

Highlighting the death of the subject and the downplaying of the event is important for understanding the emergence of a distinctly post-structuralist philosophical view in France, whose announcement can be located in the philosophical events of 1966–68: Michel Foucault published *The Order of Things* in 1966; Jacques Derrida presented “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” in October 1966 at the critically important conference at Johns Hopkins University on “Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man,”11 and published his triumvirate *Of Grammatology, Writing and Difference, and Speech and Phenomena* in 1967; and Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *Spinoza and the Problem of Expression* were published in 1968. These works each, in their own way, respond to the structuralist treatment of both the subject and the event and, in so doing, what they collectively announce is the posting of structuralism, that is, a distinctly philosophical response to the challenge posed to philosophical thinking by the emergence of structuralism as the dominant intellectual paradigm. Collectively they set the philosophical agenda for “French philosophy” for most of the remainder of the twentieth century.

Highlighting these events of 1966–68 should not be taken to imply that the “announcement” of a post-structuralism announced at the same time the “end” of structuralism, nor should 1966 be understood to function vis-à-vis structuralism in the way that 1960 marked the end of existentialism. Not only was Lacan’s *Écrits* – one of the major texts of structuralism – first published in 1966, but 1966 also saw the founding of the important journal *Cahiers pour l’analyse*, created by Althusser’s students at the École Normale Supérieure with the intention of examining the epistemological implications of psychoanalysis within the context of structuralism.12 In addition, while structuralism emerged as a rejection of many of the foundational assumptions of existentialism, poststructuralism emerges less as a renunciation of structuralist assumptions than as a corrective to some of its theoretical excesses. But as a corrective, those philosophical writers in France who come into prominence in the late 1960s and early

10. While this is less the case in Lacan than the others, Lacan too rejects the privileging of the subject associated with existentialism and phenomenology.

*11. The importance of Derrida’s presentation at this conference is a focus of the essay by Jeffrey T. Nealon in this volume.

12. In addition to several essays by Lacan, the ten issues of *Cahiers pour l’analyse* also include essays by Foucault, Derrida, and Irigaray, among others. [*] For a discussion of the importance of the *Cahiers*, see the essay by Patrice Maniglier in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*. 
1970s both recognize their intellectual debt to structuralism and recognize the need to move beyond structuralism.\textsuperscript{13}

While not wanting to overlook the important differences between the French philosophers and theorists who follow structuralism, there are nevertheless certain themes and trends that do emerge in various ways in their work. In some cases, as just mentioned, these should be understood as correctives to the excesses of structuralism, in other cases as various ways in which these thinkers were to give expression to the Nietzschean–Freudian–Marxian spirit of the times, and in still other cases as a way of retrieving themes from some of the French traditions that had fallen out of favor during the scientistic orientation of the 1950s and early 1960s, in particular the return of certain ethical, spiritual, and religious themes, along with some positions associated with phenomenology and existentialism. What cannot be denied, and should not be underestimated, is that the hegemony of structuralist social scientific thinking in the late 1950s and early 1960s was followed by the reemergence of the value of specifically philosophical thinking.

One way to understand their specifically philosophical orientation is to note that while the poststructuralists, like their structuralist predecessors, drew heavily on the ideas of Marx and Freud, unlike the structuralists they drew at least as much from the third so-called “master of suspicion” – Friedrich Nietzsche. As I discuss in my essay on “French Nietzscheanism,” it is important to note the role Nietzsche plays in those central texts of 1966–68 mentioned above, as Foucault sets out his position by opposing Nietzsche to Kant, Derrida does much the same by opposing Nietzsche to Lévi-Strauss, and Deleuze does so as well by posing Nietzsche as the alternative to Hegel. Nietzsche’s critique of truth, his emphasis on interpretation and differential relations of power, and his attention to questions of style in philosophical discourse thus became central motifs within the work of the poststructuralists as they turned their attention away from the human sciences and toward a philosophical-critical analysis of writing and textuality (Derrida); relations of power, discourse, and the construction of the subject (Foucault); desire and language (Deleuze); questions of aesthetic and political judgment (Lyotard); and questions of psychoanalysis and sexual difference (Irigaray, Kristeva, Cixous). And so, while the structuralist theorists had turned away from philosophy, many of the theorists

\textsuperscript{13} See, in this regard, Deleuze’s important essay, written in 1967, entitled “How Do We Recognize Structuralism?,” in Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953–1974, David Lapoujade (ed.), Michael Taormina (trans.) (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), which he opens by commenting that this question is important because it has “some bearing on work actually in progress” (ibid., 170) and closes by commenting that critics of structuralism cannot prevent it “from exerting a productivity which is that of our era” (ibid., 192).
following structuralism readily identify themselves as philosophers and/or draw unapologetically from philosophical resources. This is not surprising when one remembers that most of the poststructuralist philosophers “came of age” in an intellectual environment dominated by Sartre’s existentialism and they all studied and were profoundly influenced by both Merleau-Ponty’s thinking on language and corporeality as well as Heidegger’s critique of the history of metaphysics. But unlike most philosophical thinkers in France who preceded the rise of structuralism, French philosophers after structuralism also learned from their structuralist teachers and colleagues and they engage in philosophical reflection and analysis while taking account of the institutional and structural forces that inform philosophical thinking itself.¹⁴

Turning now to Germany, the situation there, while for different reasons, bears some striking similarities to what was happening in France. Although not dominated by structuralism, tensions between philosophy and the social sciences also mark the intellectual landscape in Germany and both Gadamer’s and Habermas’s important early works – Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (1960), and Habermas’s *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (1967) and *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968) – intended to intervene in that debate. Also, while the young French philosophers initially struggled to escape the dominating presences of Sartre, Lévi-Strauss, and Lacan, the Germans had their own dominating figures to overcome – Heidegger, Horkheimer, and Adorno – all of whom died between 1969 and 1976.

But the German scene also differed from the situation in France, in part because while there was a sense in which almost all the French thinkers came out of the same educational system and had very similar philosophical formations, German philosophy was marked by longstanding animosity between the Heideggerian and critical theory traditions. The tension between these two traditions was apparent in Habermas’s and Gadamer’s respective approaches to the Enlightenment, with Habermas aligning himself with the Enlightenment commitment to critical reason and emancipation from prejudice, while Gadamer’s appeal to tradition and authority as well as his cultural conservatism left him much less comfortable with the Enlightenment commitments to progress and critique. This tension came to the fore in a “debate” between Gadamer and Habermas, initiated by Habermas’s 1967 review of *Truth and Method*, over

¹⁴. This is seen clearly not only in Foucault’s notion of the *epistēmē*, but also in Jacques Derrida’s many essays that examine the institutional setting of philosophy and philosophical instruction; see in particular, Derrida’s *Du droit à la philosophie*, much of which is translated in *Who’s Afraid of Philosophy? Right to Philosophy 1*, Jan Plug (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002) and *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, Jan Plug et al. (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).
their respective claims for the universality of hermeneutics and the necessity of critique.\textsuperscript{15}

Ironically, while many of the French philosophers of the period were turning for inspiration to a number of German philosophers – Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and Heidegger – the Germans themselves were to some degree turning away from their own tradition and, in the case of Gadamer, going back to Plato, while Habermas and other critical theorists, as James Swindal’s essay chronicles, looked increasingly to English language philosophy and social science.\textsuperscript{16} Even so, it is important to note that at least in the case of Habermas, his most important work of the 1960s – \textit{Knowledge and Human Interests} – shares more with what was happening in France than his later work would lead one to expect. With chapters on Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, and criticisms of positivism and scientism, Habermas closed \textit{Knowledge and Human Interests} with a discussion of the emancipatory value of the “critically-oriented sciences.” Exemplified in earlier times by Marxist ideology-critique and psychoanalysis, Habermas concluded that the best modern representative of a critically oriented science would be a critical social theory committed to the value of philosophical reflection.

Although it is impossible to locate any set of themes that unite all the philosophers discussed in this volume, it is certainly possible to take note of certain motifs that appear frequently in their writings. One obvious theme at work in much of the philosophical reflection in Europe during the 1960s–1980s is an attention to questions of language, power, and desire that emphasizes the context in which meaning is produced and makes problematic all universal truth and meaning claims. As Claire Colebrook’s essay on the “linguistic turn” in continental philosophy makes clear, a sustained reflection on language is one of the dominant themes that runs through the work of all of the philosophers discussed in this volume. Whether in Christopher F. Zurn’s discussion of Habermas’s discourse ethics, Sara Heinämaa’s discussion of Kristeva on the “semiotic” and “speaking subject,” Wayne J. Froman’s discussion of Gadamer’s and Ricoeur’s hermeneutic theories, David R. Hiley’s discussion of Rorty’s interpretations of Sellars, Quine, and Davidson, or Samir Haddad’s or Jeffrey T. Nealon’s discussions of Derrida and deconstruction, each of the essays here attests to Foucault’s observation in \textit{The Order of Things} that the \textit{epistêmê} of the twentieth century erupted with the question of language as “an enigmatic multiplicity that must be

\textsuperscript{15} The “debate” is discussed below in the essays by Christopher F. Zurn and Wayne J. Froman. Many of the documents of the debate can be found in Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (eds), \textit{The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur} (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990).

*\textsuperscript{16} For a brief discussion of German philosophy in this period, organized around three “schools” associated with Heidegger, the Frankfurt School, and Joachim Ritter, see the essay by Dieter Thomä in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7}.
mastered.” One should also note, in this regard, the attention paid to literary language, not only by Barthes and Blanchot, but by Cixous, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Gadamer, Kristeva, Ricoeur, and Serres, as well as the significant impact on literary studies of the work of many of these authors, not least the importance of Deleuze’s book for Proust studies and Serres’s for Zola studies. It is also easy to see that a concern with history and the event characterizes many of the thinkers whose work is addressed in this volume. There is no single reason behind this, nor a single form in which they seek to think time, temporality, or history. In Germany, this is seen most clearly in the dialogic approach of Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory, in which what is of greatest interest is the dialogue we have – or more accurately, the dialogue we are – between our present situation and the tradition. For Gadamer, the object to be analyzed hermeneutically – the “hermeneutical event proper” – is “the coming into language of that which has been said in the tradition: an event that is at once assimilation and interpretation.” The task of hermeneutics thus has to do with overcoming the distance between where we are and what confronts us from the past. Following Heidegger in ontologizing the hermeneutic relationship, we do not engage the tradition as a subject confronting something alien; rather we, as human beings, are the mediating relation – the dialogue – between the present and tradition. If one construes understanding dialogically as a process of question and answer – what Gadamer calls the “hermeneutical Urphänomen” – then one realizes that understanding is not a subjective apprehension of a given “object” but the appropriation of its “effective history.” Hermeneutic consciousness, as Froman discusses in his essay, is wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein – which could be translated equally well as “historically effected consciousness,” “consciousness effected by history,” and “consciousness of the effects of history” – which means that consciousness is always already at once “affected by history” and “open to the effects of history.” Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics thus preserves Heidegger’s central insight in Being and Time that the understanding

19. Thinking the event is not, of course, restricted to the thinkers addressed in this volume, as is clear from the discussion of Alain Badiou in Bruno Bosteels’s essay in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
of oneself and one’s possibilities as a being in the world is temporal and situated historically.

In France, on the other hand, where the structuralists sought to understand the extratemporal functioning of systems (whether social, psychic, economic, or literary), thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, or Lyotard – in a corrective to the overemphasis on synchrony that one finds in structuralist writing – attend to the historical unfolding of the phenomena they choose to examine. In part, the attention to time, temporality, and history can be viewed as a consequence of the intellectual resources to which these thinkers appeal, resources that were not necessarily central to the work of their structuralist predecessors. Foucault, for example, draws on the study of the history of science and scientific change in the work of Georges Canguilhem and Gaston Bachelard, while Deleuze returns to Bergson’s theories of time and durée (duration). For Derrida, it is primarily Heidegger’s focus on Being and the history of philosophy as a history of the forgetting of the ontological difference (the difference between Being and beings) that leads him to think in terms of the history of metaphysics as a history of logocentrism and onto-theology. For many of these thinkers, the move in Heidegger’s thought from the thinking of Being (Sein) to the thinking of Ereignis – the event of appropriation – can be seen to inspire, whether directly or indirectly, their respective attempts to develop a philosophy of the event, just as the attention to Nietzsche in the late 1960s and 1970s, and in particular to his notion of the eternal recurrence, led many to rethink traditional notions of temporality and history.

For example, we find Foucault’s entire philosophical oeuvre deeply inflected with an attention to history. The guiding thesis of his early work was that there exists, at any given time, an order of things that makes the social functioning of the time possible. This order operates within the fundamental codes of a culture: those governing its language, its schemes of perception, its techniques, exchanges, values, and so on. Unlike Kant’s transcendental project, a project with which the work of Lévi-Strauss is quite compatible, as Ricoeur noted when he referred to Lévi-Strauss’s anthropological theory as “a Kantianism without a transcendental subject,” for Foucault this order is a historical a priori: neither transcendental nor universal, this order is a historically specific constellation that exists prior to experience. But it is at the same time prior to reason insofar as the standards of rationality at work at any particular historical moment are

22. This should not be taken to imply that none of the structuralists drew at times on similar resources; for example, in this case, we might note that Althusser also appealed to Bachelard with his notion of “epistemological break.”
themselves determined on its basis. This order also establishes the basis on which knowledge and theory become possible, as Foucault argued in *The Order of Things* and, based on this order, certain ideas appear, certain perceptions, values, and distinctions become possible.

For many, this idea of a *historical a priori* is simply a contradiction in terms. For Foucault, however, experience is thoroughly historicized: one’s experience is “constructed” from the *a priori* – one might even say “structural” – rules that govern experience and social practices at a particular point in history. At other times, there were other *a priori* rules that governed social practices, and people’s experiences were, as a consequence, constructed differently. This historical *a priori* is ultimately what determines the “order of things,” by which Foucault’s French title – *Les Mots et les choses* – meant the relation between words (conceptual understandings) and things (reality as experienced).

One finds this attention to time and history in much of the important work done by the major figures in French philosophy after structuralism. For example, Pierre Bourdieu criticizes the objectivist accounts of gift exchange, such as that of Lévi-Strauss, for collapsing the relationship between gift and counter-gift into a relation of reciprocal equivalence, thereby failing to understand the socially necessary, albeit individually and collectively misrecognized “time-lag” between gift and counter-gift that stands as the condition for the possibility of the gift.24 For Deleuze, on the other hand, time is a constant theme, running through his reflections on Bergsonian duration, Nietzsche’s eternal return, and his theory of cinema (the second volume of which is *The Time-Image*). In fact, one could claim that in his two major texts, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze is offering us a new way to think about time in order to think the logic of events. One could also here cite Jean-François Lyotard’s *post*-modernism and the thinking of the event of the post, as well as his reflections on the *arrive-t-il?* – the is-it-happening? – of the *différend*. And for Derrida, to take one final example, insofar as a central dimension of his philosophical project was the deconstruction of logocentrism as a metaphysics of presence that invariably privileges the temporal present, reflecting on time, history, and the event have also been recurring themes throughout Derrida’s writings. For example, in his presentation at the 1966 colloquium at Johns Hopkins University on “Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man,” Derrida opened ironically with the remark that “perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an ‘event,’” noting that it was precisely the function of structuralist discourse to reduce or suspect the meaning of this

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“loaded word.” 25 Or his coining of the neologism *différance* to situate at the foundation of deconstructive analysis an attentiveness to both meanings of the French verb *différer*: to defer in terms of delay over time and to differ in terms of spatial nonidentity. Insofar as *différance* names the movement of both temporal deferring and spatial differing, it stands as the transcendental condition for the possibility of differentiation, which is to say, *différance* is what makes differences possible. 26 What all these examples make clear is that philosophy in France from the 1960s onward has been marked by a renewed concern with thinking historically and, in particular, thinking the event.

A third significant theme in this period, especially in France, is the attempt to resituate the subject. While thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault, or Deleuze were never comfortable with the subject-centered thinking of the existentialists or phenomenologists, they were equally uncomfortable with the straightforwardly antihumanist rhetoric of structuralist thinkers such as Althusser or Lévi-Strauss. Thus Derrida could reply, to a question that followed his presentation at Johns Hopkins concerning the “death of the subject”:

> The subject is absolutely indispensable. I don’t destroy the subject; I situate it. I believe that at a certain level both of experience and of philosophical and scientific discourse, one cannot get along without the notion of the subject. It is a question of knowing where it comes from and how it functions. 27

Even Foucault, who can arguably be associated with the rhetoric of the “death of the subject” in his works of the early 1960s, can at the same time be shown to have been thinking about the question of the construction of the modern subject throughout his *oeuvre*. But here a distinction must be drawn between the “end of man” and the “death of the subject.” For while there is no question that the subject named “man” in philosophical discourse, from Descartes’s Archimedean *cogito* to Kant’s autonomous rational moral agent, is a concept toward which Foucault has little sympathy, it is equally clear that Foucault’s desire to deflate the subject as epistemically and discursively privileged is not conjoined with an


26. This is why Derrida can say that “*différance*, in a certain and very strange way, (is) ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being”; see Jacques Derrida, “*Différance*,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 22.

attempt to eliminate the subject entirely. Instead, Foucault seeks to analyze the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse and power, which, he writes, means to ask not “How can a free subject penetrate the density of things and give it meaning?” but “How, under what conditions, and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules?”²⁸ In fact, by the end of his career, as his attention turned specifically to sexuality and the construction of the ethical subject, Foucault himself came to see that the transformation of human beings into subjects of knowledge, subjects of power, and subjects to themselves had been “the general theme of [his] research.”²⁹

For feminist thinkers writing after structuralism, the question of the subject was also central to their work as they sought to challenge both philosophical and psychoanalytic assumptions concerning the subject as sexed or gendered male or masculine. Although there are important differences, as the essays in this volume by Mary Beth Mader and Sara Heinämaa clearly indicate, between the theoretical positions of Cixous, Irigaray, or Kristeva, insofar as these “difference feminists” argue for sexual difference and the significant and important differences between male and female desire, they had to argue that there were important differences between male and female subjects. To make this argument required that they refuse to follow the structuralist project of entirely eliminating the subject. Luce Irigaray, to take one example, is uncomfortable with giving up the possibility of occupying the position of the subject insofar as this is a position that women have heretofore never been able to occupy. She thus notes that she would prefer to see the “culture of the subject … evolve in the direction of a culture of a sexed/gendered subject and not in the direction of a heedless destruction of subjectivity.”³⁰ Moreover, she suggests that insofar as the circulation of women as objects of social–sexual exchange has been foundational to the Western patriarchal social order, we should not underestimate the possibilities for radical social transformation if women were to finally emerge as “speaking subjects.” The “speaking subject” is, of course, also


a central focus of Julia Kristeva’s work, as she defined her project of analytical semiology or semanalysis, in part, as the “insertion of subjectivity into matters of language and meaning.”31 Such a subject would not, of course, be a Cartesian or Husserlian subject, who could function as a pure source of meaning. Rather, following the discoveries of Freud, Lacan, and structural linguistics (Saussure, Benveniste), the “speaking subject” will always be a “split subject,” split between conscious motivations and the unconscious, between structure and event, and between the subject of the utterance (sujet d’énonciation) and the subject of the statement (sujet d’énoncé), who would be “posited as the place, not only of structure and its regulated transformation, but especially, of its loss, its outlay.”32 Elsewhere, in Revolution in Poetic Language, this subject is developed as a subject-in-process/on-trial (sujet-en-procès), a dynamic subject at the intersection of the semiotic and the symbolic, making itself and being made, but a subject nonetheless.

In Germany, on the other hand, both Gadamer and Habermas share with these French philosophers a certain resistance to a classical philosophy of the subject. For Gadamer, coming out of the Heideggerian tradition, there was never much sympathy for the strong subjectivism associated with existentialism, and challenging the subjectivist account of understanding is a central component of the hermeneutic theory he puts forward in Truth and Method. For Habermas, on the other hand, while sharing with the French a desire to displace the subject from a position of epistemic and semantic centrality, he thinks much French philosophizing goes too far in the opposite direction. As Zurn puts it in his essay, “there is an alternative path out of subject-centered philosophy: namely, the thoroughly intersubjectivist theory of communicative reason that sees reason and subjectivity as fully situated and immanent in everyday practices.” There is, however, with respect to the question of the subject, a third important voice in Germany, that of Dieter Henrich. Turning away from the Heideggerian critique of the subject and returning to classical German philosophy – and most especially Kant and Fichte – Henrich explores the primordial structure of self-awareness as a form of “being-a-self” and, pace Habermas, argues for the primacy of subjectivity over intersubjectivity.33

A last theme to note is the attention paid to difference rather than a focus on identity or the Same. One of the essential themes of Saussurean linguistics was

32. Ibid., 24.
*33. For further discussion of Henrich, see the essay by Dieter Thomä in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
that “in language there are only differences without positive terms.”34 By this, he meant that language functions as a system of interdependent units in which the value of each constituent unit results solely from the simultaneous presence of other units and the ways each unit differs from the others. While the structuralists all took note of this theme, emphasizing in their analyses relations rather than things, the emphasis on difference did not become truly dominant until after the structuralist paradigm began to wane. For example, sexual difference is a theme that almost all the feminist thinkers after structuralism have addressed, as the essays by Mader and Heinämaa clearly demonstrate. Indeed, Irigaray goes so far as to suggest that, if Heidegger is right in thinking that each epoch has but a single issue to think through, then “sexual difference is … the issue of our age.”35 Hélène Cixous, on the other hand, sees the rigid conceptualization of sexual difference as what supports the identification of the male/masculine with the Same, while the female/feminine is rendered Other. For Cixous, the way out of this patriarchal system is not via the elimination of difference but through escaping the dominant logic of difference as hierarchal opposition to a new logic of difference in which “difference would be a bunch of new differences.”36

We have already noted how Derrida has emphasized différance in his deconstructive project. But more generally, the attention to difference is a move one finds in almost all recent French philosophers. For Deleuze, in particular, difference has been a central and constant focus of his thinking. His Nietzsche and Philosophy (1962), which read Nietzsche against Hegel, looks to difference as one way to mark this opposition. In place of Hegel’s “speculative element of negation, opposition or contradiction, Nietzsche substitutes the practical element of difference, the object of affirmation and enjoyment.”37 Where the dialectic is engaged in the “labor of the negative,” according to Deleuze, Nietzsche offers a theory of forces in which active force does not negate or deny the other but “affirms its own difference and enjoys this difference.”38 Nietzsche’s notion of will to power is, for Deleuze, a theory of forces in which forces are distinguished in terms of both their qualitative and quantitative differences. In fact, what Nietzsche names with the “will to power” is “the genealogical element of force, both differential

34. Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with the collaboration of Albert Riedlinger (eds), Wade Baskin (trans.) (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 120.
38. Ibid.
and genetic. The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative
difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation.39 And, given the importance that difference plays in Deleuze's reading, it is not at all surprising to find him concluding that what returns eternally is not the Same or the identical; rather, what returns is the repetition of difference.

Deleuze develops these themes much further in Difference and Repetition, a work that reflects the “generalized anti-Hegelianism” of the time in which “difference and repetition have taken the place of the identical and the negative, of identity and contradiction.”40 Hegel is not the only culprit, however; rather, from Plato to Hegel, the metaphysical tradition sees the different in opposition to and derivative on the one, while Deleuze sets out to develop an ontology of difference in which “it is not difference which presupposes opposition, but opposition which presupposes difference” and treats it as the negation of identity.41 Deleuze's project in this work is nothing short of reversing the tradition that privileges identity by showing identity to be an optical effect produced “by the more profound game of difference and repetition.”42

As this brief review of the ways in which questions of language, the subject, history, and difference emerge in the work of the thinkers discussed in this volume indicates, there are important intersections between what was happening philosophically in Germany and France during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. And although the much anticipated encounter between Habermas and Foucault never took place,43 and the encounter between Gadamer and Derrida did take place,44 but was so marked by their respective failures to understand one another that one might argue that this encounter too “did not take place,” these thinkers

39. Ibid., 50.
41. Ibid., 51.
42. Ibid., xix.
43. Following Habermas's lecture series at the Collège de France in May 1983, which was later expanded in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Foucault invited Habermas to a private conference that was to take place in the US in November 1984 with some of their American colleagues (Hubert Dreyfus, Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor), to discuss questions of modernity provoked by Kant's famous essay “What is Enlightenment?” The conference was cancelled following Foucault's death. Habermas discusses this in “Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present,” in Jürgen Habermas, The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).
as well as the others discussed in the essays that follow made an indelible mark on European philosophy, one that can be seen to have set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present, as the essays in Volumes 7 and 8 of *The History of Continental Philosophy* clearly demonstrate.
1

FRENCH NIETZSCHEANISM

Alan D. Schrift

As an artist one has no home in Europe, except Paris …

(Ecce Homo, “Why I Am So Clever,” §5)

When philosophers think of “French Nietzscheanism,” they tend to associate this development with the 1960s. But French Nietzscheanism has, in fact, a long history in which one can locate three particular moments: first among writers of both the avant-garde Left and neoroyalist Right from the early 1890s until the First World War; then among nonconformist intellectuals in the years before and after the Second World War; and finally among philosophers in the 1960s and 1970s. Nietzsche himself was drawn to France and his works found there an early and welcome home. Richard Wagner à Bayreuth, the first translation of any of Nietzsche’s works, appeared in French in January 1877, barely six months after it first appeared in German. And by the time Nietzsche’s first works appeared in English (Thus Spoke Zarathustra and The Case of Wagner were published in 1896), Henri Albert already had plans to publish a translation of Nietzsche’s complete works through Mercure de France, a project he completed in 1909 with the French translation of Ecce Homo. But this initial enthusiastic reception of

2. The fourth and final of Nietzsche’s Untimely Meditations, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth was published in July 1876 by Verlag Ernst Schmeitzner. Schmeitzner also published Richard Wagner à Bayreuth, translated into French by Marie Baumgartner.
3. Louis Pinto suggests these plans were envisaged as early as 1894; see Louis Pinto, Les Neveux de Zarathoustra (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), 25 n. By contrast, the first English translation of the complete works, edited by Oscar Levy, was published between 1909 and 1911.
Nietzsche’s works in France should not obscure the fact that the association of Nietzscheanism in France with the emergence of poststructuralism in the 1960s is not mistaken, because it was not until the late 1950s that Nietzsche’s work was taken seriously by French philosophers as philosophy. Before we examine this uniquely philosophical moment of French Nietzscheanism, therefore, a few comments on the two earlier moments are in order.

Early in the twentieth century, there was considerable interest in France in Nietzsche’s thought, but this was located primarily outside the university and, when in the university, outside the faculty in philosophy. Professor of German Literature Henri Lichtenberger (1864–1941) taught the Sorbonne’s one full-year course in German language and literature in 1902–1903 on Nietzsche, and Lichtenberger’s La Philosophie de Nietzsche, first published in 1898, was already in its ninth edition by 1905. Charles Andler (1866–1933), also a professor of German literature, published a magisterial six-volume study of Nietzsche between 1920 and 1931. Outside the university, from the 1890s into the early twentieth century, Nietzsche was widely read by and associated with the literary avant-garde, most notably André Gide (1869–1951) and his circle, many of whom studied with Andler at the École Normale Supérieure and were later associated with La Nouvelle Revue Française. There was also an attraction to Nietzsche among certain literary and political circles associated with the Right that began in the 1890s and was later associated with Charles Maurras (1868–1952) and the Action Française, and which continued until the approach of the First World War, when their nationalistic and anti-German attitudes


5. Henri Lichtenberger, La Philosophie de Nietzsche (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1898). In 1910, this work was the first French text on Nietzsche to be translated into English, as The Gospel of Superman: The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

6. Charles Andler, Les Précurseurs de Nietzsche (Paris: Bossard, 1920); La Jeunesse de Nietzsche: Jusqu’à la rupture avec Bayreuth (Paris: Bossard, 1921); Le Pessimisme esthétique de Nietzsche: Sa philosophie à l’époque wagnérienne (Paris: Bossard, 1921); Nietzsche et le transformisme intellectualiste: La Philosophie de sa période française (Paris: Bossard, 1922); La Maturité de Nietzsche: Jusqu’à sa mort (Paris: Bossard, 1928); La Dernière philosophie de Nietzsche: Le Renouvellement de toutes les valeurs (Paris: Bossard, 1931). Andler’s first two volumes were sent to the publisher Félix Alcan in 1913, but publication at that time was impossible because of the war (see Le Rider, Nietzsche en France, 84). The six volumes were published together in three volumes as Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée (Paris: Gallimard, 1958).
made it impossible for them to any longer look on Nietzsche with favor. While
the literary Left welcomed Nietzsche as a philosopher-poet who challenged
the strictures of contemporary morality, the philosophical establishment was
dismissive of Nietzsche's stylistic transgressions, his "irrationalism," and his
"immoralism." Where Gide promoted his association with Nietzsche in his
*L'Immoraliste*, published in 1902, Alfred Fouillée's *Nietzsche et l'immoralisme*,
one of the few works on Nietzsche written by a philosopher during this period,
also appeared in 1902, went through four editions by 1920, and was extremely
critical of Nietzsche, questioning why any serious philosopher would attend
to his thought. In fact, Nietzsche was so closely identified with "immoralism"
that the term was introduced and defined as "Nietzsche's doctrine" in the presti-
tigious philosophical dictionary *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philos-
ophie*, compiled from 1902 to 1923 by members of the Société Française de
Philosophie, under the direction of their General Secretary André Lalande.

The near total failure by university philosophers to acknowledge Nietzsche's
work from 1890 through the First World War and beyond is less the result of
unfamiliarity with his work than a consequence of their decision to "profes-
sionalize" philosophy both by emphasizing its logical and scientific rigor and by
distinguishing sharply between philosophy and literature. During this period,
although there were serious antagonisms between the three dominant "schools"
within French academic philosophy – the positivists, neo-Kantians, and spiri-
tualists – the university professors were united in thinking that the university
was the only space for "serious" philosophical discussion. As a consequence,
Nietzsche's popularity among so-called philosophical "amateurs" was taken as

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7. For a discussion of the literary attraction to Nietzsche among the Right and Left during this
period, see Christopher E. Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris: The Nietzsche Vogue in France 1891–
1918* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); for a discussion of Nietzsche's
appropriation by the Action Française, see Reino Virtanen, "Nietzsche and the Action Fran-
ceaise: Nietzsche's Significance for French Rightist Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 11
(April 1950).


9. The members of the Société Française de Philosophie met regularly to discuss the meanings
of key philosophical terminology, and they published their proceedings in two issues each
year of the *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie*. Lalande collected and annotated
these proceedings and published them with Félix Alcan in a single volume in 1925–26. The
*Vocabulaire*’s eighteenth edition was published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1996.

10. Pinto makes this point in *Les Neveux de Zarathoustra*, 38ff. One might relate the university
philosophers' hostility to Nietzsche to the similar animosity philosophers at the Sorbonne
and École Normale Supérieure showed to the work of Henri Bergson.

11. I discuss the tensions between these "schools" and their leading representatives – Émile
Durkheim, Léon Brunschvicg, and Henri Bergson, respectively – in the opening chapter of
evidence of his philosophical unworthiness within the academy.\footnote{The general point of the hostility between "professional," that is university, philosophers and philosophical "amateurs" is discussed in Jean-Louis Fabiani, “Enjeux et usages de la 'crise' dans la philosophie universitaire en France au tournant du siècle,” \textit{Annales ESC} (March–April 1985).} Even after the First World War, although Nietzsche remained a canonical figure within German studies\footnote{Beginning in 1903, Nietzsche appears roughly every four or five years on the \textit{Programme} of the \textit{agrégation d'allemand}, even through the Second World War, appearing on the \textit{Programmes} in 1940 and 1942. For further information on the French institution of the \textit{agrégation}, see note 25.} and was very much a part of the cultural debate between the Right and the Left, there was almost no philosophical scholarship on his thought.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, Nietzsche continued to be ignored by the university philosophers.\footnote{In 1946, the Société Française d'Etudes Nietzschéennes was founded by Armand Quinot and Geneviève Bianquis and its eight founding members were all Germanists with the exception of the philosopher Félicien Challaye. The society continued until 1965 and eventually included among its members the philosophers Jean Wahl, Angèle Kremer-Marietti, Gilles Deleuze, Richard Roos, Pierre Boudot, and Jacques Derrida.} But during these years, the “second moment” of French Nietzscheanism took shape as his thought emerged as an important reference for avant-garde theorists who would, in the 1960s, become associated with philosophers. The most significant figure here was Georges Bataille,\footnote{For a discussion of Georges Bataille and the Collège de Sociologie, see the essay by Peter Tracy Connor in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5}.} for whom Nietzsche was a constant object of reflection from the foundation of the journal \textit{Acéphale} in 1936 through his \textit{Sur Nietzsche}, published in 1945.\footnote{Georges Bataille, \textit{Sur Nietzsche} (Paris: Gallimard, 1945); published in English as \textit{On Nietzsche}, Bruce Boone (trans.) (New York: Paragon House, 1992). Vincent Descombes regards Bataille as the central figure in Nietzsche’s "second French moment.” See Vincent Descombes, "Nietzsche’s French Moment,” Robert de Loaiza (trans.), in \textit{Why We Are Not Nietzscheans}, Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut (eds) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999). While I do not share Descombes’s unsympathetic view of Nietzsche’s third, "philosophical" moment, my chronology here basically agrees with his.} Through Bataille, Pierre Klossowski, and others, including the philosopher Jean Wahl, Nietzsche was a constant presence in the activities of the Collège de Sociologie. Two features distinguish Bataille’s approach to Nietzsche: his attempt to read Nietzsche in relation to Hegel, and his desire to challenge the association of Nietzsche’s thought with fascism and National Socialism. These features come together in Bataille’s framing Nietzsche as “the hero of everything human that is not enslaved,”\footnote{Georges Bataille, “Nietzschean Chronicle,” in \textit{Visions of Excess: Selected Writings}, 1927–1939, Allan Stoekl (ed. and trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 203.} and as he develops these features, Bataille emphasizes, more than earlier French readings, the place of the eternal return in Nietzsche’s thought. Bataille and his collaborators at \textit{Acéphale} were all influenced by Karl Löwith’s
Nietzsche's Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichens, which appeared in 1935 and was reviewed by Klossowski in the second issue of Acéphale (January 1937). For Bataille, where Hegel's philosophy is directed by an unaltering teleology, Nietzsche's thought of eternal return affirms the immanence of each moment as an unmotivated end in itself. And where Hegel's dialectic of determinate negation leaves nothing to chance, Nietzsche's emphasis on the death of God and the immanent, excessive possibilities of the moment leaves everything to chance. By attending to the will to chance at the core of the eternal return, Bataille deemphasized the significance of the will to power, which he saw as central to the fascists' willful misappropriation of Nietzsche and which he criticized for being motivated by an instrumental rationality that mistakenly reduced all value to use-value instead of affirming the transvaluation of all values that opens the future to the possibility of the new.

The other significant work on Nietzsche written during this period, sociologist Henri Lefebvre's Nietzsche, shares with Bataille the desire to read Nietzsche against the fascists, arguing that “The Nietzschean idea of the future is not fascist. ‘Surpass! Overcome!’ This Nietzschean imperative is precisely the contrary of the fascist postulate, according to which conflicts are eternal and human problems don’t have solutions.” But unlike Bataille, Lefebvre also sought to emphasize both Nietzsche's existentialism and his compatibility with Marx. A committed Marxist and member of the Parti Communist Français until he was expelled in 1958, Lefebvre opens his text with an epigraph from Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, and goes on to argue that Nietzsche's account of human alienation raises important themes that are insufficiently addressed by Marx's exclusively economic account of alienation. At the same time, he argues that Nietzsche lacks a coherent theory of alienation, which would require that he see the alienation of thought from life “as the result of social differentiation and the division of labor” (144). Because Lefebvre finds Nietzsche's revaluation of values easy to “integrate with the Marxist concept of man,” he concludes that “it is absurd to write [as Drieu la Rochelle did in his Socialisme fasciste (1934)] Nietzsche contre Marx” (164). Lefebvre's Marxist vision drifts toward existentialism as he notes that in Nietzsche's magnificent future, “the men of our epoch will, suffer, despair, and always return to hope. And it is this which gives their life its unique

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character” (*ibid*.). Even the eternal recurrence squares with Lefebvre’s existentialist Marxist vision of the future, as the eternal recurrence gives rise to the Nietzschean Imperative, “an imperative that gives existence an infinite density: ‘Live each moment in a way that you will to relive it eternally’ [‘Vis tout instant de sorte que tu veuilles toujours le revivre’]. There doesn’t exist an eternity and a pre-existent truth that fatalistically determines us. On the contrary: we create eternity, our eternity!” (87).22

Somewhat surprisingly, given Nietzsche’s early association in the English-speaking world with existentialism, the second Nietzschean moment in France, while emerging at the same time as French existentialism, is not particularly associated with that movement. Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Beauvoir were no doubt familiar with Nietzsche’s works, but Nietzsche’s thought did not play nearly as influential a role in existentialist philosophy as that played by Hegel, Husserl, or Heidegger. Even Wahl, who was the figure at the Sorbonne most closely associated with contemporary German philosophy, devoted far more time to Kierkegaard than to Nietzsche during these years. The existentialist who was most comfortable appealing to Nietzsche was Albert Camus,23 but he did so more from the perspective of a literary rather than philosophical writer. Sartre, on the other hand, was quite hostile to the idea of Nietzsche’s philosophical importance. In an essay on the work of Brice Parain, Sartre wrote that “We know that Nietzsche was not a philosopher.”24 And Sartre follows this comment about Nietzsche not being a philosopher with the following: “But why does Parain, who is a professional philosopher, quote this crackbrained nonsense?”

In contrast to the two earlier moments, what distinguishes the third Nietzschean moment in France is precisely that Nietzsche’s thought is for the first time taken up by professional philosophers. Nietzsche’s philosophical moment in France begins in 1958, when *La Généalogie de la morale* appeared on the reading list in French translation for the *agrégation de philosophie.*25

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25. The *agrégation de philosophie* is a competitive annual exam that certifies students to teach philosophy in secondary and postsecondary schools. Appearing on the Programme, or reading list, for the *agrégation* insures that all students taking the examination, normally taken on completion of one’s studies at a grande école or university, will spend the year reading one’s work; in addition, a significant component of the teaching corps will offer lycée or university courses that address figures and texts on the annual reading list. I discuss the history and
Appearing again in 1959, these were Nietzsche's first appearances on the examination since 1929, and they began a series of his appearances over the next two decades. In precisely those years when Nietzsche's *Genealogy* was one of the required texts (1958–59), Deleuze was beginning his university career at the Sorbonne, where he taught as *Maître-assistant* in the history of philosophy from 1957 to 1960, and where he offered a course on the *Genealogy* in the fall of 1958, which surely explains why the *Genealogy* plays such a central role in Deleuze's *Nietzsche et la philosophie*. To appreciate the novelty of Nietzsche's *philosophical* moment, consider the following: in 1959 and 1961, Wahl gave the first lecture courses on Nietzsche ever offered by a professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne, and during precisely these years, 1958–62, we see appear the first six articles on Nietzsche ever to be published in France's prestigious philosophical journals. And to appreciate the novelty of Deleuze's 1962 publication of *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, consider that there were only three books on Nietzsche published in France by philosophers in the preceding four decades.

Influence of the *agrégation de philosophie*, examining in detail the role it played in the emergence of French Nietzscheanism, elsewhere; see “The Effects of the *Agrégation de Philosophie* on Twentieth-Century French Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46(3) (July 2008).


27. I thank Giuseppe Bianco for providing me a copy of a student's notes from Deleuze's 1958 course, which offered a “*Commentaire de ‘La Généalogie de la morale.’*”

28. Published in English as *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Hugh Tomlinson (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). Among the other philosophers who are on the *Programmes* for the written examination or French explication while Deleuze taught at the Sorbonne are Bergson, Kant, and the Stoics (1957), and Spinoza, Hume, and Kant (1958, 1959). Deleuze published on all of these figures in the following decade.


31. For another indication of how French scholarship has changed since the early 1960s, consider that Wahl’s 1963 review of *Nietzsche et la philosophie* in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* begins by saying that Deleuze's book belongs alongside the most important books on Nietzsche, which he then names: those of Jaspers, Heidegger, Fink, and Lou Salomé.
Two of these were introductory texts written by philosophy teachers at the Lycée Condorcet: Félicien Challaye’s *Nietzsche* (1933), and André Cresson’s *Nietzsche, sa vie, son œuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie et des extraits de ses œuvres* (1942). It is not until much later, in Angèle Kremer-Marietti’s *Thèmes et structures dans l’œuvre de Nietzsche* (1957), that Nietzsche’s work receives a more philosophically sophisticated treatment.32

Along with Nietzsche’s appearance on the agrégation, Deleuze’s book, and the German publication of Heidegger’s two-volume *Nietzsche* in 1961,33 the emergence of French Nietzscheanism is marked by two major conferences. The first, at which Nietzsche was treated for the first time in France as a serious philosopher, was held at the Abbey at Royaumont, July 4–8, 1964, and this conference played a significant role in legitimating Nietzsche’s philosophical reputation.34 Organized by Deleuze and presided over by the distinguished historian of philosophy Martial Guéroult,35 in addition to papers by younger philosophers (Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Gianni Vattimo36), and literary or avant-garde writers (including Klossowski), presentations were also made by distinguished senior academic philosophers Jean Wahl, Jean Beaufret, Karl Löwith, Eugen Fink, and Henri Birault, the prestigious nonacademic philosopher Gabriel Marcel, and Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, the editors who were just beginning work on a new critical edition of Nietzsche’s works.37 In his

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32. Another indication of Nietzsche’s position within the academic philosophical world can be gleaned from Armand Cuvillier’s *Manuel de Philosophie à l’usage des Classes de Philosophie et de Première Supérieure* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1944), a preparatory text for students studying for either the baccalauréat or the entrance examinations for the grandes écoles, including the École Normale Supérieure. Cuvillier’s text mentions Nietzsche only four times in over 650 pages, and does not include any of Nietzsche’s texts in a list of one hundred “Important Works Published since 1870” (ibid., 668).

33. Heidegger’s *Nietzsche* was not translated into French until 1971, in two volumes, by Pierre Klossowski and published by Gallimard.

34. The proceedings were published as *Nietzsche: Cahiers de Royaumont* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967).

*35. For brief discussions of Guéroult, see the essay by Derek Robbins in this volume, and the essay by Simon Duffy on French and Italian Spinozism in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.

*36. For a discussion of Vattimo, see the essay by Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.

37. Colli and Montinari’s original edition was to appear in Italian, published by Adelphi Edizioni, and French, published by Gallimard, and edited by Foucault and Deleuze. Montinari had been trying unsuccessfully since 1961 to get a German publisher to agree to publish a German edition; conversations at the Royaumont conference with Karl Löwith led him to intervene and persuade de Gruyter to acquire the rights from Adelphi and Gallimard to publish the Colli–Montinari edition in its original language. I discuss this in a history of the English translation of the Critical Edition, which I am currently editing, in my “Translating the Colli–Montinari Kritische Studienausgabe,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 33 (2007).
own presentation, as was customary for the organizer of a conference, Deleuze gave a closing address in which he surveyed the presentations of the preceding days.38 He noted five themes that were addressed throughout the papers and discussions: Nietzsche's masks and the necessity of interpretation; the will to power as that which remains behind the masks; relations of affirmation and negation; the Dionysian affirmation in eternal return; and Nietzsche's relations with other thinkers (Dostoevsky, Hesse, Marx, and Freud, among others). What Deleuze could not say, but what became clear soon after, was that the conference at Royaumont marked the confirmation of Nietzsche's philosophical reputation in France as he took his place in the philosophical canon, an event affirmed by the fact that his name made its initial appearance on the written examination of the *agrégation de philosophie* in 1970, reappearing three more times in the following seven years.39

Where the Royaumont conference acknowledged Nietzsche's place in the canon, the second major conference, for ten days at Cerisy-la-Salle in July 1972,40 placed Nietzsche at the center of contemporary French philosophy. Under the title *Nietzsche aujourd'hui* (Nietzsche today), the Cerisy conference included presentations by several of the participants who were at the Royaumont colloquium (including Deleuze, Fink, Klossowski, and Löwith). In addition to presentations by scholars associated with Nietzsche's work such as Eugen Biser, Eric Blondel, Pierre Boudot, Richard Roos, and Paul Valadier, it also included a significant presentation by Jacques Derrida, “La Question du style,” which would later be revised and published as *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, as well as presentations by a number of younger scholars associated with Derrida, including Sarah Kofman, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Pautrat, and Jean-Michel Rey.41 And while some presentations, like the vast majority of presentations at

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39. When a philosopher is named on the reading list for the written examination, this means that candidates preparing for the exam will be expected to know the entirety of that philosopher's corpus. It also assures that this philosopher will be the focus of a wide range of university and lycée courses in philosophy. This further suggests a link between Nietzsche’s first appearance on the written *Programme* in 1970 and the organization of the Cerisy conference for the summer of 1972.
40. Over eight hundred pages of presentations and subsequent discussions from this conference were published in two volumes as *Nietzsche aujourd’hui* (Paris: Union Générale d’Éditions, 1973).
41. Many of these philosophers participated in the open seminar Derrida directed at the École Normale Supérieure, in the winter of 1969–70, devoted to a “Theory of Philosophical Discourse” with a particular emphasis on “The Status of Metaphor in Philosophy.” Both Pautrat and Kofman note that preliminary drafts of their first books on Nietzsche – Bernard
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“French Nietzscheanism” refers to more than the production of an enormous amount of French philosophical scholarship on Nietzsche, however, and to discuss “French Nietzscheanism” in its third moment is, I would argue, to go to the heart of poststructuralist philosophy because in many ways it was in their appropriation of Nietzschean themes that the dominant poststructuralist philosophers – Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida – distinguished themselves both from the structuralists who preceded them and from the more traditional philosophical establishment in France, whose authority they sought to challenge. As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, although the influence of philosophy had declined within French academic institutions in the wake of the structuralists focusing their critical attention on the discursive and analytic practices of the human sciences, Nietzsche’s appeal to the new generation of philosophers lay to a large extent in his having been overlooked, as we saw in the preceding discussion of Nietzsche’s first and second French moments, by the more “traditional” university philosophers.48 It was precisely Nietzsche’s “marginal” status as a philosopher that made him, according to Bourdieu, “an acceptable philosophical sponsor” at a time – the late 1950s and early 1960s – when it was no longer fashionable in France to be a “philosopher.”49

It was, in other words, by virtue of their appeal to Nietzsche that this new generation of philosophers both “escaped” from philosophy and returned to philosophy. Both Deleuze and Foucault acknowledge explicitly the emancipatory role Nietzsche played at the time. In a 1983 interview, for example, Foucault commented that:

The actual history of Nietzsche’s thought interests me less than the kind of challenge I felt one day, a long time ago, reading Nietzsche for the first time. When you open The Gay Science after you have been

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trained in the great, time-honored university traditions – Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl – and you come across these rather strange, witty, graceful texts, you say: Well I won’t do what my contemporaries, colleagues or professors are doing; I won’t just dismiss this. What is the maximum of philosophical intensity and what are the current philosophical effects to be found in these texts? That, for me, was the challenge of Nietzsche.50

Deleuze says something similar, confessing that he “belongs to a generation, one of the last generations, that was more or less bludgeoned to death with the history of philosophy,” adding that within philosophy “the history of philosophy plays a patently repressive role.”51 But, he continues, “It was Nietzsche, who I read only later, who extricated me from all this. Because you can’t deal with him in the same sort of way.”52

While Bourdieu’s observation of the poststructuralists’ desire to keep their distance from “the philosophical high priests of the Sorbonne”53 is important, it should not obscure the fact that for all the rhetoric concerning the “end of philosophy,” one of the most obvious differences between the discourses of the structuralists and those of the poststructuralists is the degree to which the latter remain philosophical. The role Nietzsche plays in this renewal of philosophical discourse is not insignificant. Unlike the rigid, scientistic, and constraining systems of structuralism, Nietzsche appeared to his new readers to be both philosophically inspired and philosophically inspiring. Derrida, for example, provides the following list of themes to look for in Nietzsche:

the systematic mistrust as concerns the entirety of metaphysics,
the formal vision of philosophical discourse, the concept of the philosopher-artist, the rhetorical and philological questions put to the history of philosophy, the suspiciousness concerning the values of truth (“a well applied convention”), of meaning and of meaning of Being, of “meaning of Being,” the attention to the economic phenomena of force and of difference of forces, etc.54

And in Of Grammatology, he credits Nietzsche with contributing:

52. Ibid., 6.
54. Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 305.
a great deal to the liberation of the signifier from its dependence or
derivation with respect to the logos and the related concept of truth
or the primary signified, in whatever sense that is understood [by
his] radicalizing of the concepts of interpretation, perspective, eval-
uation, difference ...\textsuperscript{55}

Moreover, by addressing questions concerning human existence without
centering his reflection on human consciousness, Nietzsche indicated how one
might respond to structuralism’s sloganistic “death of the subject” by showing
a way to raise anew questions of individual agency without succumbing to an
existentialist voluntarism or subjectivism. At the same time, the poststructural-
ists saw in the notion of eternal recurrence\textsuperscript{56} a way to again entertain questions
of history and historicity, questions that had been devalued within the struc-
turalists’ ahistorical emphasis on synchronic structural analyses.\textsuperscript{57} That is to say,
where the structuralists responded to existentialism’s privileging of conscious-
ness and history by eliminating them both, the poststructuralists took from
structuralism insights concerning the workings of linguistic and systemic forces
and returned with these insights to reinvoke the question of the subject in terms
of a notion of constituted-constitutive-constituting agency situated and oper-
ating within a complex network of sociohistorical and intersubjective relations.
In this way, Nietzsche’s emergence as a philosophical voice played an unparal-
leled role in the development of poststructuralism as a historical corrective to
the excesses of both its predecessor movements.

Nietzsche’s philosophical importance for the emergence of post-structuralist
French philosophy becomes apparent, as I indicated in the Introduction, above,
when one considers the way Foucault plays Nietzsche against Kant in The Order
of Things, Deleuze plays Nietzsche against Hegel in any number of his works,
and Derrida plays Nietzsche against Lévi-Strauss in “Structure, Sign, and Play
in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,”\textsuperscript{58} first presented in October 1966 at
the conference at Johns Hopkins University on “Language of Criticism and the

\textsuperscript{55} Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans.) (Baltimore, MD: John

\textsuperscript{56} One cannot overestimate the role played here by Klossowski’s work, in particular “Oubli et
anamnèse dans l’expérience” (see note 46), and Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux, published in
English as Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle, Daniel W. Smith (trans.) (Chicago, IL: Uni-

\textsuperscript{57} In their introduction to Post-structuralism and the Question of History, Geoff Bennington and
Robert Young also make this point, noting that where structuralism sought to efface history,
“it could be said that the ‘post’ of post-structuralism contrives to reintroduce it” (Derek
Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young [eds], Post-structuralism and the Question

\textsuperscript{58} This essay is discussed in detail in the essay by Jeffrey T. Nealon in this volume.
Sciences of Man.” What these appeals to Nietzsche announce is the posting of structuralism, that is, a distinctly philosophical response to the challenge posed to philosophical thinking by the emergence of structuralism as the dominant intellectual paradigm in the late 1950s, and collectively they set the philosophical agenda for much of what we, outside France, refer to as “poststructuralism.” Rather than speak, then, in generalities about French Nietzscheanism, as is often done by its critics, we can explore the dimensions of this Nietzscheanism by looking at its instantiation in the work of these three dominant figures in French philosophy during the period of Nietzsche’s third French moment.

I. FOUCAULT

If I wanted to be pretentious, I would use “the genealogy of morals” as the general title of what I am doing. It was Nietzsche who specified the power relation as the general focus, shall we say, of philosophical discourse – whereas for Marx it was the productive relation. Nietzsche is the philosopher of power, a philosopher who managed to think of power without having to confine himself within a political theory in order to do so.

(Foucault, “Prison Talk,” 1975)

Michel Foucault is perhaps the clearest example of how Nietzschean themes were integrated into the core of French philosophizing in the 1960s and 1970s insofar as Foucault consistently inscribed his thinking in a space opened by Nietzsche. Foucault first read Nietzsche in 1953 “by chance,” having been led to him by his reading Bataille. But as he was to say later, “curious as it may seem,” he read Nietzsche “from the perspective of an inquiry into the history of knowledge – the history of reason.” It was, in other words, his effort to “elaborate a history of rationality,” and not his interrogation of power, that first led him to read Nietzsche. Reading Nietzsche made possible one of the decisive events


60. See, for example, the essays in Ferry and Renaut (eds), Why We Are Not Nietzscheans.

61. While I will focus on Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida, one could also look, in this context, at the work of Maurice Blanchot or Luce Irigaray.


in Foucault’s development insofar as Nietzsche showed the way beyond the phenomenological, transhistorical subject. Nietzsche showed, in other words, that “There is a history of the subject just as there is a history of reason; but we can never demand that the history of reason unfold as a first and founding act of the rationalist subject.”

Although Nietzsche is usually associated with his genealogical works – *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* – Foucault himself acknowledged that his archaeological project “owes more to the Nietzschean genealogy than to structuralism properly so called.” For example, in *The Order of Things*, Nietzsche figures prominently as the precursor of the epistēmē of the twentieth century, the epistēmē that erupted with the question of language as “an enigmatic multiplicity that must be mastered.” For Foucault, it was “Nietzsche the philologist” who first connected “the philosophical task with a radical reflection upon language” (OT 305); it was Nietzsche, in other words, who recognized that a culture’s metaphysics could be traced back to the rules of its grammar, and who recognized that, for example, Descartes’s proof of the cogito rested on the linguistic rule that a verb – thinking – requires a subject – a thinker – and that the very same linguistic prejudice leads to the metaphysical error of adding a doer to the deed. Insofar as the structuralists all based their theories on the view of language as a system of differences, we can therefore understand why Foucault could regard the question of language as the single most important question confronting the contemporary epistēmē.

And insofar as Nietzsche viewed our metaphysical assumptions to be a function of our linguistic rules (grammar as “the metaphysics of the people”), and he understood both our metaphysics and our language in terms of the difference between forces, one can understand why Foucault traces the roots of the contemporary epistēmē, which no longer views man as the privileged center of representational thinking and discourse, back to Nietzsche.

In much the same way, Foucault discovers in Nietzsche the first attempt at the dissolution of man:

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65. Ibid.


Perhaps we should see the first attempt at this uprooting of Anthropology – to which, no doubt, contemporary thought is dedicated – in the Nietzschean experience: by means of a philological critique, by means of a certain form of biologism, Nietzsche rediscovered the point at which man and God belong to one another, at which the death of the second is synonymous with the disappearance of the first, and at which the promise of the superman signifies first and foremost the imminence of the death of man. (OT 342)

When speaking of the “disappearance” or the “death” of “man,” Foucault means something quite specific, and it is a mistake to equate the referent of “man” in these early remarks with what Foucault means in general by the “subject.” This is precisely what he indicated when he noted that it was Nietzsche who showed that there is a “history of the subject.” This is to say, there is no question that the subject named “man” in philosophical discourse, from Descartes’s Archimedean cogito to Kant’s autonomous rational moral agent, is a concept toward which Foucault has little sympathy. But this subject named “man” functions in this context as a technical term, the name for a certain conceptual determination of human being that serves to stabilize the increasingly disorganized representations of the classical epistēmē and that, as such, comes to be the privileged object of philosophical anthropology (see OT 312–13). The passage quoted above, relating Nietzsche to the uprooting of anthropology, follows by one page a reference to Kant’s formulation in his Logic (1800) of anthropology – which asks the question “What is Man?” – as the foundation of philosophy. Only by understanding Foucault’s talk of “man” as designating a foundational concept of Kantian anthropology can we make sense of his provocative claim that “man is a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old” (OT xxiii; see also 308, 386–7). While “man” has been privileged in the discourse of the human sciences since Kant, Foucault locates the beginning of this end of man in Nietzsche’s doctrines of the Übermensch and eternal return, as we see clearly in Foucault’s final reference to Nietzsche in The Order of Things, where he couples Nietzsche’s death of God with the death of man: “Rather than the death of God – or, rather, in the wake of that death and in profound correlation with it – what Nietzsche’s thought heralds is the end of his murderer; … it is the identity of the Return of the Same with the absolute dispersion of man” (OT 385).

Turning from Foucault’s early work to his genealogical period, we again see the Nietzschean inspiration at the heart of Foucault’s thinking about truth, power, and the subject. For Foucault, Nietzsche was the first to address a certain kind of question to “truth,” a question that no longer restricted truth to the domain of epistemic inquiry nor took the value of “truth” as a given. By posing ethical and political questions to “truth,” Nietzsche saw “truth” as an ensemble
of discursive rules “linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it.”

When Nietzsche claimed, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, that philosophy must for the first time confront the question of the value of truth, he recognized that “Truth” was not something given in the order of things, and in so doing, Foucault credits him with being the first to recognize “truth” as something produced within a complex sociopolitical institutional regime. “The problem,” Foucault writes:

is not changing people’s consciousness – or what’s in their head – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth. … The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness, or ideology; it is truth itself. Hence the importance of Nietzsche.

Throughout his career, Foucault drew inspiration both from Nietzsche’s insights linking power, truth, and knowledge (“Knowledge functions as an instrument of power”), and from his rhetoric of will to power, which drew attention away from substances, subjects, and things, and focused that attention instead on the relations of forces between these substantives. For Foucault, “power means relations,” and where Nietzsche saw a continuum of will to power and sought to incite a becoming-stronger of will to power to rival the progressive becoming-weaker he associated with modernity, Foucault saw power relations operating along a continuum of repression and production, and he drew attention to the multiple ways that power operates through the social order and to the becoming-productive of power that accompanies the increasingly repressive power of that normalizing, disciplinary, carceral society we call “modern.” Foucault shares with Nietzsche an emphasis on the productivity of power: contrary to the “repressive hypothesis” that functions as one of the privileged myths of modernity, Foucault argues that power relations are not preeminently repressive, nor do they manifest themselves only in laws that say “no.” They are also productive, traversing and producing things, inducing pleasures, constructing knowledge, forming discourses, and creating truths.

72. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §480; *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 13, 14[122].
fundamental ambivalence between repression and production that led Foucault to conclude that resistance is internal to power as a permanent possibility.\textsuperscript{75}

The final dimension of Foucault’s Nietzscheanism we will examine is his thinking on the subject, which as we saw above was what first led him to read Nietzsche. Foucault’s desire to deflate the subject as epistemically and discursively privileged is not conjoined with an attempt to eliminate the subject entirely. Instead, Foucault seeks to analyze the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse and power. What this means, and what has been largely misunderstood by many of Foucault’s critics, is that his so-called “anti-humanism” was not a rejection of the human \textit{per se}; it was instead an assault on the philosophically modern idea that sought to remove “man” from the natural world and place him in a position of epistemic, metaphysical, and moral privilege that earlier thought has set aside for God. This is why Foucault ends \textit{The Order of Things} by associating the “death of God” with the “end of man,” as the passage cited above suggests. But this was not to be Foucault’s final position on this matter. While Foucault has no sympathy for the phenomenological-existential and, in particular, the Sartrean subject,\textsuperscript{76} he does retrieve a more ambivalent subject whose constitution takes place within the constraints of institutional forces that exceed its grasp and, at times, its recognition.

This is the subject whose genealogy Nietzsche traced in \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals} (Essay I, §13). In an analysis that Foucault discusses in his important early essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Nietzsche focuses not on the valorization of origins (\textit{Ursprung}) but on a critical analysis of the conditions of the subject’s emergence (\textit{Entstehung}) and descent (\textit{Herkunft}). Pursuing this genealogy, Nietzsche locates the subject not as a metaphysical given but as a historical construct whose conditions of emergence are far from innocent. The “subject” is not only a superfluous postulation of a “being’ behind doing,” a “doer” fictionally added to the deed. In addition, the belief in this postulate is exploited by slave morality both to convince the strong that they are free to be weak – and therefore are accountable for their failure to be weak – and to convince the weak that they are, in reality, strong and should therefore take pride in having freely chosen – by refraining from action – to be weak. For Nietzsche, “the subject (or, to use a more popular expression, the soul) … makes possible to the majority of mortals, the weak and oppressed of every kind, the sublime self-deception that interprets weakness as freedom, and


their being thus-and-thus as a merit.”77 For this reason, Nietzsche directs his genealogical gaze to the life-negating uses made of the principle of subjectivity in the service of a “hangman’s metaphysics” that invented the concept of the responsible subject in order to hold it accountable and judge it guilty.78

This account of the subject inspires Foucault to link the modern form of power with subjects and subjection:

It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.79

In *Discipline and Punish*, his most Nietzschean text, Foucault notes the link between power and the subject while arguing that the history of the micro-physics of punitive power would be an element in the genealogy of the modern “soul.”80 Foucault addresses this soul most explicitly in the discussion of the construction of the delinquent as a responsible subject, arguing in Nietzschean fashion that there is a subtle transformation in the exercise of power when punishment no longer is directed at the delinquent’s actions (his “doing”), but at his very person, his “being” as (a) delinquent.81

By the end of his career, as his attention turned, in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, specifically to sexuality, his thinking moved from the constitution of the subject as an object of knowledge and discipline to the ethical practices of subjectivation (*assujettissement*) and “the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, rapport à soi, which [he calls] ethics, and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as an ethical subject of his own actions.”82 In thinking about the construction of the ethical subject, Foucault himself came to see that the question of the subject, or

81. Foucault repeats this argument at a crucial moment in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*, noting the point at which the homosexual, no longer simply the performer of certain “forbidden acts,” emerges as a subject with a “singular nature,” a new “species” (*ibid.*, 43).
more accurately, the question of subjectivation – the transformation of human beings into subjects of knowledge, subjects of power, and subjects to themselves – had been “the general theme of [his] research.”\(^3\) Even here, however, as his thinking turned to the Greeks and his overt references to Nietzsche diminished, I would argue that Foucault continued to see his own trajectory framed by the Nietzschean project of creatively constructing oneself through giving style to one’s life.\(^4\)

**II. DELEUZE**

It is clear that modern philosophy has largely lived off Nietzsche. (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 1)

Like Foucault, the degree to which Deleuze brings Nietzschean themes to bear within his work is extensive. For example, a recurrent theme throughout Deleuze’s works is the desire to remain within the plane of immanence and refuse any move to a transcendental or theological plane that takes us away from bodies and what they can do. On several occasions, he addresses this point by noting a distinction between ethics and morality. In a 1986 interview, Deleuze put the distinction this way:

> Morality presents us with a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values (this is good, that’s evil …); ethics is a set of optional rules that assess what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved.\(^5\)

This distinction, which Deleuze also sees in Foucault and Spinoza,\(^6\) he sees first and foremost in Nietzsche. Deleuze opens *Nietzsche and Philosophy* by addressing this point, as he recasts Nietzsche’s distinction between “Good and Bad” and “Good and Evil” – the ostensible topic of *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

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\(^3\) Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 327. This is reflected as well in the titles Foucault gave to the last two courses he taught at the Collège de France for which he completed the required resumé: “Subjectivity and Truth” (1980–81) and “The Hermeneutic of the Subject” (1981–82).

\(^4\) See the reference in this context to *The Gay Science* §290 in Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” 292.

\(^5\) Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 100, translation modified.

First Essay – by distinguishing between the immanent, ethical difference between noble and base that grounds evaluative judgments on one’s “way of being or style of life,” and the transcendent moral opposition between good and evil that grounds evaluative judgment on an absolute and otherworldly ideal.\(^{87}\) When Deleuze returns to this point later in the text, he distinguishes “good and bad” from “good and evil” precisely in terms of the distinction between the ethical and the moral: “This is how good and evil are born: ethical determination, that of good and bad, gives way to moral judgment. The good of ethics becomes the evil of morality, the bad has become the good of morality” (NP 122).

Deleuze’s book, we should recall, is not titled *Nietzsche’s Philosophy* but *Nietzsche “and” Philosophy*, and in addition to providing an interpretation of Nietzsche, it highlights what Nietzsche offers to philosophy: on the one hand, a “new image of thought” and, on the other, an understanding of a body as any relationship of forces. This new image of thought is put forward in contrast to the “dogmatic image of thought” that has dominated philosophy and that Deleuze summarizes in “three essential theses” (NP 103):

1. Thinkers, *qua* thinkers, want and love truth.
2. We are diverted from the truth by forces foreign to it, in particular, the body, passions, and sensuous interest.
3. The way to ward off this diversion into error is through a method.

That Nietzsche would be Deleuze’s guide out of the dogmatic image of thought is not surprising, given that the questioning of the “will to truth” is perhaps his most consistent task in his mature, post-*Zarathustra* writings. According to Deleuze, for Nietzsche meaning and value precede truth, and for that reason it is not so much our “truths” that are of interest to Nietzsche; what interests him instead are the values that give rise to the truths that have meaning for us, which is why the epistemological question of truth leads directly to a genealogy of values. The question of value takes us out of the realm of metaphysics and confronts us with the problem of a genealogy of forces. Where the question that guides metaphysics is “what is?” and the answers that are sought take the form of essences, genealogy, on the other hand, is guided according to Deleuze by the question “which one?” (*qui*?), and the answers sought take the form not of metaphysical essences but relations of forces and capabilities, that is, what this one can do.

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87. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 1; cf. 121–2. Hereafter cited as NP followed by the page number.
This leads us directly to Nietzsche's second contribution to contemporary philosophy: understanding a body as any relationship of forces, with forces understood as either dominant/active or dominated/reactive. Relations of forces are, for Deleuze, one of the two great axes in terms of which Nietzsche's philosophy is organized (NP x). In fact, Deleuze notes that Foucault and Nietzsche share a conception of force in terms of "the relation of force with other forces that it affects or that affect it." Nietzsche's originality, for Deleuze, is located in part in his "delineation of a genuinely reactive type of forces" (NP x) that has taken the form of the man of *ressentiment*, in whom reactive forces have come to prevail over active forces (NP 111).

Power is, for Deleuze, the second axis along which Nietzsche's philosophy is organized, and the one that is most misunderstood insofar as the question of power is thought to result in a politics, while in Nietzsche it "forms an ethics and an ontology" (NP x–xi). What Nietzsche means by "will to power," according to Deleuze, is not the desire to have something – power – but the having of this power in order to act on the world. Life, for Nietzsche, is the incessant process of acting on and being acted on, which is expressed in terms of the forces of strength and the forces of weakness. In order to mark the difference between Nietzschean affirmation and Hegelian negativity – and one should never lose sight of the fact that Deleuze's Nietzsche book is written in part to challenge the dominance in the early 1960s of Hegelianism in French philosophy – Deleuze reframes this distinction between the forces of strength that Nietzsche associates with the noble and the forces of weakness he associates with the slave in terms of the forces of action and reaction: where the noble actively and affirmatively differentiates himself from his rivals, the slave reactively opposes all that is other than himself. Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave thus emerges in this context as an example of the triumph of reactive forces, of the becoming-reactive of active forces, insofar as Hegel's master, no less than his slave, is capable only of reaction in the struggle for recognition.

Deleuze uses this distinction throughout his work to advance the cause of immanence and, true to his affirmative spirit, Deleuze refuses the negative, and replaces it with critique, a critique that confronts the triumph and reign of the base in which the triumphant reactive forces, now separated from what they can do, both deny active forces and turn against themselves. The goal of critique is not to negate but to transmute these reactive forces: only through transvaluation, through the becoming-active of reactive forces, will critique succeed and will force, now active, take its place as force that affirms its difference and makes its difference an object of enjoyment and affirmation (NP 61). In other words, while Nietzsche's critique might look dialectical, he departs from Hegel and

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the Hegelian tradition precisely here. In place of Hegel’s “speculative element of negation, opposition or contradiction, Nietzsche substitutes the practical element of difference” (NP 9). Where the dialectic is engaged in the “labor of the negative,” and seeks to sublate all difference and alterity, Nietzsche offers a theory of forces in which active force does not negate or deny the other but “affirms its own difference and enjoys this difference” (NP 9).

For Deleuze, when Nietzsche interrogates history in terms of a history of nihilism, he is examining history from the perspective of the triumph of reactive forces, and we see Deleuze mobilize this Nietzschean critique of reactive forces not only in his critique of Hegelianism but also in his and Guattari’s critique of the philosophical and psychoanalytic tradition’s view of desire as lack, which assumes that desire is derivative, arising in reaction to the perceived lack of the object desired or as a state produced in the subject by the lack of the object. For Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, desire is a part of the perceptual infrastructure: it is constitutive of the objects desired as well as the social field in which they appear. It is, in other words, what first introduces the affective connections that make it possible to navigate through the social world. This is to say that desire, like Nietzsche’s will to power, is productive – it is always already at work within the social field, preceding and “producing” objects as desirable.

In contrast to the view of desire as lack, Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as the willing of power. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they introduce the desiring machine as a machinic, functionalist translation of Nietzschean will to power: insofar as a desiring machine is a functional assemblage of a desiring will and the object desired, they are able to avoid the personification/subjectivation of desire in a substantive will, consciousness, ego, unconscious, or self. They are also able to escape the problem of interiority that gives rise to the understanding of desire as lack.

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*89. For further discussion of this point, see my essay with Rosi Braidotti in this volume.
90. Viewing desire in terms of lack is not exclusive to the psychoanalytic tradition; rather, it has dominated the Western philosophical and psychological tradition since Plato’s *Symposium* (200a–d), where Socrates remarks that one who desires something is necessarily in want of that thing. Rejecting this understanding of desire as lack is a view shared by several of Deleuze’s contemporaries; see, for example, Jean-François Lyotard, *Économie libidinale* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974), published in English as *Libidinal Economy*, Iain Hamilton Grant (trans.) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); and Hélène Cixous, “Sorties,” in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune née* (Paris: Union Générale d’Éditions, 1975), published in English as *The Newly Born Woman*, Betsy Wing (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). I discuss the Deleuzian critique of “desire as lack” in more detail elsewhere; see my “Spinoza, Nietzsche, Deleuze: An Other Discourse of Desire,” in *Philosophy and the Discourse of Desire*, Hugh J. Silverman (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2000).
as lack because insofar as desire and the object desired arise together, connections with the outside are always already being made. “Who, except priests,” Deleuze remarks, “would want to call [desire] ‘lack’? Nietzsche called it ‘Will to Power’ … Those who link desire to lack, the long column of crooners of castration, clearly indicate a long resentment [ressentiment] like an interminable bad conscience.”92 The psychoanalyst thus appears in Anti-Oedipus as the latest incarnation of the ascetic priest,93 and to Nietzsche’s account of the “internalization [Verinnerlichung] of man,”94 Deleuze and Guattari add man’s Oedipalization: Oedipus repeats the split movement of Nietzschean bad conscience that at once projected onto the other while turning its hostility back against itself, as the failure to satisfy the desire to eliminate and replace the father is accompanied by guilt for having such desire.

Transforming Nietzsche’s will to power into a desiring-machine, Deleuze and Guattari’s affirmation of desiring-production emerges as a post-Freudian repetition of Nietzsche’s affirmation of healthy will to power. And as Nietzsche sought to keep will to power multiple so that it might appear in multiple forms, at once producer and product, a monism and a pluralism, so too Deleuze wants desire to be multiple, polyvocal, operating in multiple ways and capable of multiple and multiplying productions.95 While Nietzsche encouraged the maximizing of strong, healthy will to power, he acknowledged the necessity – indeed, the inevitability – of weak, decadent will to power. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari advocate that desire be productive while recognizing that desire will sometimes be destructive and will sometimes have to be repressed, while at other times it will seek and produce its own repression. Analyzing this phenomenon of desire seeking its own repression is one of the goals of Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis, and the Nietzschean inspiration for this analysis is revealed in the structural similarity between desire desiring its own repression and Nietzsche’s “discovery” in On the Genealogy of Morals of the meaning of ascetic ideals: the will would rather will nothingness than not will.96

93. See, for example, Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 108–12, 269, 332–3; see also Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, Brian Massumi (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 154. I have discussed Nietzsche’s influence on Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of psychoanalysis elsewhere; see my Nietzsche’s French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism (New York: Routledge, 1995).
III. DERRIDA

On what we are speaking about at this very moment, as on everything else, Nietzsche is for me, as you know, a very important reference. (Derrida, *Positions*)

We have already seen, in broad strokes, the range of issues that Derrida locates as the Nietzschean themata within French thought in the 1960s. In addition, he makes numerous other remarks concerning Nietzsche’s rhetorical strategies and multiplicity of styles, the *différence* of force and power, the playfulness of interpretive multiplicity, and what Derrida calls “the axial intention of [Nietzsche’s] concept of interpretation”: the emancipation of interpretation from the constraints of a truth “which always implies the presence of the signified (aletheia or adequatio).” When one looks more specifically for the Nietzscheanism within Derrida’s own work, one theme stands out: the Nietzschean roots of his deconstruction of the philosophical binarism at the heart of the Western metaphysical tradition.

The “typical prejudice” and “fundamental faith” of all metaphysicians, Nietzsche wrote, “is the faith in opposite values.” Throughout his critique of morality, philosophy, and religion, Nietzsche attempted to dismantle such oppositional hierarchies as good/evil, truth/error, being/becoming. This refusal to sanction the hierarchical relations among those privileged conceptual oppositions transmitted within the Western metaphysical tradition was pervasive in French philosophical writing in the 1960s and 1970s, and the critique of binary, oppositional thinking is, in particular, an essential component in Derrida’s critical project. For Derrida, the history of philosophy unfolds as a history of certain classical philosophical oppositions: intelligible/sensible, truth/error,

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100. See, for example, Lyotard’s remark that “oppositional thinking … is out of step with the most vital modes of postmodern knowledge,” in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 14.

*101. This is discussed in this volume in the essay on Derrida by Samir Haddad.*
speech/writing, literal/figurative, presence/absence, and so on. These oppositional concepts do not coexist on equal grounds, however; rather, one side of each binary opposition has been privileged while the other side has been devalued. Within these oppositions, a hierarchical “order of subordination”\textsuperscript{102} has been established and truth has come to be valued over error, presence has come to be valued over absence, and so on. Derrida’s task is to dismantle or deconstruct these binary oppositions. In practice, their deconstruction involves a biphasic movement that Derrida called “double writing” or “double science.” In the first phase, he overturns the hierarchy and values those poles traditionally subordinated by the history of philosophy. Although Derrida is often read as privileging, for example, writing over speech, absence over presence, or the figurative over the literal, such a reading is overly simplistic, as Derrida realizes it is the hierarchical oppositional structure itself that is metaphysical. Therefore, when overturning a metaphysical hierarchy, one must avoid reappropriating the hierarchical structure if one wishes to avoid reestablishing the closed field of these binary oppositions.

To view deconstruction as a simple inversion of these classical philosophical oppositions ignores the second phase of deconstruction’s “double writing”: “we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept,’ a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime.”\textsuperscript{103} These new “concepts” are the Derridean “undecidables” (e.g. “différence,” “trace,” “supplément,” “pharmakon”): marks that in one way or another resist the formal structure imposed by the binary logic of philosophical opposition while exposing the optional and contingent character of those choices that the tradition has privileged as dominant. Throughout Derrida’s early work, we find as a recurrent motif his charting the play of these undecidables: the play of the trace, which is both present and absent; the play of the pharmakon, which is both poison and cure; the play of the supplément, which is both surplus and lack.

Returning now to Nietzsche, we can see this same critique of oppositional thinking in his assessment of traditional values, as he often proceeds by disassembling the privileged hierarchical relation that has been established among the values in question. Nietzsche’s disassembling, like Derridean deconstruction, operates in two phases.\textsuperscript{104} The first phase overtops the traditionally privileged relation between the two values while the second seeks to displace the opposition

\textsuperscript{102} See Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” in Margins of Philosophy, 329.
\textsuperscript{103} Jacques Derrida, Positions, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 42; see also Margins of Philosophy, 329.
\textsuperscript{104} For a more detailed discussion of the methodological affinities between Nietzschean genealogy and Derridean deconstruction, see the first chapter on Derrida in my Nietzsche’s French Legacy, 9–32.
altogether by showing it to result from a prior value imposition that itself requires critique. For example, regarding the genealogy of the will to truth, we find Nietzsche inverting the traditional hierarchy of truth over falsity. Investigating the origin of the positive value placed on truth, Nietzsche finds that it is simply a moral prejudice to affirm truth over error or appearance. To this, he suggests that error might be more valuable than truth, that error might be a necessary condition of life. His analysis does not stop here, however, as Heidegger assumed when he accused Nietzsche of “completing” the history of metaphysics through an “inversion” of Platonism. By adopting a perspectival attitude and denying the possibility of an unmediated, noninterpretive apprehension of “reality,” Nietzsche displaces the truth/falsity opposition altogether. The question is no longer whether a perspective is “true” or “false”; the sole question that interests the genealogist is whether or not a perspective enhances life. This same critical strategy operates in the closing stage of the famous chapter of Twilight of the Idols where Nietzsche traces the history of the belief in the “true world”: “The true world we have abolished: what world then remains? The apparent one perhaps? … But no! with the true world we also abolished the apparent one!” We have abolished the apparent world because it was defined as “apparent” only in terms of its opposition to the “true” world. Without the “true world” to serve as a standard, the designation “apparent” loses its meaning and the opposition “true versus apparent” itself loses its critical force. In other words, the traditional (de)valuation of “appearance” depends on its being the negation of that which the tradition has affirmed as “truth,” and, like Derrida, Nietzsche is not satisfied with simply inverting the traditional valuation of truth over appearance but wants instead to dismantle the entire hierarchical opposition between truth and appearance.

Nietzsche discovers a certain faith in binary thinking at the center of philosophical discourse. By genealogically uncovering the will to power whose imposition of a certain value gave rise to the two poles of the opposition in question, genealogy obviates the force the opposition is believed to have. The clearest example of this strategy is his deconstruction of the good/evil opposition. Nietzsche moves beyond good and evil precisely by showing that both “good” and “evil” owe their meaning to a certain type of will to power: the slavish, reactive will to power of herd morality. To simply invert the values of slave morality, making “good” what the slave judges to be “evil,” is no less reactive than the original imposition of value by the slave, who judges all that differs from himself to be “evil” and defines the good in reactionary opposition to what

105. See Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, §34.
106. For a discussion of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, see my Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction (New York: Routledge, 1990).
107. Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable."
is other than himself. A reading of Nietzsche as an “immoralist” or “nihilist” remains at this level of mere inversion, failing to acknowledge Nietzsche’s insight that by conforming to the oppositional structure, one inevitably confirms its validity and its repressive, hierarchizing power. But a reading of Nietzsche as the “transvaluer of values” locates a second movement in the Nietzschean critique of morality. This second movement flows from the active imposition of new values arising from a healthy will to power that has displaced the hierarchy of good/evil altogether. In rejecting the binary structure of moral evaluation, Nietzsche’s transvaluation inauguraes a playful experimentation with values and multiplication of perspectives that previews Derrida’s own approach to deconstructive reading, which he contrasts sharply with the textual doubling of commentary.108 Nietzsche’s affirmation of perspectival multiplicity thus emerges as the life-enhancing alternative for those with a will to power sufficient to go beyond the reactive decadence of binary morality, and this life-enhancing multiplicity continues to function within Derrida’s own interpretive practice in his call for a productive style of reading that does not merely “protect” but “opens” texts to new interpretive possibilities.109

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That the twentieth century would be marked by three distinct moments of “French Nietzscheanism” would not have displeased Nietzsche, as he felt a special kinship with both the French language and French culture,110 and he included the French among his “most natural readers and listeners.”111 While these moments, and in particular the latest one, have not been universally regarded as a good development for French philosophy, as the work of both Jürgen Habermas and the French neo-conservatives Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut attest,112 there can be little doubt that the intense engagement with Nietzsche’s thought by French philosophers from the late 1950s through the early 1980s is one of the defining features of what has come in the English-speaking world to be known as French poststructuralism.

108. See Derrida, Of Grammatology, 157–64.
109. See ibid., 158ff.
110. See, for example, Beyond Good and Evil, §§253–4; Twilight of the Idols, “What the Germans Lack,” §4; The Wanderer and His Shadow, in Human, All Too Human: Volumes One and Two, §214.
As recently as the first five years of the twenty-first century, it was widely held that the work of Louis Althusser\(^1\) could best be described as an example of “structural Marxism,”\(^2\) a curious – and particularly Parisian – hybrid of structuralism and Marxism, and therefore a product of the 1960s, whose intellectual fashions had come and gone. Accordingly, in the decade following his death in 1990, a number of commentators suggested that were it not for the publication of his autobiographical text, *The Future Lasts Forever*, the central event of which was Althusser’s murder by strangulation of his wife in 1980,\(^3\) there would be little interest in his “dated” philosophical work.\(^4\) The subsequent publication of a mass of material, already larger (and still growing) than the body of work published during his lifetime, has rendered these assessments irrelevant. Not only has an

1. Louis Althusser (October 16, 1918–October 22, 1990; born in Birmandries, Algeria; died in Paris, France) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1939–48), and received a *doctorat d’état* from the University of Picardy. His influences included Bachelard, Canguilhem, Epicurus, Lucretius, Machiavelli, Marx, and Spinoza, and he held an appointment at the École Normale Supérieure (1948–80).
3. On November 16, 1980, Althusser strangled his wife, Hélène Legotien, at their apartment at the École Normale Supérieure. He was determined to be unfit to stand trial for reasons of insanity and spent most of his remaining ten years in psychiatric hospitals. Althusser had suffered from severe mental illness for most of his adult life and had been hospitalized prior to 1980 over thirty times. His autobiography, *The Future Lasts Forever*, attempts to explain the tragedy in the light of his life as a whole. While interesting, it is an extremely unreliable account of his life and works.
entirely new Althusser come to light, but the publication, above all, of his “late” writings – those written after 1980 – on what he called “aleatory materialism” or “the materialism of the encounter,” has succeeded in calling into question the meaning of Althusser’s work as a whole. Readers have been forced to resort to various expedients to explain not only the existence of the new Althusser, but even more, its relation to the old Althusser. Some readers, most notably Antonio Negri, have responded by locating a break or turn in Althusser’s thought at the end of the 1970s, which has the effect of completely dissociating the early and late Althusser. An examination of all the material so far published, some of which dates back to the 1940s–50s, however, problematizes any attempt chronologically to order and arrange Althusser’s work. Even the texts in which he explores the notion of an aleatory materialism cannot simply be set in opposition to the work of the 1960s. Instead, they illuminate aspects of well-known essays such as “Contradiction and Overdetermination” – where his discussion of Lenin’s theory of the conjuncture was simultaneously a discussion of Machiavelli, as well perhaps as Epicurus and Lucretius – that have been persistently overlooked by commentators. Further, while Althusser himself repeatedly invoked the name of Spinoza (and perhaps even more importantly wrote a book on Montesquieu), there was little sense of the importance of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy for some of his key concepts. We now possess his lecture notes on such figures as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, the reading of whom contributed to the notion of ideological interpellation. The texts that constitute For Marx and Althusser’s contribution to Reading Capital, texts that were regarded by admirers and critics alike as presenting a finished theory (of society, history, the dialectic), now appear to exhibit the incompleteness, the unevenness, the rough edges of pieces of a puzzle. It is clear that they were part of a much larger set of inquiries that only now is coming to light.

Accordingly, only if we recognize that Althusser’s is an oeuvre that is still taking shape and undoubtedly still holds some surprises in store, can we begin to suggest a provisional way of reading it. Few of his contemporaries devoted as much thought as Althusser to the activity or practice of philosophy itself,

what it means, as it is said in French, to “do philosophy.” He caused a minor scandal when in the early 1960s he introduced the phrase “theoretical practice”; his many critics accused him of blurring the crucial distinction between practice and theory in order to elevate his theorizing to the status of action, as if there were no difference between a mass demonstration and the publication of an essay. In fact, the successive definitions of philosophy he offered in the period from 1963 to 1975 (philosophy is the theory of theoretical practices, philosophy is the activity of tracing lines of demarcation between the ideological and the scientific, and philosophy represents the class struggle in theory) all emphasized the material and historical existence of philosophy. To refer to it as a practice or activity was to deprive it of its spiritual, intellectual, or merely discursive character and to situate it in a field of operation where it might be evaluated not according to its truth but according to its real effects. Philosophy as a practice belonged to a specific historical moment, which it in no way transcended. To capture the nature of the moment, Althusser used the term, taken from the communist movement, of conjuncture: the historical moment is not a totality unified around a particular idea or zeitgeist, but is rather the product of encounter and combination, even of conflicting forces “locked,” as it were, together in their very struggle. The field in which philosophy exists and operates is thus a field of conflict in which a balance of forces exists: some ideas and doctrines are dominant over others and this domination is independent of the question of their validity or truth. Ideas are dominant neither because they are true nor because they are false. The relations of force that govern the theoretical conjuncture are a continuation of the relations of force in the social world around them. So, for example, ideas that might appear utterly bankrupt and unthinkable in a political conjuncture in which anticapitalist mass movements have the ascendancy might, when the balance of forces shifts in favor of capital, quite suddenly appear valid and true; the reemergence of methodological individualism and rational choice theory in the 1980s is a case in point. In the same way, arguments that previously were widely experienced as compelling are robbed of their force or emptied of their content. In fact, Althusser so firmly rejected any notion of the omnipotence of truth or any notion of philosophy’s role as an impartial adjudicator of arguments, that he runs the risk of reducing the effectiveness of philosophy to zero. How does one think, as well as act, against the dominant ideas? To do so requires strategic alliances and the

9. Althusser’s concept of philosophy as a practice left its mark on his former student Alain Badiou, whose concepts of intervention and event are in part derived from Althusser, even if Badiou’s project is in certain ways a reaction against Althusser, who rejected the very concept of ontology. See Alain Badiou, Being and Event, Oliver Feltham (trans.) (New York: Continuum, 2007). [*] For a discussion of Badiou, see the essay by Bruno Bosteels in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
ability to assess and exploit the internal contradictions of the dominant theories. A philosophy adequate to such a conception can no longer be described as stating arguments or propositions. To describe the precise form of its activity Althusser used another term borrowed from the socialist and communist traditions: intervention.\textsuperscript{10} Philosophy enters into this conflict to modify the balance of forces if it can. Does Althusser here refer to an ideal of what philosophy, or perhaps a Marxist philosophy, should be? Absolutely not: he insists on the contrary that he has merely described what every philosophy does, even and especially when it does not conceive of itself in this way.

Such a view of philosophy may appear crude and reductive; it certainly deprives the monuments of its history of their universal truth. In fact, Althusser’s sense of philosophy renders the task of the philosopher very complicated. Once upon a time, a Marxist who was a philosopher might simply draw a line of demarcation between Marxist and non-Marxist philosophy, between the philosophy that declares its allegiance to Marxist thought and demonstrates this allegiance through its use of terms known to be Marxist and the philosophy that declares its opposition or perhaps only its indifference to Marxism and makes use of terms “foreign” to Marxism. This model, embraced by Communist parties for much of the twentieth century, represents a form of ideological trench warfare, what Antonio Gramsci\textsuperscript{11} called the war of position. Althusser, in contrast, insisted on the complexity of what, by the mid-1960s, he came to call the theoretical conjuncture, characterized by constantly shifting fronts necessitating a series of temporary alliances with otherwise opposing theories against a common enemy.\textsuperscript{12} To make matters even more complicated, the opposition between Marxist and non-Marxist theories was no longer decisive: some of the most conservative ideas might appear not against Marxism, but in the form of Marxism, emerging within it as a new theoretical development. Similarly, genuine allies in a struggle against particular doctrines might well appear as anti-Marxists. Thus, it was no longer possible to dismiss the intellectual world outside as “ideology.” Every tendency had to be understood and its effect in the current conjuncture precisely measured.

What was the theoretical conjuncture in which Althusser himself would attempt to intervene? In a philosophical version of Lenin’s “Letters from Afar”


\textsuperscript{11} For further discussion of Gramsci, see the essay by Christopher Thornhill in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5}.

– in which he sketched out the political conjuncture that emerged after the fall of the Czar in February 1917 – Althusser delivered a talk in 1966 in which he gave a comprehensive account of the French intellectual scene. In his presentation, he described the complexity of the theoretical struggle and the tactics adequate to this complexity. “Front No. 1,” as he calls it, is the idealist tradition, still dominant, although in retreat, of “spiritualism,” those philosophies, frankly or covertly religious (often advancing in the mask of a certain Descartes, Husserl or Heidegger), whose objective is to secure the rights and the domination of consciousness, morality, Man, all the forms of transcendence that rob this world of its substantiality, sanctify the established order and ultimately block the activity of the sciences. Althusser identifies Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur as the leading figures of this movement.

In opposing this reactionary tradition, however, Marxism fortunately does not stand alone; on the contrary, it has a number of powerful “objective allies” who, whether they want to or not, consciously or unconsciously, oppose and weaken the forces of spiritualism. Althusser labels this block, allied with materialism in this particular struggle but necessarily opposed to it in others, “rationalist and critical idealism.” Important among the forces that compose this block, for Althusser, are the philosophers who have led a “return” to the great texts of philosophy and who, simply by insisting on reading the texts line by line and by refusing to attribute to a given philosopher any idea not literally to be found in his work, have succeeded in neutralizing the spiritualist readings of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hegel (Althusser mentions in this connection Jean Hyppolite and Martial Guéroult). But perhaps the most important of the objective allies is the structuralist camp in its entirety, all those, from Lévi-Strauss to Barthes to Lacan, who through their relentless critique of consciousness and of humanism, have provoked the party of Spirit to expressions of impotent rage, opening a breach in the dominant philosophies through which authentic knowledge may pass.

But Marxist theory cannot be satisfied with the emerging victory on Front No. 1, the engagement with spiritualism. In fact, the communist tradition has for too long remained in an unprincipled alliance with rationalist-critical idealism,

as if the history of philosophy came to a halt in the eighteenth century, rendering the struggle between reason and faith, or naturalism and supernaturalism, the primary contradiction of our time. In fact, the weakening of spiritualist ideology can only have the effect of intensifying the conflicts previously latent in the anti-spiritualist camp, leading to the opening of Front No. 2. It is thus necessary to wage a struggle simultaneously on two fronts, on the second of which Marxist theory will wage war on those with whom it is allied on Front No. 1. The shift in the balance of forces in favor of structuralism means that “among the urgent tasks of Marxist philosophy” are:

the task of fundamentally criticizing the empiricist, formalist and idealist ideology that reigns over most of the human sciences, the task of distinguishing, in the human sciences, which are real objects and which imaginary, which are our objective allies, specialists who are de facto working on our side.17

The notion of the second front would seem to authorize an interpretation of Althusser’s relation to structuralism as nothing more than a temporary alliance with an otherwise hostile force against a common enemy, an alliance that would require a temporary cessation of hostilities and perhaps even the occasional exchange of pleasantries, but which, once the broader war stopped, would inevitably dissolve into conflict.

All of this makes it quite clear that, from his own perspective, Althusser did not freely choose the problems and themes that were to occupy him throughout his career, nor does this perspective allow us in any meaningful sense to speak of the linear development of Althusser’s thought, as if it were propelled by the emergence and resolution of its internal contradictions. As Pierre Macherey18 has remarked, Althusser was “intrepid,”19 exhilarated by the risks of theory (which for him was a “perpetual war”), willing to follow tracks without knowing where, if anywhere at all, they would lead. His philosophical motto was not Spinoza’s “Caute” (caution), but Napoleon’s “on s’engage et puis on voit” (“first you engage and then you will see” – a favorite of Lenin’s). His fearlessness was undoubtedly merely an aspect of madness, which gave him enormous energy even as it was destroying him. He wrote constantly: books, essays, letters, and

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18. A student of Althusser’s at the École Normale Supérieure from 1958 to 1963, Pierre Macherey (1938– ) is best known for his Pour une théorie de la production littéraire (A Theory of Literary Production; 1966), generally considered the best representation of Althusserian literary criticism, and a five-volume interpretation of Spinoza’s Ethics. [*] For a discussion of Macherey, see the essay by Simon Duffy in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
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fragments of all three. How do we approach this mass of material, only a fraction of which has been published?

We can provisionally identify three series of questions and problems that occupied Althusser throughout his career (no doubt because they were the questions that dominated the conjunctures through which he lived): (i) the subject; (ii) structure; and (iii) origin.

I. THE SUBJECT

Althusser’s first sally into the “perpetual battle” of philosophy took place on a terrain that would be associated with him throughout his career: Hegel. While Althusser in a sense cultivated his image as an anti-Hegelian, at least in For Marx and Reading Capital, an overview of his work as a whole reveals that rather than simply rejecting Hegel – as if his entire oeuvre possessed such coherence that one was compelled either to accept or reject it as a totality – Althusser read Hegel in the same way he read every other text: “to read Hegel in a materialist way [en matérialiste] is to draw lines of demarcation within him.”20 After the posthumous discovery of Althusser’s diplôme d’études supérieures (roughly the equivalent of a Master’s thesis) on Hegel entitled “On Content in the Thought of G. W. F. Hegel,” written in a few months in 1947, a number of commentators argued that he had once been a Hegelian before becoming an anti-Hegelian, thereby again chronologizing the conflicts internal to Althusser’s thought.21 Reading not only this thesis but also two essays written around the same time, we can see that his philosophical career began with the very act of reading that he would codify later as the gesture of drawing lines of demarcation. Althusser made visible the humanist, subjective reading of Hegel by such important figures as Alexandre Kojève and Hyppolite,22 who, according to Althusser, turned such moments as the confrontation of consciousnesses in the master–slave relation or the unhappy consciousness into a Hegelian “Robinsonade”23 in a manner similar to existentialism: man is that night, that void the truth of which all his activity and accomplishment cannot but affirm. Althusser never argues that such readings are false or that such ideas are not to be found in Hegel; instead he attempts to

22. The young Althusser wrote a very sharp and in certain ways crude critique of Hyppolite, expressing a view at odds with later statements. See Althusser, The Spectre of Hegel, 175–84.
23. Marx’s phrase for the positing of the solitary individual – endowed, of course, with certain invariant characteristics – who, like Robinson Crusoe, stands outside and prior to society.
bring to light another, the other, Hegel. Marx himself in the preface to *Capital* had distinguished between the “mystified” and “rational” forms of the Hegelian dialectic, and for Althusser the rational form consisted of an objective critique of every notion of subjectivity, of man as Subject. Was not the *Phenomenology of Spirit* precisely the unmasking of consciousness as merely a moment in Spirit’s alienation from itself and would not the return of Spirit to itself in Absolute Knowledge mark the overcoming of any separation of consciousness and world?

The struggle against philosophical “Robinsonades” led to another encounter with contemporary philosophy: “the return to Hegel” as he called it was doubled by the return to Husserl, the second every bit as important as the first in the world of French Marxism. In 1955, Althusser published an essay cast as a letter to the prominent exponent of phenomenology, Paul Ricoeur: “On the Objectivity of History.” Here again, rather than simply reject Husserl, Althusser sought to explore his conflicting legacies. The occasion was Ricoeur’s critical review of a book on the possibility of historical knowledge by Raymond Aron. The latter had used Husserl’s concepts of lived experience and the *Lebenswelt* to advance the notion that the reality of the past as it was lived by real men (the “truth of history” according to Aron) remains inaccessible to the historian and thus limits his enterprise. Ricoeur, according to Althusser, defended the rationality and objectivity of historical inquiry by stressing the idea of knowledge against an inaccessible “lived experience.” He did so, Althusser argues, not by showing the mutual immanence of objectivity and knowledge, but by resorting to an originary act of consciousness, the intention to objectivity that must precede all knowledge as its origin and foundation.

It was undoubtedly the task of unmasking the apologetic and limiting functions of the notion of the subject that led Althusser to the field of psychoanalysis, a field that, up to the 1960s, was regarded with tremendous suspicion by French Marxists. In the academic year of 1963–64, he organized with his students (among them, Etienne Balibar and Jacques-Alain Miller) a seminar on psychoanalysis. The transcript of his two lectures was published posthumously as *Psychanalyse et sciences humaines: deux conférences*. It was from these lectures

24. For example, in Althusser, *The Spectre of Hegel*, 170–84.
27. The phrase “intention to objectivity” is Ricoeur’s and is cited by Althusser to show Ricoeur’s theoretical recourse to the will of a knowing subject. See Althusser, “Sur l’objectivité de l’histoire,” 23.
28. The work of Althusser’s students is discussed in the essay by Patrice Maniglier in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.
that he culled the material for his 1964 essay “Freud and Lacan,” an essay that brought psychoanalytic theory, and Jacques Lacan’s version of it in particular, to the attention of a new audience. Significantly, Althusser saw in Lacan a fellow combatant engaged in a struggle against the dominant ideas against which rational argument alone, no matter how true and self-evident, could never prevail. It was this fact that alone could explain the apparent difficulty and even intentional obscurity of Lacan’s language:

Hence the contained passion and passionate contention of Lacan’s language, unable to live or survive except in a state of alert and accusation: the language of a man of the besieged vanguard, condemned by the crushing strength of the threatened structures and corporations to forestall their blows, or at least to feign a response to them before they are delivered, thus discouraging the opponents from crushing him beneath their assault.

Lacan’s theoretical merit was to have shown the specificity of psychoanalysis, its irreducibility either to biology (instincts – or today, genes – determine all behavior) or to psychology, a discipline founded on the notion of the autonomous subject, a “science” of the individual soul. Althusser was especially interested in Lacan’s critique of “every philosophy that issues from the Cogito,” every variant of existentialism, of course, but also the individual subject assumed as a given by liberal theory. Lacan insisted from the beginning of his enterprise on the fact that the ego, the conscious part of which was often called “consciousness,” far from being governed by some reality principle, was founded on misrecognition, on a nearly delusional belief in its own independence. It was here that Lacan served as a point of attack on phenomenology for Althusser. For although Sartre insisted on an individual solitude so profound that solipsism became the fundamental philosophical problem, others, especially Merleau-Ponty, but also Trân Duc Thao, insisted that to read Husserl correctly was to arrive at the conclusion that the fundamental ground of human existence was intersubjectivity, a Mitsein, to use Heidegger’s expression, that was the element proper to humanity. Psychoanalysts in France were understandably attracted to

31. Ibid., 203.
*33. Trân Duc Thao is discussed in more detail in the essay by William L. McBride in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
*34. Heidegger’s notion of Mitsein is discussed in the essay by Miguel de Beistegui in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
this model, which allowed them to conceive of the unconscious as a product of this intersubjectivity, specifically the alterity immanent in any experience of the ego.

Althusser, perhaps surprisingly, did not regard the partisans of intersubjectivity as objective allies; rather, he saw this theory as perhaps the most sophisticated variant of the philosophy of the subject, a defense disguised as a critique. It not only left the individual subject intact, preserving the distinction between “the interiority of the subject and the exteriority of the objective world,” but posited an alterity that can be discovered or experienced only through an intentional act, the initiative of the subject (Levinas, whose work was apparently unknown to Althusser, would represent the most powerful example of such a position). Such theories essentially prevented any inquiry into causes: consciousness found its truth and identity in another consciousness in a circle of recognition. In opposition, Althusser from early on insisted that the origin of the subject as conceived by philosophy and psychology was:

manifestly political: the subject is that which is submitted to an order, which is submitted to a master and which is at the same time thought in psychology as being the origin of its actions. This means that it is a subject of imputation, i.e., that it is he who must account to a third party for his own actions, his own conduct, his own behavior.  

The subject of imputation, the subject to whom freedom of thought and action is imputed, is the individual who has consented to the domination of those who have sovereignty over him, thereby rendering that sovereignty legitimate. The subject of imputation is also the individual who, being master of his actions, is held responsible and punishable for them: he must own them before both God and man. This is the first form of one of Althusser’s most important contributions: the interpellated subject.

As Althusser began to explore the notion of ideology, so essential to Marxist explanations of domination and exploitation, he quickly arrived at the notion that “the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology” and correlatively that “all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects.” In contrast to the treatment of ideology in “Marxism and Humanism,” which stressed its existence as “a system of representations” through which individuals “live” their social existence, Althusser, beginning in

38. Louis Althusser, ”Marxism and Humanism,” in *For Marx*, 221–47.
“Three Notes on the Theory of Discourse” (1966) and “On Feuerbach” (1967), moved to the theory that the definitive function of ideology was not deception or misrepresentation (no matter how functional in a given society) but the work of transforming individuals into free and responsible subjects. While Althusser himself seemed to suggest in *Psychanalyse et sciences humaines* that such a notion was historically determined, linked to the rise of liberal philosophy in the seventeenth century, he soon came to regard the constitution of the subject as “the formal structure of ideology.” Thus, the legal subject who has always already consented to his domination or exploitation by another is a variant (and not a secularized version) of an ideological structure that has no history because it is contemporaneous with social existence.

To illustrate his thesis in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Althusser will choose an example whose origins precede not only capitalism but feudalism as well: “Christian Religious Ideology,” an example, he says, “accessible to everyone.” Here the passive voice of the phrase “the individual is interpellated as a subject” is modified by the identification of the agent of interpellation: subjects (plural and lower case) are constituted in and by the Absolute Subject, whose function is to set each one apart and to grant each the ability to obey or refuse the Subject’s commandments. In this way the subjects are subject in a double sense: they are subjects in the sense of agents, authors of thought and action, but also subjected beings who are declared free in order voluntarily to subject themselves to the Subject. The relation of Subject to subjects is a specular one in which each recognizes the other recognizing him, and recognizes himself in the other. This recognition (the Hegelian origins of which should be clear) acts as a guarantee of the individual’s status as subject in the double sense. Althusser illustrates this very schematic outline, which might appear Lacanian in inspiration, but in fact draws far more on Hobbes, Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, with an allegorical reading of Scripture. In Exodus 3, God calls out “Moses, Moses,” interpellating, recruiting Moses in order to endow him with the power to accept or refuse his commands. When Moses responds to the call, he in turn asks by what name he should refer to God when he discloses this revelation to his people, and God answers: “I am that I am,” constituting himself as subject. This allegory allows us to see other variants of the same model: the earthly sovereign who constitutes the individuals under his authority as subjects in the double sense (Hobbes), the empirical and transcendental subjects (Kant).

41. Ibid.
It is at this point that a crucial question emerges for Althusser: if the interpel-
lation of the individual as subject is the central function of ideology, how exactly
is this function carried out? The term *ideology* in Marxist theory usually refers,
as the name suggests, to the system of ideas that expresses the economic devel-
opment and relations of a given society or historical period. The system of ideas
expresses a certain social reality in the sense that it is its effect and that it reaf-
ffirms or reproduces it. Ideology would then work on minds or consciousness,
creating certain beliefs that subjects would then act on: beliefs in the justice or
merely the inevitability of the master–slave, or worker–employer relation. As
Marx explained in *The German Ideology*, it would not be enough to criticize
these ideas because they were held in place and put into practice by a set of
material relations and could not disappear or even be diminished except to the
extent that these relations changed. While such a position appeared to be mate-
rialist, connecting ideas to realities, even as it rejected the weapons of criticism
in favor of the criticism that issues from weapons (to cite Marx’s famous phrase),
Althusser regarded it as an idealist survival that promoted the dangerous illu-
sion that by changing property relations one would automatically change the
entire ideological edifice of society. In contrast, Althusser argued that “ideology
has a material existence” and that it exists in apparatuses, practices, and rituals.
Religion, for example, is not a matter of belief, but a set of institutions and prac-
tices: “kneel down, move your lips in prayer and you will believe.”

The individual is addressed not by God, but by those, his intermediaries, who occupy
certain positions in the apparatus of the church: the individual is declared free
so that he may be judged according to whether he has (freely) obeyed or violated
the commandments. To move out of the terrain of religion, we can recognize in
Foucault’s account of the panopticon another allegorical figure of the interpel-
lated subject. The anonymous agent of surveillance induces the effect of subjec-
tivity in the isolated individualities before it: they watch themselves as they are
watched (the simultaneity of surveillance and self-surveillance), what they do,
what they think, what they feel. Thus, for Althusser as for Foucault, the “autono-
mous individual” is the product of practices of constraint and coercion.

II. STRUCTURE

However stimulating and suggestive Althusser’s account of ideology remains,
especially insofar as it provokes a re-examination of the concept of the subject, it
raises one of the central theoretical problems in Althusser’s career: the problem
of structure. In referring to the “formal structure” of ideology of which there

are a number of variants, Althusser appears to draw on the linguistic model that was so important for the structuralist works of the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, and Althusser never confronted the effects of this essay, it is this text – “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” – more than anything else he wrote that identified him in the minds of so many readers as a structuralist. Interestingly, a 1966 text that circulated widely but was never published during his lifetime, but which is now available, allows us to see that Althusser advanced a very sharp critique of Lévi-Strauss.\(^43\) He identified the two theoretical poles between which Lévi-Strauss's work never ceased to vacillate. The first was the linguistic model, the “formal combinatory,” consisting of elements whose combination was governed by certain rules, which necessarily existed outside of and prior to history and of which every given society was one possible variant. The second theoretical pole was based on a refusal to transcend any given society, regarding each as a collective, anonymous subject, which produced the means by which the end of its reproduction would be achieved: the functionalist explanation. What makes Althusser’s critical observations of particular interest is the fact that they apply at least as much to “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” as to any work of Lévi-Strauss's. Indeed, what are the ideological state apparatuses in Althusser’s argument – the church, the school, the media – but the means by which a certain order reproduces itself and which come into existence for precisely that end. At the same time, Althusser insists that:

ideology is endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e., an omni-historical reality, in the sense in which that structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we can call history in the sense in which the Communist Manifesto defines history as the history of class struggles, i.e., the history of class societies.\(^44\)

As we have already noted, Althusser fills the otherwise empty forms of this “immutable” structure with the speculary relation between Subject and subjects that, like the deep structures of language, can produce an infinite number of possible variations.

The “Ideology” essay that was extracted with great care and precision from a much longer and far less functionalist manuscript\(^45\) – a fact that places a great emphasis on the character of the version Althusser chose to publish – remains


\(^{44}\) Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 161.

by far the most widely read text in his corpus. The functionalism and even formalism of the essay has overshadowed Althusser’s other works, particularly those in which he subjects functionalism and formalism to a critique, and has certainly contributed to a sense of an epistemological break in Althusser’s work after 1975. It is all the more necessary then to understand the exceptional, even perverse, nature of this justly famous text (which is in no way reducible to functionalism). It is perverse in the same manner as his autobiography: it diverts our attention away from what makes Althusser’s work so strikingly original, and insinuates what the autobiography openly and repetitively states, namely, that Althusser is a derivative thinker who provides little more than elegantly written summaries of earlier perhaps invalidated theories.

In fact, the question of structure as it was posed in France in the 1950s and 1960s remained at the center of Althusser’s philosophical reflection from the very beginning. His book on Montesquieu – *Montesquieu, la politique et l’histoire* – ignored by critics and admirers alike, was an investigation of the contradictory concept of structure at work in Montesquieu’s theory of history. Montesquieu’s theory of law breaks with earlier notions; the laws he seeks to postulate are no longer the ideals towards which a society should, but may not, strive, nor are they essences of which a given society is a more or less faithful realization: the law is “immanent” in a given society, it is that which makes its very diversity and complexity intelligible. Althusser’s first book, then, allows us, through the mediation of an eighteenth-century thinker, to identify at least two opposing conceptions of structure insofar as it is applied to history: the first is structure as an “ideal order” that underlies the apparent disorder of surface phenomena and to which the act of knowledge must reduce these phenomena in order to obtain their meaning; the second is not an order at all, nor does it require a reduction of phenomenal disorder to an essential order. It is the immanent principle of a disorder and irregularity that are posed as irreducible.

A few years later, Althusser would confront the same problems as they existed in Marxist theory. By the end of the nineteenth century, the dominant current in Marxist thought had arrived at a theory of historical progress that differed only in its details from the “bourgeois” view sketched out by Adam Smith. History was a narrative of economic development, which in turn produced ever more “advanced” social and cultural superstructures: the free market “produced” the free society. The Marxist version only added to this scheme of progress another layer of complexity: the development of the means of production necessarily came into conflict with the existing relations of production. This conflict would increase in scope and severity until revolution (the violence of which was in inverse proportion to its inevitability) would restore equilibrium between the forces and relations of production. The contradiction between these two poles of opposition in a given society functioned as the origin and principle of
intelligibility for all its phenomena: law, religion, literature, art, and music. In *Reading Capital*, Althusser pointed out that this “Hegelian” (and “Smithian”) scheme was formally identical to any of the binary oppositions whose polarity defined a given field for structuralist inquiry. It was in this context that Althusser raised the “practical” notion of conjuncture to the level of theory: to seek to explain a given historical moment on the basis of a central contradiction as if its complexity were the ideal epiphenomena of a material kernel was not only to deny the irreducible reality of this complexity, but it was to ignore the actual character of Marxist practice. No party or organization capable of effecting change could afford the luxury of such denial: on the contrary, every antagonism, every conflict irrespective of its relation to the “central” conflict, had to be accounted for and, if at all possible, exploited. As Althusser explains in “Contradiction and Overdetermination” (1962), the fact of domination (like the fact of revolution) does not radiate from an economic relation, but depends on the coalescing of a series of absolutely heterogeneous relations of force: it is never determined but always overdetermined. Hence, Althusser’s recourse to the concept of conjuncture represents an attempt to theorize what already existed in a practical state. The present understood as conjuncture is absolutely original or singular, it is the expression of nothing transcendent to it. It is also irreducibly complex; it is a composite unity, the always temporary conjunction of forces and elements that crystallize to persist indefinitely.

Does this mean then that Althusser had, in the name of the conjuncture and therefore of specificity and singularity, lapsed into “hyper-empiricism,” content merely to describe historical phenomena without attempting to establish causal relations among them, as an early reader of “Contradiction and Overdetermination” had charged? Had Althusser renounced, without admitting it (perhaps even to himself), Marx’s key notion of mode of production and its determination of the economic forms internal to it? The questions that Althusser posed in his early work and to which he returned in the last decade of his life mark the limit of his thought. Limit but not limitation: the reaching of and therefore identification of a threshold that remains our threshold, not in a historicist sense that would lead us to hope for and expect the attainment of what lies beyond it, but a limit that runs across the history of philosophy. It is here that Althusser’s use of the term “structure” takes on its full significance; for if Althusser in certain texts employs the term “structure” to denote a system whose elements combine together according to certain rules to produce the real, in other texts the same term takes on a radically opposed meaning and function. If what exists, what is actual not only in the strong sense but in the only meaningful sense, is the conjuncture – that is, the composite unity of composite

unities, ad infinitum, the product not of an ideal order of which it would be an expression, but of, as Althusser will say in his last work, encounter and chance (including the chance outcome of struggles never decided in advance) – then mode of production can no longer be thought of as a transcendental system, the set of all possible social formations of which the present would be one. Instead, as Althusser suggests at the conclusion of his contribution to Reading Capital, mode of production could be understood only as an immanent cause, “a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term … the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects.”

If it is true, as Balibar has argued, that structure and conjuncture represent the two opposing poles of Althusser’s thought, it is no less true that he never ceased to insist not simply on their unity but on their mutual immanence. This marks the threshold of Althusser’s thought and ours and it is no accident that the reference here is to Spinoza, whose philosophy, still relatively unexplored, represented for Althusser the detour that alone seemed to lead to a future.

III. ORIGIN (END)

The future: is philosophy then going somewhere? This is a more complicated question than might initially be thought. There is no question that much of Althusser’s work is devoted to rooting out every form of teleology, not only in Marxist thought, but in philosophy in general. We have just noted the way in which his notion of the overdetermined historical contradiction rules out any sense of the linear unfolding of history: the necessity of revolutions has nothing to do with the inevitable stages of progress towards an end. As Althusser argues in “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter,” capitalism itself did not arise automatically within feudalism as its internal contradiction, the birth of the new within the old. Capitalism, he tells us, might never have happened: it was the product not only of struggles whose outcome is always contingent, but of an encounter between processes that might easily never have taken place. In a highly overdetermined encounter, elements collided, took hold, and a world, a mode of production, was born and no internal principle of negativity establishes the time and place of its demise. While such a conception of the emergence of a mode of production is present in certain of Marx’s

writings (notably those on the period of “primitive accumulation” at the end of the first volume of *Capital*), the Marxist tradition in its various forms from the *Communist Manifesto* on, has tended precisely to cover it up with a far more reassuring communist “superstition,” that is, a teleology of modes of production, the initial phase of which at least will culminate in communism. Against the idea that the elements that combine to form a mode of production “do not exist in history so that a mode of production may exist,” Althusser claims instead that they “exist in history in a floating state prior to their ‘accumulation’ and ‘combination,’ each being the product of its own history and none being the teleological product of the others or their history.”

Marxist theoreticians have most commonly conceived these elements (the accumulation of money, technology, and a population without the means of subsistence) as if they were “from all eternity destined to enter into combination, harmonize with one another and reciprocally produce each other as their own ends.” It is surely significant that Althusser’s manuscript leaves off at this precise point: capitalism might not have come into existence, but was the product of an encounter that nothing predetermined. The next step in the argument, the step Althusser does not take, is the acknowledgment that a new, unprecedented mode of production will come about, if it does, as the result of an equally chance encounter between elements, requiring even to come into existence (to say nothing of being able to persist in time) the immense accumulation of the most diverse and unrelated conflicts and antagonisms that Althusser calls the overdetermined contradiction.

But as we have noted, Marxism in its “practical state,” as Althusser liked to say, was forced repeatedly to confront the radical instability, reversibility, and contingency of social and political existence. In fact, every one of its major defeats was in part a consequence of organizations believing in their own myths, the myths of inevitable progress, communism as a religion, with its own version of providence. Thus the demands of political practice never allowed Marxism to lapse completely into a teleology of history. The same cannot be said for most other philosophies, whose task was to discover the radical origin of things, the principle of intelligibility without which history or even nature would lapse into unintelligible disorder.

In a very important sense the postulation of an origin was, for Althusser, constitutive of philosophy as such and the number of philosophers who deviated from philosophy’s true path was tiny. Althusser consistently named Epicurus, Lucretius, Machiavelli, Spinoza, and Marx as the thinkers who definitively broke with “the philosophy of philosophy” and refused any notion of origin. The theological function of the concept of origin seems clear enough: the transcendental

50. Ibid., 198.
51. Ibid., 200.
cause of the world, the unity that precedes division, spirit before matter, is that in relation to which alone the world through a reduction to the truth external to it, its truth, can be known. Althusser however insists that the concept of origin is just as necessary to “secular” forms of philosophy, binding it in complex ways to theology and theology to it: it is the gesture of denial and concealment by which thought pretends to inaugurate itself: “The function of the concept of origin, as in original sin, is to summarize in one word what has not to be thought in order to think what one wants to think.”52 Althusser spent a good deal of time specifying what political liberalism (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau) and classical political economy (from the physiocrats to Smith and Ricardo) had not to think in order to be free to conduct their inquiries. Everything not only does begin, but must begin with an anthropology: a given human subject, the individual as subject of right, subject of interest, subject of needs. This invariant human essence is both the beginning and the end of history: everything depends on our not looking “behind the curtain,”53 on our remaining spectators of this little production. To ask about the origin of the origin, which in this case is to pose the question of the historical emergence of different forms of subjectivity, would be to nullify the way of thought that has dominated the world for centuries. Hence the scandal of Althusser’s two favorite heretics – Spinoza and Marx – whose philosophies, Althusser maintained, contained all the ingredients necessary for a critique of philosophical anthropology.

But Althusser himself could not entirely resist the attraction of the concept of origin. In “The Underground Current,” his last substantial text, the posthumously published version of which was extracted from a longer unfinished manuscript by François Matheron, Althusser announces the inauguration of “aleatory materialism,” a materialism of chance and encounter, derived from Epicurus and Lucretius. Although it is not difficult to discern the existence of this “underground current” in Althusser’s earlier works, it must be acknowledged that at the end of his life he added something new: a philosophy of the void. Instead of refusing “the old question, ‘What is the origin of the world,’” as he once did, he accepts it and what is more provides an answer: “Nothingness.”54 He has thus shifted, however subtly, from the position that there is no origin to the notion that “in the beginning there was nothingness and disorder.”55 It turns out, however, that Althusser is less interested in the origin than in the end proper to it. If all that exists has emerged from primal nothingness, so to nothingness it will certainly return. The aleatory origins of capitalism (it might not have come

52. Althusser and Balibar, Reading Capital, 63.
53. Ibid., 163.
55. Ibid.
into existence) thus serve to guarantee its demise. At a time when socialism and communism suffered the greatest defeats since the time of their emergence, when the mass movements that nourished them were vanquished and dispersed, Althusser, at the end of his life, joined Walter Benjamin in a messianic hope for the transformation to come, impatient for an end that would not arrive on time.

**MAJOR WORKS**


Michel Foucault’s work has been of importance to scholars working in a wide range of disciplines. In fields ranging from politics to epistemology, from aesthetics to queer studies, from the history of medicine to the history of ethics, his writings, lectures, and interviews have given rise to new and fruitful directions of research. Despite his own philosophical training, however, for most of his career Foucault disputed the categorization of his work as philosophy. Most of his published books have the word “history” in the title and he preferred to see his work as historico-philosophy, which is to say, philosophy carried out through a historical investigation. This historical focus ties Foucault’s work closely to that of both Nietzsche and the French school of historical epistemology and philosophy of science, but also opens up new ways of asking questions about subjectivity and ethics. The wide range of Foucault’s interests, combined with the fluid multidisciplinarity of his approach, makes it difficult to tell a single story about his place in the history of European philosophy. He himself regularly gave changing assessments of the overall sense of his work, but also regularly rejected attempts to pin his work down to a single tendency.

1. Michel Foucault (October 15, 1926–June 25, 1984; born in Poitiers, France; died in Paris) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1946–49), and received a doctorat d’état from the Sorbonne (1961). His influences included Althusser, Bachelard, Canguilhem, Hadot, Heidegger, Kant, and Nietzsche, and he held appointments at the École Normale Supérieure (1951–53), the University of Upsalla (1955–58), University of Clermont-Ferrand (1960–66), University of Paris VIII–Vincennes (1968–70), the Collège de France (1970–84), and the University of California-Berkeley (1975–84).

2. For a discussion of this school, see the essay by Pierre Cassou-Noguès in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.
or school. He also developed a critique of the role of what he calls the “author-function” in modern Western discourse, and dreamed of a time when works of philosophy, as well as fiction, would be published anonymously.\(^3\) This dream, of course, has not come to pass, and Foucault the author is now firmly (at least for the moment) installed in the pantheon of postwar European philosophy. Not only is there a growing output of specialist monographs, a dedicated journal, and an official archive managed by an official society, but Foucault’s own oeuvre continues to grow with the ongoing publication of more than ten years of lecture courses from the Collège de France.

I. WHICH FOUCALUT?

There are now so many “Foucaults” (Foucault the post-Kantian philosopher, Foucault the theorist of power, Foucault the queer theorist, Foucault the historian of sexuality and ethics, etc.) that it is difficult to integrate these personae into a unified image. This is a situation that Foucault himself would probably have welcomed. After all, one of his earlier books begins with a plea that he not be subjected to the morality of a bureaucracy that would insist that our papers be in order. “Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same,” he warns his readers.\(^4\) And yet, he himself regularly provided overviews of his work in which he offered new ways of integrating its many strands – accompanied by warnings about how not to interpret them. Hence, in the late 1960s he went to great lengths to deflect suggestions that his work borrowed its methods from structuralism, while in the mid-1970s he began to reinterpret his entire work in terms of his focus on power, and in the early 1980s he again reinterpreted his work, but this time in terms of his new focus on subjectivity and ethics. In the meantime, on different occasions, he characterized his work as being simply an attempt to be Nietzschean (and therefore anti-Nietzschean) and also as being a continuation, albeit in a radically changed form, of Kantian critique. In one interview, he even remarked that, for him, the “essential philosopher” was Heidegger.\(^5\) What are we to do in the face of this plethora of conflicting ways of

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understanding Foucault’s work? How are we to make even preliminary sense of the multiple twists and turns taken by his thought?

One option, which is suggested by Foucault himself and which we will broadly adopt here, is to see his work as involving three phases, each of which can be more or less neatly assigned to a decade: the 1960s, the period of interest in forms and practices of knowledge;6 the 1970s, the period of interest in practices of power; the 1980s, the period of interest in forms of subjectivity and ethics. Remembering that each new stage carries forward the concerns of the previous stage, we then get a picture of Foucault as motivated by an interest in three aspects of human reality: knowledge, power, and the self; or, put differently, the human sciences, politics, and ethics. Even as we adopt this model, however, we should bear in mind that any such characterization can only be provisional. This is something Foucault recognized, for example in one of his last books, published several months before his death. Here, in the opening pages of The History of Sexuality, Volume Two, he admits that despite his conviction that his work has moved on through several stages, he also looks back and imagines that he has actually been traveling in a spiral. He now finds himself, he says, “at the vertical” to himself, rather than farther away from himself; in other words, he finds that he is looking down on the earlier stages of his thought, having simply moved in a circle.7 This is a significant admission, given the importance that Foucault attached to the task of distancing ourselves from ourselves and succeeding in thinking “otherwise.”8 It seems to suggest that the apparently abrupt shifts in his work were really returns to aspects of his earlier concerns that had not yet been sufficiently explored. Beginning, then, with the idea that Foucault’s work can be divided into three phases, which would focus in turn on knowledge, power, and the self, let us take one of his earliest books and see to what extent it already addresses, or at least calls for, these later concerns.

II. MADNESS AND SOCIETY

In the French academic system prior to 1968, a doctoral candidate was expected to complete two dissertations. Foucault’s second or “complementary” thesis was a translation into French of Kant’s Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, accompanied by an extensive interpretative essay that was to be the introduction.

6. The 1960s was also a period of intense interest in literature. See, for example, Michel Foucault, Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel, Charles Ruas (trans.) (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986).
8. Ibid., 9.
to the published edition of the translation. His major thesis, which was mostly written while he was director of the Maison de France in Uppsala, Sweden, comprised a history of madness in the period the French call the “classical” age. This was submitted at the Sorbonne in 1961, where Foucault’s examiners included Georges Canguilhem, a leading philosopher and historian of science, and Jean Hyppolite, then Director of the École Normale Supérieure. In the same year, the text was published as Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique (Madness and unreason: History of madness in the classical age).

In considering this book, it is important to bear in mind that Foucault’s early academic interests were as much in the fields of psychiatry and psychology as in philosophy. One of his undergraduate degrees, for example, was in psychology; his first academic position was as a tutor in psychology at the École Normale in Paris (1951); and his first full-time academic job was as Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Clermont-Ferrand (1960). In addition, not only did he undergo a short treatment for alcoholism in 1950, but he also underwent psychotherapy after two attempted suicides, and finally worked as a researcher in an experimental psychology laboratory at Saint Anne psychiatric hospital in Paris. Foucault’s interest in the relation between mental health and medicine, therefore, was both theoretical and practical and was informed by his experience as both patient and medical researcher.

This may help to explain why, of all Foucault’s works, this one has perhaps received the most tumultuous reception. It was initially adopted by the antipsychiatry movement of the 1960s (under the influence of David Cooper and R. D. Laing), even though Foucault himself

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9. Unpublished for many years, this essay finally appeared as Emmanuel Kant, Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique et introduction à l’Anthropologie, Michel Foucault (trans. and intro.) (Paris: Vrin, 2008), and was published in English as Michel Foucault, Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (trans.) (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008).

10. This is the period from, roughly, the early 1600s to the late 1700s; in other words, from the end of the Renaissance to the height of the Enlightenment.

11. This text has had a complicated history. Having been published in 1961, it was then republished in abridged form in 1964, dropping Folie et déraison from the title. It was this abridged version that was the basis for most translations of the book (including the first English translation, Madness and Civilization, in 1965). However, the complete book, with some small changes, was republished in French in 1972 as Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique. This edition was finally published in an English translation in 2006 as History of Madness.


13. Foucault studied with Ludwig Binswanger in Switzerland in 1953, and one of his first publications was a translation and introduction to Binswanger’s Traum und Existenz as Le Rêve et l’existence, published in English as Dream and Existence. His first book was Maladie mentale et personnalité, published in English as Mental Illness and Psychology.
did not see the work as contributing to that movement. Even more than his other books, it was subjected to virulent criticism by professional historians who disputed its findings at the levels of both methodology and historical evidence. And it was also the subject of an extended philosophical debate with the young Jacques Derrida, relating to the book’s account of Descartes’s discussion of the possibility of madness in his *Meditations*.

But what of the content of the book itself? In an interview published in the same year as the book, Foucault makes a comment that we can take as a summary of the work’s central contention: “Madness only exists in a society, it does not exist outside the forms of sensibility which isolate it and the forms of repulsion which exclude or capture it.” Several key ideas – ideas that were to inform his entire intellectual trajectory – are introduced here. First is the idea that an apparently natural and universal phenomenon such as madness is in fact a social construct, one which by implication has a specific history. Second is the idea that the procedures by which something like madness is generated involve both isolating (in order to investigate) and excluding (in order to differentiate). Third is the idea that any given society comprises forms of “sensibility” that largely determine the individual’s experience of phenomena such as “madness,” “sexuality,” and so on. In *History of Madness*, Foucault traces the emergence of this concept (and practice) of madness in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Following a technique that he was to use in most of his works of history, Foucault contrasts the period under investigation with both the preceding and the succeeding periods – thus focusing in effect on two turning points, in this case the emergence of the classical experience of madness from the Renaissance era, and its subsequent dissolution at the beginning of the nineteenth century. One of the effects of this contrastive technique is that it tends to emphasize breaks and ruptures rather than continuities in historical developments. As a result, particularly in the 1960s, Foucault became known as a historian of discontinuities who was, consequently, faced with questions about how these

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14. This continues to this day: when the complete English translation was published in 2006, a virulent attack on Foucault’s scholarship was published in *The Times Literary Supplement*.
16. This interview, published in *Le Monde* in 1961, is untranslated; see *Dits et écrits*, vol. 1, 169.
17. Foucault was, no doubt, influenced here by his teacher Althusser, who had developed the idea, originally introduced by Bachelard in the 1930s, of the importance of épistemological breaks in the history of scientific thought and method. Bachelard’s formulation of this idea was also a strong influence on the work of Thomas Kuhn.
radical shifts come about.¹⁸ For Foucault, however, it was not so much the rupture that was important (and he never pretended to be able to explain these large-scale shifts, except in terms of contingencies), but the simple fact that at any given time a certain structure is in place that comprises more or less unique forms of both exclusion and division. These forms, which operate at multiple levels of discourse and practice, constitute the limits of what can be known or thought at any given time. Later, when he comes to systematize his 1960s methodological approach under the term “archaeology,” Foucault will describe these forms as constituting a “historical a priori.”¹⁹

Hence, for example, in History of Madness, Foucault is sketching the elements that constituted what he calls the “experience” of madness in the seventeenth century. The most obvious of these elements were the great asylums that began to be built in Europe from the 1650s, but they also included a whole range of ways of thinking about, controlling, and understanding madness that drew on received ideas, scientific concepts, and judicial and police measures. One of the central aims of Foucault’s book is to trace the emergence and shifts in the forms of knowledge and, in particular, to trace their relation to concrete measures such as the incarceration of the “mad” alongside the homeless and the deviant. However, the point is not just that practices and forms of knowledge change, but that a new object – “madness” – is itself constituted as a concomitant to the knowledge and the practice. This is the basis for Foucault’s claim that madness cannot exist outside a society. While it is true that the first version of this book also suggested the existence of another, prediscursive form and experience of madness, one that lay below the scientific construction, in his subsequent histories Foucault gradually came to concentrate exclusively on the contingent and changing objects themselves.²⁰

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¹⁸. Foucault himself, however, always disputed this characterization of his work. While at one stage he recognizes that his work may have “exaggerated, for pedagogical purposes,” the strength of historical discontinuities, he insists that his aim was to pose the problem of discontinuity in order to “resolve” or “dissolve” it. See Michel Foucault, “On Power,” Alan Sheridan (trans.), in Politics, Philosophy, Culture, Kritzman (ed.), 100.

¹⁹. Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 142–8. The concept of the “historical a priori” is closely related to the concept of the epistēmē that Foucault introduced in The Order of Things. In both cases, Foucault is indicating a set of rules and formations that determine which statements will be accepted as falling within a particular field of scientifi city: in other words, as being potentially true or false.

²⁰. The idea of a prediscursive madness is clearly suggested in the original preface to History of Madness, but this was toned down in the second French edition. However, both versions are included in the latest English translation.
Foucault’s *History of Madness* is a book that is motivated by a concern with the present, but that takes the form of an excavation of an earlier stage in the formation of a discourse, a practice, and an object that we now take to be universal and natural. It represents Foucault's first attempt to analyze historically a form of rationality that grounds a particular human science, while also investigating the complex set of relations between that form of rationality and the social and political practices around which it develops. Finally, it raises the question, in the present, of our constitution of ourselves as subjects who are defined as rational beings, in fundamental opposition to the unreason of madness. Even though, at least since the Romantic period, it is possible to attach a certain value to the cultural productions of those who are ostensibly mad (for example, Nietzsche or Van Gogh), Foucault insists that the space in which unreason is allowed to persist in contemporary society is as carefully circumscribed as it was in the asylums of the seventeenth century. Even at this early stage, therefore, in his first major book, we can begin to identify the three themes that, as we will see, come to structure Foucault's work: knowledge, power, and the self. And these themes are explored historically on the basis of a concern with the present that is characterized by a dual recognition: first, that the present forms of knowledge, power, and subjectivity exact a price – that they have, in some sense, certain costs associated with them; and, second, that these present forms are inherently fragile – that they are subject to transformation and possible erasure. So far as *History of Madness* is concerned, therefore, the important point for Foucault is the implication that our current forms of relating to madness (for example, through the science and pharmacology of psychiatry) are just as contingent, as impure, and as likely to disappear at some future moment, as the forms that characterized the seventeenth century.

This theme, of the contingency and fragility of current forms of knowledge and practice, is one that constantly reappears in Foucault's histories. Shortly after publishing *History of Madness*, for example, he declared, “One day, perhaps, we will no longer know what madness was.”21 In an even more famous prediction, he closed *The Order of Things* (1966) with the suggestion that “man” would soon be erased from history like a face drawn on the sand at the edge of the sea;22 while his *History of Sexuality, Volume One* (1976) ends with the prediction that one day we will no longer understand the grip in which we were held for so

21. The essay “Madness, the Absence of an Oeuvre” (1964) is reprinted as Appendix I in *History of Madness*; see esp. 541.

long by “the ruses of sexuality.”23 Part of the attraction of Foucault’s works is the way they combine this sense of future possibilities, often expressed in prose that is more captivating than humanities scholarship usually produces, with a painstaking attention to historical detail and documentary evidence. This can create an effect, as one commentator put it, of “a ballet dancer disguised as a librarian.”24 To follow Foucault’s thought, to allow it to have its maximum possible effect, we need to keep in mind all of these threads: first, a constant concern with the present that holds out the hope for a transformed future, but which requires a historical understanding of how we became what we are today; second, a slowly unfolding schema comprising three interrelated points of focus—forms of knowledge, systems of constraint, and modes of relation to the self; third, a series of investigations into diverse fields, each of which struggles to develop the methodological tools, such as archaeology and genealogy, that are proper to its own material. However, as has already been suggested, perhaps the most convenient way to get an overview of this complex web is through the prism of the division of Foucault’s oeuvre into three overlapping stages.

Foucault’s work in the 1960s can, as a whole, be characterized as investigating the historically contingent emergence of those sciences that take human beings and their behavior as their object. After History of Madness, he published The Birth of the Clinic (1963) which proclaims itself as an “archaeology of medical perception.”25 This book, which is one of Foucault’s least-read mature works, offers a history of the modern concept of illness as it emerges around the turn of the nineteenth century, that is, at the end of the classical age. In 1966, there followed the book that, at least in France, made Foucault an intellectual star. This book, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, is a monumental history of the shift that saw the sciences of general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth emerge in the classical age and then give way to the modern sciences of linguistics, biology, and economics. The book was read at the time in the context of structuralist modes of analysis (including the work of Lévi-Strauss and Lacan), which were seen as disregarding the importance of individuals in favor of large-scale social and historical structures. Foucault’s final prediction of the imminent demise of “man” put him firmly in this so-called antihumanist group, but he always strove to distance his work from the scientific aspirations of structuralism. In fact, his next book, The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), is an attempt, after the fact, to formalize the methodology he

had employed in the “archaeologies” of the 1960s, and one of its main targets is the assumption made by many readers that his method can be assimilated to structuralism. These debates have by now lost much of their urgency, and it can be admitted that Foucault’s work in the 1960s, like that of most of his contemporaries, had a complex relation to the work of thinkers such as Althusser, Barthes, Lacan, and Lévi-Strauss.26

IV. THE INTRUSION OF POLITICS

The first major shift in Foucault’s thought began to take shape in the final years of the 1960s. Although Foucault himself did not take part in the events of May 1968 (he was in Tunisia, teaching, for most of this period), he was becoming more involved in a range of political activities. While teaching at the University of Tunis, for example, he had given practical support to a group of students who were being tried for subversion. Toward the end of May, he returned to Paris, where he took part in various meetings and demonstrations up until the end of June. As part of a response to the student protests, the government decided to set up a new “experimental” university outside the city, at Vincennes. Foucault, at the invitation of Canguilhem, was asked to form the new university’s department of philosophy,27 and he also played a key role in the establishment of a department of psychoanalysis, under the direction of Serge Leclaire, that was independent from the department of psychology and provided academic support for Lacanian analysts. His most significant involvement in the politics of this time, however, was his role in the “Groupe d’information sur les prisons” (Group for Information on the Prisons; GIP). This organization was formally launched by Foucault in February 1971 and included as members or supporters Gilles Deleuze, Claude Mauriac, Hélène Cixous, and even Jean-Paul Sartre. Its aim was to respond to the growing unrest in France’s prisons by collecting and publishing information from people who tended to be silenced by the government bureaucracy: not only the prisoners themselves, but also their families, and groups of professionals working within the prison system. With regard to this work, Foucault always insisted that his task as an intellectual was to provide a channel

26. Althusser was one of Foucault’s intellectual mentors at the École Normale Supérieure; Barthes was a close friend; and he attended Lacan’s early seminars. [*] Structuralism and the work of Lévi-Strauss and Lacan are discussed in several essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.

27. Among those who accepted Foucault’s invitation to join the philosophy department were Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, Étienne Balibar, François Châtelet, Jacques Rancière, René Schérer, and Michel Serres.
for silenced voices rather than to express his own expert opinion.\(^{28}\) The GIP would expose the “intolerable” and help to have the prisoners’ demands heard, but would not propose its own reform agenda.\(^{29}\) The work of the GIP made numerous connections with other political and intellectual movements of the early 1970s: for example, a growing concern over the disciplinary uses of psychiatry, struggles around the right to abortion, and the emerging gay liberation movement. This work led Foucault to participate in countless political demonstrations, to organize protests and sit-ins, and to face several prosecutions.\(^{30}\)

We can see this engagement with political activism as both complementing and motivating Foucault’s intellectual work at this time. During this period – the early 1970s – he was conducting the research that would turn his work toward more explicitly political themes, and one of the first indications of this shift came in his inaugural lecture as a professor at France’s most prestigious academic institution, the Collège de France. Foucault had been elected as “Professor of the History of Systems of Thought” (a title that he himself had coined) in 1969 and he gave his inaugural lecture in December 1970. In much the same way that we can read *History of Madness* as a key to the themes that unfold throughout Foucault’s work, this inaugural lecture can be read as a key to the particular themes of his work in the 1970s. The lecture, published in French as *L’Ordre du discours* (“The Order of Discourse”), has two explicit aims: to outline a series of future research projects that investigate and analyze the modes of ordering (both internal and external) that shape discourse; and to introduce the methodological principles that will order Foucault’s own discourse in the following years.\(^{31}\) One of the overriding concerns of the lecture is to turn our attention to discourse as encompassing a material, unpredictable, violent reality. For Foucault now, since multiple systems of constraint operate in the field of discourse, the issue of power becomes unavoidable.

From the very beginning, however, Foucault’s understanding of power was significantly different from the accounts that had informed traditional political philosophy. Influenced, no doubt, by Nietzsche’s idea that power is both a constraining and a generative force, Foucault rejected the idea that power

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\(^{29}\) See, for example, the interview “Je perçois l’intolerable,” and the Preface to *Enquête des vingt prisons*. Neither has been translated, but both are included in Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. 2.

\(^{30}\) See note 12, above.

can be identified exclusively with forms of repression. In his inaugural lecture, he distinguishes between two aspects of his future research projects: on the one hand, what he calls the “critical” (or, archaeological) part that will analyze the principles that order and govern discourses from within; and, on the other, the “genealogical” part that will analyze the way in which discourses produce domains of objects. This production constitutes what Foucault calls the “power of affirmation” of discourse: its capacity to generate objects about which one can then produce true or false propositions. This is the basis of Foucault’s later working out in detail of a theory of power that gave precedence to affirmation and production over negation and repression. And, even at this early stage, Foucault predicts that when we come to study the modern forms of sexuality we will find that prohibitions did not play quite the role that we used to imagine.

V. MODERN POWER

In the mid-1970s, Foucault published the two books that were the product of this new turn in his work: Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975) and The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction (1976). Of all Foucault’s books, these were arguably the two that had the most impact both in intellectual circles and in political movements. Discipline and Punish, contrary to its own subtitle, is much more than a history of the prison. It offers a history of the emergence, growth, and spread of a range of disciplinary techniques that can be taken to define the operations of power in modern societies. Foucault focuses on techniques of power (such as the timetable, surveillance, and military drilling) which operate at the micro level and, on his account, make possible the large-scale phenomena that we see on the macro level. This microphysics of power is resolutely focused on the productive and generative effects of these techniques. In the case of military discipline, for example, Foucault demonstrates how a whole range of techniques produced a human body (the body of the soldier) that possessed capacities that had not been seen before. After the eighteenth century, in fact, the soldier is no longer a natural type, but a form that is produced through training and exercise. We could equally cite examples of classroom discipline that produced new capacities in pupils, such as the crucial ability to sit at a desk for long hours.

As with his earlier work, this book involves an investigation of the emergence and transformation of certain key discourses: in this case, discourses around education, military training, and criminology. However, to this archaeology of

32. Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” 73.
33. Ibid., 70.
knowledge, Foucault has now added a genealogy of power relations. And, in fact, he insists that no analysis of a discourse can be complete without considering its relation to forms of power: “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”34 It is these newly defined power–knowledge relations, rather than the individual knowing subject, that determine both the forms and the domains of knowledge. The really crucial step that Foucault takes in this book, however, is to suggest that not only are forms of knowledge determined by power–knowledge relations (“Truth is a thing of this world”35), but that the subject itself is also a product of such relations. In the context of the prison, Foucault argues that the history of modern techniques of surveillance, punishment, and discipline are part of the genealogy of the “modern ‘soul’” (DP 29). This soul, which we can take to be one form of modern subjectivity, is merely “the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body” (DP 29). But, at this stage of Foucault’s work, it is by no means merely a correlative phenomenon. The “soul” is in fact the “prison” of the body: not only an effect of power and domination, but also its instrument.

Throughout Discipline and Punish, from its detailed exposition of the disciplinary regimes of schools and barracks, to its central analysis of Bentham’s blueprint for a total disciplinary institution (the Panopticon), the reader has a sense that Foucault is giving us not just a history of our distant past, but something that he himself calls a “history of the present” (DP 31). In other words, we are aware that what is being put under the microscope here is our own world: a world in which power operates through more and more subtle forms of surveillance, regulation, and control. As Foucault asks rhetorically, “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (DP 228). Once we take the book to be a critique of contemporary society, however, an important question arises: on what basis can Foucault criticize these modern forms of power, and what basis does he have for proposing alternative forms? These are questions that have been most forcefully pushed by political philosophers, including, among others, Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, and Charles Taylor.36 The central problem for these critics is that Foucault

has no account of freedom that he can juxtapose to his account of power; and, similarly, he has no account of the essential human individual that he can juxtapose to his account of an individual that is produced by power. It is true that, in the mid-1970s, Foucault is adamant that the modern subject is a product of modern technologies of power, and a little later he will also try to uncover the way that freedom is constituted to work as an element of modern governmentality. Since the subject and freedom are both produced by and within a particular social context, therefore, it may be difficult to see how they could act as a critical fulcrum for an oppositional politics. However, the fact that Foucault rejects the kind of autonomous subject that these critics assume does not in itself mean that he cannot account for resistance.37

VI. SEX, SEXUALITY, AND THE BODY

One possible basis for critique that Foucault seems to favor at this stage is the body. In *Discipline and Punish*, for instance in the claim that the soul is the prison of the body, there is a suggestion that the body and its forces are, in a sense, the raw materials from which power produces forms of subjectivity. And it could therefore, one might imagine, function as both a source and a justification for opposition to certain effects of power. This idea is even more strongly present in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*, which we will now look at in some detail. This is the first volume (which, in French, is titled *La Volonté de savoir* [The will to knowledge]) of a projected four-volume study of the emergence and transformation of the scientific, moral, and philosophical discourses that constitute sexuality – from classical Greece to the present.38 In this introductory volume, Foucault sets out to undermine the accepted idea – which he calls “the repressive hypothesis” – that, after a long period of repression, there is now (in the 1970s) occurring a liberation of sexuality from the hostile forces of social, medical, and political power. In effect, his book is an argument against the idea, common at the time, that sex and power are mutually opposed and that sexual liberation is an inherently revolutionary act. In making this argument,


38. The fourth volume (“The Confession of the Flesh”), which would have focused on medieval Christianity, was almost complete when Foucault died but has not been published. When combined with volumes 1–3, it would have completed a full overview of sexuality from classical Greece to the modern West, a project quite different from the initially projected six-volume *Histoire de la sexualité*, of which *La Volonté de savoir* was published in 1976 as the initial volume.
however, Foucault not only offers a new account of the relations between sexuality, sex, and the body, but also further develops the theory of power that had been the basis for *Discipline and Punish*.

What is the difference between “sex” and “sexuality”? For Foucault, if we take “sexuality” to refer to the complex web of discourses (medical, moral, political) that govern both our practices and our self-understandings in relation to sex acts, then it is relatively easy to set up an opposition between “sexuality,” on the one hand, and “sex,” on the other. And in that case, it would be easy to conclude that in order to free ourselves from Victorian prudery and repression (from a repressed sexuality) we would need to liberate “sex” from these constraints. The account that Foucault offers us, however, is one that investigates and problematizes not only our modern forms of sexuality, but also the idea of sex that is often taken to underlie it. Sex, he concludes, is not the presocial, ahistorical, biological ground of our sexuality; it is, rather, an invention of the discourses of sexuality that functions in a way that further tightens the grip of power. In other words, the idea of sex, he argues, is simply an “ideal point” made necessary by the deployment of sexuality (HSI 155). If we wish to break away from the modern constraints of sexuality then, it is not sex that offers us a way out. Instead, Foucault once again appeals to the body – this time, to “bodies and pleasures” – as a source and foundation for resistance. It is easy to see how this analysis of the politics of the body was able to resonate with movements such as feminism, gay rights, and (later) AIDS activists. And, in fact, we could say that this book – the shortest of all Foucault’s histories – had a greater impact than any of his other works. But the book was not important just for its contribution in the area of sexuality and the politics of the body; it also developed and advanced Foucault’s analysis of power and the forms of government in modern society.

### VII. FROM POWER TO BIOPower

If it is true that *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* can be read as something of a manifesto for a new sexual politics, it is also true that as a work of political theory it has a similar programmatic tone. In particular, in a central section devoted to “Method,” Foucault consolidates and advances the new approach to power that he had introduced in *Discipline and Punish*. He is concerned to reject one of the standard approaches to power, according to which power is embodied

in large-scale groups, institutions or centers (such as finance, industry, etc.). On this account, power is a substance that can be captured, exercised, abused, and conceded; and it is something that always works by subtraction or reduction – it forbids, limits, represses, and compels. For Foucault, however, power is something that exists only in relations between forces, and these relations are in a state of constant mobility and modification; any apparently settled structures that emerge are, he argues, always local and unstable; and, as we have already seen, it is something that is primarily positive (not in the sense of being morally positive, but being productive). Since power is present in all social relations, we can say that “power is everywhere”; power is neither a structure nor a strength we possess; it is simply “the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (HSI 93).

Foucault now proposes five principles that will govern his study of power. First, power is not a substance; it exists only as it is exercised in a constant, mobile play between unequal forces. Second, relations of power do not come after, or supervene on, other relations; they are immanent to those relations and they have a directly productive role. Third, “power comes from below.” This does not mean that power lies with the oppressed, but that it is the micro-relations that make possible the effects we see at a macro level. In other words, to understand the major forms of domination, we must begin with a microphysics of power. Fourth, “power relations are both intentional and non-subjective” (HSI 94). That is, power is exercised in accordance with a series of aims and objectives, but there is no individual or group who sets these aims or orchestrates these strategies. This implies that there is no “headquarters” of power in any society, and similarly that there is “no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt” (HSI 95–6). Finally, where there is power, there is resistance, and this resistance is always in a position of interiority in relation to power. In other words, resistance is a built-in part of power relations. In fact, Foucault would come to use this as a way of distinguishing power relations from relations of domination: relations of domination are ones in which, for all intents and purposes, the space of resistance (or, freedom) has been eliminated.40

This first volume of *The History of Sexuality* is also significant for introducing a concept that has had growing importance in the reception of Foucault’s work in the fields of political theory and political science: the concept of biopower. In the final section of the book, Foucault makes a connection between the deployment of sexuality and a shift in the operation of power within Western societies from a negative, deductive “sovereign power” to a life-administering “bio-power”

As the administering of life came to have central importance for governments, beginning in the early nineteenth century, so sexuality took on a key importance as it was situated at the intersection of the two axes of this new biopower: on the one hand, anatomo-politics, or the disciplining of the individual body; and on the other, biopolitics, or the regulation of the population. Biopower is a concept that encapsulates the operations by which institutions and governments control, regulate, and direct large-scale populations conceived in terms of life. The target of government is the life of the population and the operations of power therefore require mechanisms that are capable of fostering life – for instance in the fields of health and reproduction. While discipline had targeted individual bodies, and attempted to normalize them, biopower targets the “biological processes of man-as-species” in order to ensure that they are “regularized.” It is not, however, the case that one type of power replaces the other; rather, the two forms of power – discipline and biopower – operate in tandem in modern society, that is, in societies that “function in the biopower mode.”

Part of the importance of this concept of biopower is its link to Foucault’s slightly later concept of “governmentality.” During the course of his lectures at the Collège de France in the late 1970s, Foucault explored various aspects of this modern biopower, but he also shifted towards discussing the larger phenomenon of modern, liberal government. For example, Foucault begins the 1977–78 course saying that his theme will be the phenomenon of “biopower,” but by the fourth lecture he suggests that in hindsight he would not have given this course the title “Security, Territory, Population,” because what he really wanted to undertake was a history of “governmentality.” What Foucault means by governmentality is both the set of institutions, procedures, and tactics that make possible the operation of biopower, and the tendency that has led to the preeminence of this form of power within Western societies since the eighteenth century. The suggestion, in other words, is that a particular form of power, which takes “life” as its object, has come to dominate in Western societies and that this process may be termed the “governmentalization” of the state. While this approach guided Foucault’s work for a number of years (especially in his courses at the

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Collège de France), it was not to find its way into any significant book-length publications during his life. It has, however, inspired and guided a number of important studies by political theorists and historians of the social sciences.\footnote{See, for example, Graham Burchell et al. (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).}

**VIII. ETHICS AS SELF-CONDUCT**

For Foucault himself, however, there is one element in his approach to governmentality that gives a link to the next and final phase of his work, in which he turns toward ethics. The idea of government, which Foucault sometimes formulated as “the conduct of conduct,” is not only a matter of subjects being governed by exterior forces; it is also a matter of self-government, or “the government of self and others.”\footnote{See, for example, Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 341; and the title of Foucault’s 1982–83 course at the Collège de France, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the College de France, 1982–1983*, Graham Burchell (trans.) (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).} In order to understand any phenomenon, then, we need to consider the role that is played by techniques of self-government. Hence, in addition to the axes of knowledge and power, in his work in the 1980s Foucault adds a third axis: the axis of the self, subjectivity, or ethics. In this turn, Foucault went on to introduce several themes (such as work on the self and aesthetics) that have enriched traditional approaches to ethics. These themes are explored most thoroughly in the context of the history of sexuality project. In 1984, shortly before his death, the second and third volumes of this history were finally published: *Volume Two: The Use of Pleasure* and *Volume Three: The Care of the Self*. During the eight-year gap between the first and second volumes, this project had undergone a major transformation; first, in terms of this addition of a third axis of analysis, but even more importantly as a result of its re-orientation toward ethics per se. The second and third volumes make explicit something that was perhaps implied in the first volume: that the project of a history of sexuality could be accurately described as one element of a “genealogy of ethics.”\footnote{See Michel Foucault, “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress,” in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984. Volume 1: Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, Paul Rabinow (ed.) (New York: New Press, 1997).}

The historical period covered by these two volumes stretches from classical antiquity (including the work of Plato) up to the early centuries of the current era (including the work of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius). This history was to be completed, as we have already noted, with a volume that would cover the Christian era up to the early modern period. In these two volumes, Foucault is
interested in showing how a certain relation to the self that characterizes ethics emerges within a framework of practices and techniques that initially focus on the bodily pleasures – including those that we would call sexual. Indeed, this idea of the cultivation of a certain kind of relation to the self, a relation in which we take aspects of our own behavior as material to be molded, is seen by Foucault as being central to the very possibility of ethics. In an important methodological distinction, he differentiates between morality and ethics by defining ethics as the realm of actions carried out on the self – or the realm of self-government – and morality as the realm of prescriptions and prohibitions that may or may not be obeyed in our everyday behavior. From the point of view of a historian – or a genealogist – it is the ethical dimension that is of interest, because it is here that we see historical transformation occur. The suggestion is that the prohibitions – such as against murder, theft, and so on – change little, but the reasons why we subject ourselves to those prohibitions, and the way we do so, has undergone a rich and important history.

This field, the field of ethics, is analyzed by Foucault in terms of four aspects: the ethical substance, the mode of subjection, the practices of the self, and the mode of being toward which the ethics aims.49 The first aspect, ethical substance, is the part of oneself or one’s behavior that is taken as the material of moral conduct; in the case of sexual ethics in classical Greece, this was the *aphrodisia*, or the pleasures (hence the title of volume two). The second aspect, mode of subjection, is the way one conceives the authority of the code; for example, does it rest on a divine command, or, as in classical Greece, does it arise from a free, personal choice to give one’s existence a certain nobility and beauty? The third aspect, practices of the self, comprises the techniques used in bringing oneself to follow the code: techniques such as memorization of precepts, examination of conscience, cultivation of abstinence, and so on. The fourth aspect, the *telos* toward which one aims, could be conceived as, for example, a state of tranquility, purity, or salvation; or, as in classical Greece, it could be seen as a mode of self-mastery that entitled one to mastery over others. In an allusion to Aristotle’s fourfold account of causation, Deleuze points out that Foucault’s four aspects of ethics can be seen as the four causes (material, formal, efficient, and final) of subjectivity as a mode of relation to the self.50

The importance of this approach to ethics, for Foucault, is not just that it gives him a framework for a historical analysis, but that it allows him to conceive of ethics (today) in a way that connects it up with questions about government (in

the broadest possible sense) and with aesthetics (also in the broadest possible sense). This introduction of the idea of ethics as a transformation of the self that takes place within a complex web of governmental practices is one that challenges much Western thinking about ethics. If government is the art of the conduct of conduct, then ethics, conceived as the ways in which individuals come to conduct themselves, or to “bring themselves” (se conduire) to obey moral precepts, is essentially an issue of self-government. And, reciprocally, government in the more common sense is as much an art of conducting the self-conducting of subjects as it is a science of the management of societies. This broadened concept of government, which would reinsert ethics into the heart of political analysis, has had a growing impact, as noted above, in the field of political theory. This impact has been particularly strong in the wake of the publication of Foucault’s courses at the Collège de France: in this case, in particular, the course from 1978, “Security, Territory, and Population.”

On the other hand, Foucault’s conception of ethics also comprises the possibility of reconnecting ethics and aesthetics in a way that was marginalized through much of modern philosophy. Particularly in modern Western philosophy, ethics has not been thought of as involving a work of self-transformation, especially not a work that would appeal to aesthetic principles. However, if ethics was, at one time, thought of as a freely chosen practice that would give one’s life a certain form and beauty, then Foucault suggests that perhaps this idea can help us today to emerge from the impasses into which we have been led by the modern search for objective grounds for morality and duty.51 If morality today can no longer be conceived as obedience to a code of rules, then, Foucault suggests, “to this absence of morality corresponds, must correspond, the search for an aesthetics of existence.”52 This is not to say that we must return to a Greek practice of ethics, but that we should consider the possibility of alternative ways of thinking about, and doing the work of ethics. Some examples of this work, which Foucault discusses in a series of late interviews, are the practices of community, friendship, sexual relationship, and politics that emerged in gay groups in the 1970s and 1980s.53 There is a growing number of theorists today, as we have seen, who expand these insights to a consideration of “queer” ethics, where queer is understood to comprise a whole range of nonmainstream modes of life (gay, lesbian, transgender, etc.). For Foucault, the central idea here is, first, to recognize that both ethics and government call

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51. See, for example, my *Foucault and the Art of Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2002).
53. See, for example, Michel Foucault, “Friendship as a Way of Life” and “The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will,” both in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984. Volume 1*, Rabinow (ed.).
forth and direct certain practices of the self and, second, to mobilize the transformative potential that such practices themselves contain. Hence, rather than presenting a picture in which power ruthlessly produces “docile bodies,” we now have an image of subjects whose forms of relation to the self offer the potential for self-transformation and, consequently, the transformation of social and political realities. It is the complex relations between these modes of government (of self and others) that make up what Foucault begins to call “subjectivation.”

IX. SUBJECTS AND TRUTH

It is now possible, having traced Foucault’s trajectory through three decades, to see how, at each turn of his thought, he endeavored to incorporate his earlier phases. From the perspective of this final turn, before his death in 1984, Foucault now characterizes his work as having been an investigation of the ways in which subjects are produced – through procedures of objectivation and subjectivation – within Western societies. The first of these sets of procedures, which he had investigated in the 1960s, comprises modes of inquiry that objectivize, for example, the working subject (in economics) or the speaking subject (in linguistics). This investigation had given rise, for example, to The Order of Things. The second of these sets of procedures comprises the ways in which the subject is objectivized through “dividing practices”; that is, through divisions of sick from healthy, mad from sane, and law-abiding from delinquent. The investigation of these procedures had given rise, most notably, to Discipline and Punish. And third, there is a set of procedures through which human beings turn themselves into subjects through, in a sense, forms of self-objectivation. Foucault investigated these procedures in particular in the domain of sexuality, thus leading to the second and third volumes of The History of Sexuality.

The guiding thread that links together these diverse historical studies, a thread that perhaps only becomes clear at the end, is the question of the relation between the subject and truth. This is a question that, for Foucault, is given its significant modern form in the critical philosophy of Kant. One of Foucault’s earliest writings, as we have seen, was an essay on Kant’s Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View; and one of his last publications was a 1984 lecture on Kant’s essay “A Response to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” In another

54. This was a chapter title in Discipline and Punish and was often thought to encapsulate the picture of subjectivity that emerged in that book.
1984 text, Foucault suggests that if his work fits anywhere in the philosophical tradition, it is in the critical tradition of Kant. Foucault understands this tradition as questioning the mutual implication of the subject and the object of knowledge: What kind of subject does one have to be in order to have a certain kind of knowledge? And, how does something come to be constituted as an object of knowledge? What procedures of division, isolation, and selection are brought into play? It is from the interplay between these modes of subjectivation and objectivation that there emerges something that Foucault calls “games of truth”; these are the rules according to which something that counts as true or false can be said by particular subjects about a specific domain of objects. And, in an important departure from the Kantian model, it is the historical transformations of these games – with their subjects, objects, and rules – that Foucault's project aims to investigate. What he practices, therefore, is “historico-philosophy”: a kind of philosophy that seeks to understand the conditions of possibility of our present modes of subjectivity and knowledge; a search for the “historical a priori” of our present. And, crucially, this is a kind of philosophy that seeks to create the conditions in which these modes can be transformed. Why? Because every such historical configuration carries with it an attendant cost, in terms of the modes of subjectivity that were instituted and the domains of experience that were circumscribed. A philosophy is critical, therefore, to the extent that it can contribute to the loosening of these restrictions and to the opening up of a space of freedom in which the subject can experiment with new forms of subjectivation and objectivation. Practiced in this way, as a “historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond,” philosophy is at once a Kantian investigation of the limits of our present thought and a Nietzschean exploration of the horizons of our possible future.

MAJOR WORKS


57. Foucault, “Foucault,” 459. For a discussion of Foucault’s long and complex relation to Kantian philosophy, see Beatrice Han-Pile, Michel Foucault’s Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).


Gilles Deleuze was one of the most influential and prolific French philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century. “I consider him to be the greatest contemporary French philosopher,” Michel Foucault once said, adding famously that “perhaps one day this century will be known as Deleuzian.” Despite such accolades, Deleuze remains difficult to classify as a thinker. The labels most frequently used to interpret contemporary French philosophy are inapplicable to Deleuze, since he was neither a phenomenologist, a structuralist, a hermeneutician, a Heideggerian, nor even a “postmodernist.” Whereas many French philosophers (Levinas, Ricoeur, Derrida, Lyotard) began their careers with studies of Husserl, Deleuze wrote his first book on Hume, and always considered himself an empiricist. Most dauntingly perhaps, his published oeuvre at first sight seems to be marked by a rather bewildering eclecticism, including constructive works such as *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, numerous monographs in the history of philosophy (on Hume, Nietzsche, Bergson, Kant, Spinoza, and

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1. Gilles Deleuze (January 18, 1925–November 4, 1995; born and died in Paris, France) was educated at the Sorbonne (1944–48), and received a doctorat d’état there in 1968. His influences included Bergson, Heidegger, Hume, Kant, Lautmann, Leibniz, Maimon, Nietzsche, Sartre, Simondon, and Spinoza, and he held appointments at the Lycée d’Amiens (1948–53), Lycée d’Orleans (1953–55), Lycée Louis-le-Grand (1955–57), Sorbonne (1957–60), Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (1960–64), University of Lyon (1964–69), and University of Paris VIII–Vincennes-St. Denis (1969–87).

Deleuze's oeuvre is not always apparent, even to serious readers of his work. It is no doubt the singular nature of his work that is the most characteristic feature of Deleuze's philosophy. “Those who really brought something new [to contemporary philosophy],” Michel Serres has commented:

did not take the superhighways – for example, Gilles Deleuze. He disengaged himself from the traditional history of philosophy, from the human sciences, from epistemology – an excellent example of the dynamic movement of a free and inventive thought. … The greatest praise I can give to him is to say that philosophical thinking made him truly happy, profoundly serene.3

Deleuze was born in Paris, near the Arc de Triomphe, and lived there, except for a few interludes elsewhere, for the rest of his life. He was the second son of a conservative, middle-class engineer, and received his elementary education in the French public school system. When the Germans invaded France in 1940, Deleuze's family was on vacation in Normandy, and he spent a year being schooled there. Deleuze traced his own initiation into literature, at age fourteen, to a curious encounter on the beaches at Deauville with a teacher named Pierre Halbwachs (son of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs), who introduced him to writers such as André Gide and Charles Baudelaire. He completed his baccalauréat in 1943 at his neighborhood school in Paris, the Lycée Carnot, and began to read philosophy during the “términale” year, under the influence of his professor, M. Vial. Early on, he recalled, philosophical concepts struck him with the same force as literary characters, having their own autonomy and style. He soon began to read philosophical works with the same animation and engagement as literary texts, and decided that philosophy would be his vocation. During the Occupation, Deleuze’s older brother Georges, then a student at the military school St. Cyr, was arrested by the Nazis for resistance activities and deported; he died on the train to a concentration camp.4

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4. Deleuze never referred to his brother’s death in any of his writings, and it does not seem to have had a great influence on his later political views. François Dosse, in Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari: Biographie croisée (Paris: La Découverte, 2007) discusses Deleuze’s complex personal reaction to Georges’ death. On the one hand, Deleuze felt his brother’s loss deeply:
After the Liberation, Deleuze immersed himself in his university studies. He undertook his *khâgne* (an intensive year of preparatory studies) at the prestigious Lycée Henri-IV, and then studied the history of philosophy at the Sorbonne under the tutelage of Jean Hyppolite and Ferdinand Alquié (“two professors I loved and admired enormously”5), as well as Georges Canguilhem and Maurice de Gandillac. He was immediately recognized by both his teachers and peers to be an exceptional student, and easily excelled in his studies.6 In 1947, he received his *diplôme d'études supérieures* from the Sorbonne with a thesis on Hume, directed by Hyppolite and Canguilhem. In an era dominated by phenomenology and “the three H's” (Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger), Deleuze's decision to write on empiricism and Hume was already a provocation, early evidence of the heterodox tendencies of his thought. A revised version of the Hume thesis would be published in 1953, as Deleuze's first book, under the title *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*. In 1948, Deleuze passed the *agrégation* examination in philosophy, along with Louis Althusser and François Châtelet, and was assigned to a teaching position at the Lycée d'Amiens.7 At the time, like many of his peers, he was as influenced by the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre as he was by his academic mentors; he devoured *Being and Nothingness* when it appeared in 1948. When Sartre refused

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6. François Châtelet, in his autobiographical text, *Chronique des idées perdues*, relates the following story about Deleuze's audacity as a student: “I preserve the memory of a reading by Gilles Deleuze, who had to treat I don't know what classic theme of Nicholas Malebranche's doctrine before one of our most profound and most meticulous historians of philosophy and who had constructed his demonstration, solid and supported with peremptory references, around the sole principle of the irreducibility of Adam's rib. At the expression of this adopted principle, the master turned pale, and obviously had to keep himself from intervening. As the exposition unfolded, the indignation was changed into incredulity, and then, at the moment of peroration, into admiring surprise. And he justly concluded by making us all return the next week with our own analysis of the same theme” (*Chronique des idées perdues* [Paris: Éditions Stock, 1977], 46). The teacher Châtelet is referring to was probably Henri Gouhier (I would like to thank Alan Schrift for this identification).

the Nobel Prize in 1964, Deleuze would pen a moving tribute to him entitled “He Was My Teacher.”

Deleuze, however, quickly rebelled against the academic training he was receiving in the French university system, with its emphasis on close readings of classical canonical texts. “I belong to a generation,” he later recalled:

one of the last generations, that was more or less assassinated by the history of philosophy. The history of philosophy plays an obvious repressive role in philosophy, it is a properly philosophical Oedipal complex: “All the same, you dare not speak in your own name until you have read this and that, and that on this, and this on that.” Many members of my generation never broke free of this; others did by inventing their own particular methods and new rules, a new approach.

Deleuze’s own way of breaking free took a variety of forms. He tended to seek out and retrieve forgotten figures, such as Bergson, who had faded into obscurity and disrespect by the postwar period. He read and championed lesser-known figures, including both contemporaries (Lautmann, Simondon, Ruyer) and historical

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11. Claude Lévi-Strauss gave voice to a widespread opinion when he joked that Bergson had “reduced being and things to a state of mush in order to bring out their ineffability,” and Deleuze said that even friends laughed at him for writing on Bergson. (The quote from Lévi-Strauss appears in Richard Rorty’s review of Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Philosophy “Unsoundness in Perspective,” Times Literary Supplement.) Deleuze lamented that “they have no idea how much hatred Bergson managed to stir up in the French university system at the outset, and how he became a focus for all sorts of crazy and marginal people” (Deleuze, Negotiations, 6, translation modified). Deleuze’s 1964 book Bergsonism is now credited with having almost single-handedly brought about a revival of interest in Bergson’s work.

12. Gilbert Simondon (1924–89), a French philosopher whose work focused primarily on the issues of individuation and technology, was the author of L’Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique (The individual and its physical-biological genesis). Albert Lautmann (1908–44), a French philosopher of mathematics, shot by the German authorities in Toulouse as an escaped prisoner of war, was the author of Essai sur les Notions de Structure et d’Existence en Mathématiques (Essay on the notions of structure and existence in mathematics). Raymond Ruyer (1902–87), a prolific French philosopher, known for his work in the philosophy of
figures (Bordas-Demoulin, Hoënë-Wronski, Maimon, among many others13). He created novel sequences in the history of philosophy, reading Stoic logic in conjunction with Lewis Carroll’s work, for example, or linking Duns Scotus’s concept of univocity with the work of Spinoza and Nietzsche. Most importantly, perhaps, he read even the major figures of the tradition in new ways. “I suppose the main way I coped with things at the time,” he explained in an oft-cited text:

was to see the history of philosophy as a kind of buggery or (it amounts to the same thing) an immaculate conception: I saw myself as taking an author from behind, and giving him a child that would be his own, yet monstrous. It was very important that the child was his own, because the author had to say everything I was making him say. But it was also necessary for the child to be monstrous, because it had to pass through all sorts of decenterings, slidings, dislocations, and secret emissions that gave me much pleasure.14

Yet this seemingly flippant remark should not obscure the respect and admiration Deleuze had for all the authors he worked on. “My ideal, when I write about an author,” he later added, “would be to write nothing that would cause him sadness, or if he is dead, that might make him weep in his grave.”15

In order to write and think, Deleuze explained, he needed to work with “intercessors” with whom he could enter into a kind of becoming (past philosophers were intercessors of this type, as was Félix Guattari, in the present).16 When

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13. Salomon Maimon (1752–54?–1800), a German philosopher, born of Jewish parentage in Poland, was one of the earliest and most profound critics of Kant’s critical philosophy and the author of the Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie (Essay on transcendental philosophy), which attempted to ground post-Kantian philosophy on a Leibnizian reinterpretation of the calculus. Józef Maria Hoënë-Wronski (1778–1853), a prolific Polish mathematician who developed a messianic and mystical system of philosophy, is best remembered for his theory of infinite series as developed in works such as Philosophie de l’infini (Philosophy of the infinite) and Philosophie de la technie algorithmique (Philosophy of the algorithmic technique). Jean Baptiste Bordas-Demoulin (1798–1859), a French philosopher who attempted to reconcile Christianity with modern civilization, was the author of Le Cartésianisme ou la véritable rénovation des sciences (Cartesianism, or the true rejuvenation of the sciences), in the context of which he offered a Platonic interpretation of the calculus. [*] For a discussion of Salomon Maimon and his critique of Kant, see the essay by Richard Fincham in History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.

14. Deleuze, Negotiations, 6, translation modified.

15. Deleuze and Parnet, Dialogues, 119.

16. See Deleuze, Negotiations, 121–34. The French term “Intercesseurs” in the title is translated into English as “Mediators.”
reading Deleuze’s monographs, one literally enters a “zone of indiscernibility” between Deleuze’s thought and the philosopher he is writing on (free indirect discourse): there is a becoming-Deleuze of Leibniz, for instance, as much as there is a becoming-Leibniz on Deleuze’s part. This accounts for the complexities one encounters in reading Deleuze’s texts: one moves from a fairly straightforward explication of the thinker at hand, to a more specifically Deleuzian interpretation, which often makes use of concepts incorporated from the outside (for instance, Deleuze interprets Spinoza in terms of Duns Scotus’s concept of “univocity,” and Leibniz in terms of the mathematical concept of “singularities,” even though neither of these terms appears in Spinoza’s or Leibniz’s texts); and finally, one reaches a creative point where Deleuze pushes the thought of the thinker at hand to its differential or immanent limit. Despite his occasional use of such language, it is impossible to categorize figures in the history of philosophy simply as Deleuze’s “friends” or “enemies”: he was as indebted to Kant (a supposed enemy) as he was critical of Bergson (a supposed friend).

It is sometimes joked that “continental” philosophers pretend they have read everything, whereas “analytic” philosophers pretend they have read nothing. In Deleuze’s case, this caricature comes close to the truth: Jean-François Lyotard once called him “the library of Babel.”17 His writings are not only strongly grounded in the history of philosophy, but are also dotted with references to numerous nonphilosophical domains, including differential calculus, thermodynamics, geology, molecular biology, population genetics, ethology, embryology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, economics, linguistics, and even esoteric thought. But this erudition was never in the service of a mere acquisition of knowledge or the mastery of a discipline, but rather a kind of passage to the limit: the conditions of thought, Deleuze liked to say, must always be drawn, not from the model of knowledge, but from the process of learning.

We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other …. To satisfy ignorance is to put off writing until tomorrow – or rather, to make it impossible …18

One always speaks from the depths of what one does not know.19

Deleuze and Guattari would almost elevate this link between erudition and ignorance into a principle of their writing: “We claim the right to a radical laxity,

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19. Deleuze, Negotiations, 7, translation modified.
a radical incompetence.”20 “We would like to speak in the name of an absolute incompetence.”21 The novelist Michel Tournier, who studied with Deleuze at the Sorbonne, recalled in his memoir that, even as a student, Deleuze already manifested this ability to transmute the thoughts he incorporated from others: “He possessed extraordinary powers of translation and rearrangement: all the tired philosophy of the curriculum passed through him and emerged unrecognizable but rejuvenated, with an air of freshness, undigestedness, and raw newness, utterly startling and discomfiting our weakness and laziness.”22

During the decade between 1953 and 1962, Deleuze published little, and moved among various teaching positions in Paris and the provinces. He later referred to this period, somewhat glibly, as “a hole in my life,” but in fact it was a period of intense study and activity, during which Deleuze was quietly pursuing his own unique path in philosophy. During the 1956–57 academic year, for instance, he gave a hypokhâgne course at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand entitled “Qu’est-ce que fonder?” (What is grounding?), which already included much of the material that would later appear in *Difference and Repetition*.23 In August 1956 he married Denise Paul Grandjouan (“Fanny”), who became the French translator of D. H. Lawrence, and with whom Deleuze would have two children, Julien (b. 1960) and Emilie (b. 1964). In 1962 his groundbreaking study *Nietzsche and Philosophy* – an anti-Hegelian polemic that reads Nietzsche in the context of the post-Kantian tradition – was published to considerable acclaim, cementing Deleuze’s reputation in academic circles.24 During the remaining years of the 1960s, Deleuze published a book a year, each of them devoted to the work of a particular philosopher or literary figure: Kant (1963), Proust (1964), Nietzsche (1965), Bergson (1966), Sade and Masoch (1967), and Spinoza (1968). Deleuze later considered these to be years of apprenticeship: the books were preparatory sketches for the great canvases of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*.

In 1962, shortly after the publication of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze met Foucault in Clermont-Ferrand, at the home of Jules Vuillemin, who had just been elected to the Collège de France. Foucault had suggested that Deleuze might replace Vuillemin at the University of Clermont-Ferrand; Deleuze instead

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23. Notes from this course have been preserved by one of Deleuze’s students, Pierre Lefebvre, at www.webdeleuze.com (accessed August 2010).
24. For a discussion of Deleuze’s work on Nietzsche, see the essay by Alan D. Schrift on “French Nietzscheanism” in this volume.

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received an assignment at the University of Lyon, where he taught from 1964 to 1969. But the meeting marked the beginning of a long and respectful intellectual friendship.\textsuperscript{25} In 1970, Foucault wrote an influential article on Deleuze, entitled “Theatricum Philosophicum,” which was instrumental in introducing Deleuze’s work to a broader public;\textsuperscript{26} Deleuze would later declare Foucault to be “the greatest thinker of our time.”\textsuperscript{27} When Foucault’s life was cut short in 1984, Deleuze devoted a year of his seminar to Foucault’s writings, and the resulting book, he said, was written “out of necessity for me, out of admiration for him, out of my emotion at his death, at this interrupted work.”\textsuperscript{28}

The years 1968 and 1969 were pivotal in Deleuze’s life. In 1968, Deleuze presented and defended his \textit{thèse de doctorat d’état}: his principal thesis was \textit{Difference and Repetition}, directed by Gandillac, considered by many to be Deleuze’s \textit{magnum opus}; his secondary thesis was \textit{Spinoza and the Problem of Expression}, directed by Alquié. These were followed, in 1969, by \textit{Logic of Sense}, an analysis of the concept of sense oriented around a reading of Lewis Carroll and Stoicism. Some time during this period, Deleuze contracted a recurring respiratory ailment that would plague him for the rest of his life; he underwent a major lung operation for the condition in 1969, and although he said that the disease never seriously affected his ability to work, he was frequently absent from his courses in later years because of his illness.\textsuperscript{29} In the same year, he met Félix Guattari, a militant psychoanalyst, with whom he would write his most famous and well-read books, the two volumes of \textit{Capitalism and Schizophrenia} (1972, 1980). The first volume, \textit{Anti-Oedipus}, was an overtly political text written in the wake of the ferment of May 1968; it became a bestseller in France, and thrust Deleuze and Guattari into the limelight as public intellectuals. Deleuze was teaching in Lyon when the events of May 1968 erupted, and he was an immediate and unrelenting supporter of the student movement. “For my part,” he later recalled, “I made a kind of passage into politics around May ’68, as I

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\textsuperscript{25} See Eribon, \textit{Michel Foucault}, 136–8, for a brief account of the Foucault–Deleuze relationship. Deleuze and Foucault did not see each other after 1977, for reasons that were circumstantial (Foucault was teaching in Berkeley) as well as political. James Miller discusses the reasons for the supposed “break” in his biography, \textit{The Passion of Michel Foucault} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 297–8; both Foucault and Deleuze were protesting Germany’s request that France extradite Klaus Croissant, a lawyer for the Baader-Meinhof gang, but whereas Foucault “couched his own position in terms of right,” Deleuze went much further, and wanted “to protest what he regarded as Germany’s ‘state terrorism,’ implicitly endorsing the image of the government held by the Baader-Meinhof gang itself” (\textit{ibid.}, 297).

\textsuperscript{26} Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” \textit{Critique} 282 (1970).

\textsuperscript{27} Deleuze, \textit{Negotiations}, 102.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{29} Hugh Tomlinson, personal correspondence with the author, August 14, 1987.

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came into contact with specific problems, through Guattari, through Foucault, through Elie Sambar [founder of the Revue d’études palestiniennes].”

During the 1970s, Deleuze would become politically active in a number of causes, including the Groupe d’information sur les prisons (formed by Foucault, among others), and he had an engaged concern with homosexual rights and the Palestinian liberation movement. Late in 1969, he took up a position at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, which was created as an “experimental” campus after the events of May 1968. Foucault, Châtelet, Serres, Étienne Balibar, Jacques Rancière, and Alain Badiou were all teaching there, although Foucault was named to the Collège de France the following year, and Serres left for the Sorbonne soon afterwards. Jean-François Lyotard joined the faculty in 1972, and he and Deleuze would collaborate on several projects (including writing a public letter condemning the dismissal of Luce Irigaray in 1974 from the Department of Psychoanalysis). The Vincennes facilities were razed by the government in 1978, and the faculty was transferred to a campus at Saint-Denis, a suburb north of Paris, where Deleuze remained until his retirement in 1987, holding weekly seminars every Tuesday morning. He never took up a joint appointment at an American university, as many of his contemporaries did, and he tended to shun academic conferences and colloquia, insisting that the activity of thought took place primarily in writing, and not in dialogue and discussion. Like Kant, he traveled little: France was his Prussia, and Paris his Königsberg. The only trip that ever counted for him, he said, was a trip to Florence, “perhaps”, his sole trip to the United States took place in 1972, when he participated in a conference at Columbia University, organized by Sylvère Lotringer, on Anti-Oedipus. “If I don’t travel,” he explained, “I’ve taken motionless trips just like everyone else…. Some voyages take place in situ, they are trips in intensity.”

In 1980, the second volume of Capitalism and Schizophrenia appeared, entitled A Thousand Plateaus, a highly experimental text, organized in a series of “plateaus” rather than chapters, which pushed Deleuze and Guattari’s production of concepts (rhizome, becoming, the refrain, the war machine) to an entirely new level. In the 1980s, Deleuze and Guattari pursued their writing careers separately, with Deleuze’s attention increasingly turned toward the arts: he published a book on painting (Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation; 1980), a two-volume study of the cinema (The Movement-Image; 1983; and The Time-Image; 1985),

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30. Deleuze, Negotiations, 170, translation modified.
33. Deleuze, Negotiations, 11, translation modified.
an analysis of the Baroque (The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque; 1988), and a collection of essays on literature (Essays Critical and Clinical; 1993). Deleuze’s final collaboration with Guattari, What is Philosophy? was published in 1991. Guattari died of a heart attack in 1992; by 1993, Deleuze’s pulmonary illness had confined him severely, making it increasingly difficult to read or write; he took his own life by defenestration, on the night of November 4, 1995. Since then, additional material from Deleuze’s corpus has come to light. Two volumes of Deleuze’s occasional texts and interviews were collected and edited by David Lapoujade, a former student, and published as Desert Islands (2002) and Two Regimes of Madness (2003). Richard Pinhas, another former student, is in the process of making transcriptions of Deleuze’s seminars available at webdeleuze.com, which is an invaluable resource for those interested in the development of Deleuze’s philosophy.

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In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari famously define philosophy as “the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts,” although this creation of concepts always takes place under the constraint of changing problematics that are as much historical and social as they are philosophical.34 For Deleuze, concepts are the medium within which philosophers work – just as painters work with lines and colors, filmmakers work with images, and musicians work with sounds – and his work was marked throughout by an extraordinary conceptual inventiveness. Deleuze rejected the Heideggerian theme of the end of metaphysics, and much of his own conceptual production was aimed at developing a metaphysics adequate to contemporary mathematics and science: a metaphysics in which the concept of multiplicity replaces that of substance, event replaces essence, virtuality replaces possibility, and so on. “I feel myself to be a pure metaphysician,” he noted, “Bergson says that modern science hasn’t found its metaphysics, the metaphysics it would need. It is this metaphysics that interests me.”35 But Deleuze’s metaphysics is a resolutely post-Kantian metaphysics in that it refuses to admit the three “transcendent illusions” criticized by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason: God, the World, and the Self. Although Deleuze’s early work is often read as a reaction against Hegel, Deleuze’s more general project can be seen as a reassessment of the then-dominant post-Kantian tradition in philosophy. Kant’s genius, for Deleuze, was to have conceived a

purely *immanent* critique of reason: a critique that did not seek, within reason, “errors” produced by external causes, but rather “illusions” that arise internally from within reason itself by the illegitimate (transcendent) uses of the syntheses of consciousness. Deleuze characterized his own work as a philosophy of immanence, but argued that Kant himself had failed to fully realize the immanent ambitions of his critique, for at least two reasons.

First, Kant made the immanent field immanent to a transcendental subject, thereby reintroducing an element of transcendence, and reserving all power of synthesis to the activity of the subject. Deleuze’s first book, on Hume, had pointed to an empiricist reversal of this relation: whereas Kant’s question had been “How can the given be given to a subject?” Hume’s question had been “How is the subject (human nature) constituted within the given?” Deleuze would later characterize his own position as a “transcendental empiricism”: the determination of an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field in which the subject is itself the result or product of passive syntheses (of the body, habit, desire, the unconscious). Just as there is no universal reason but only historically variable processes of “rationalization” (Max Weber), so there is no universal or transcendental subject, but only diverse and historically variable processes of “subjectivation.” Deleuze summarized his empiricism in terms of two characteristics: (i) the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; (ii) the aim of philosophy is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the singular conditions under which something new is produced (creativity).

Second, Kant had simply presumed the existence of certain “facts” (knowledge, morality) and then sought their conditions of possibility in the transcendental. But already in 1789, Salomon Maimon, whose early critiques of Kant helped generate the post-Kantian tradition, had argued that Kant’s critical project required a method of *genesis* – and not merely a method of conditioning – that would account for the production of knowledge, morality, and indeed reason itself – a method, in other words, that would be able to reach the conditions of *real* and not merely *possible* experience. Maimon found a solution to this problem in a principle of difference: whereas identity is the condition of possibility of thought in general, it is *difference* that constitutes the genetic and productive principle of real thought. These two Maimonian exigencies – the search for the genetic conditions of real experience and the positing of a principle of difference – reappear like a leitmotif in almost every one of Deleuze’s early monographs. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, for instance, suggests that Nietzsche completed and inverted Kantianism by bringing critique to bear, not simply on false claims to knowledge or morality, but on true knowledge and true morality, and indeed on truth itself: “genealogy” constituted Nietzsche’s genetic method, and the will to power was his principle of difference. In *Bergsonism*, on the other hand, Deleuze argues that Bergson’s concepts of duration, memory, and
élan vital constitute the differential and genetic dimensions of the multiplicities of the real. Against the “major” post-Kantian tradition of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, Deleuze in effect posited his own “minor” post-Kantian trio of Maimon, Nietzsche, and Bergson. In rethinking the post-Kantian heritage, Deleuze would also retrieve the work of a well-known trio of pre-Kantian philosophers – Hume, Spinoza, and Leibniz – although from a decidedly post-Kantian viewpoint.

Deleuze’s historical monographs were, in this sense, preliminary sketches for the great canvas of Difference and Repetition, which marshaled these resources from the history of philosophy in an ambitious project to construct a metaphysics of difference. Normally, difference is conceived of as an empirical relation between two terms each of which have a prior identity of their own (“x is different from y”). In Deleuze, this primacy is inverted: identity persists, but it is now a secondary principle produced by a prior relation between differentials (dx rather than not-x). Difference is no longer an empirical relation but becomes a transcendental principle that constitutes the sufficient reason of empirical diversity as such (for example, it is the difference of potential in a cloud that constitutes the sufficient reason of the phenomenon of lightning). In Deleuze’s ontology, the different is related to the different through difference itself, without any mediation. Although he was indebted to metaphysical thinkers such as Spinoza, Leibniz, and Bergson, Deleuze appropriated their respective systems of thought only by pushing them to their “differential” limit, purging them of the three great terminal points of traditional metaphysics (God, World, Self).

Deleuze’s subsequent work was, to some degree, a further working out of the metaphysics developed in Difference and Repetition. “I believe in philosophy as a system,” Deleuze once wrote, “For me, the system must not only be in perpetual heterogeneity, it must be a heterogenesis, which, it seems to me, has never been attempted.” Heterogenesis: this means that the system itself must entail the genesis of the heterogeneous, or the production of the new (a dynamic and open system), which in turn means that the concepts themselves are dynamic and open. “It is not a question of bringing things together under a single concept, but rather of relating each concept to the variables that explain its mutations.”

Consider, for example, the notion of intensity: in Difference and Repetition, it is linked to a notion of depth; in Logic of Sense, it is linked to the concept of surface; in Anti-Oedipus, it is what takes place on a body without organs; in What is Philosophy? it marks the nature of the components of a concept.

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consistency of a concept, in other words, has as its necessary correlate the variability of the concept. For these reasons, it is impossible to summarize Deleuze’s system, but we can at least give a sense of the problems that generate it by considering five philosophical domains that more or less parallel those laid out in the architectonic of Kant’s Critiques: dialectics, aesthetics, ethics, politics, analytics.

1. Dialectics (Theory of the Idea). Difference and Repetition attempts to formulate a theory of Ideas (dialectics) based on neither an essential model of identity (Plato), nor a regulative model of unity (Kant), nor a dialectical model of contradiction (Hegel), but rather on a problematic and genetic model of difference. Ideas are what define the “essence” of a thing, but one cannot attain an Idea through the Socratic question “What is …?” (which posits Ideas as transcendent and eternal), but rather through “minor” questions such as “Which one?” “Where?” “When?” “How?” “How many?” “In which case?” “From which viewpoint?” – all of which allow one to define the spatiotemporal coordinates of Ideas that are immanent and differential. Kant posited Ideas as “regulative” notions that serve to unify and systematize the operations of the understanding: concepts find the ground of their maximal experimental use only insofar as they are related to Ideas, which Kant defines as foci or horizons that lie outside the bounds of experience. But an object outside experience can be represented only in a problematic form: it can neither be given nor known, but must be represented without being able to be directly determined. This undetermined object of the Idea marks neither an imperfection in our knowledge nor a lack in the object: it is a perfectly positive and objective structure that allows us to represent other objects (those of experience) which it endows with a maximum of systematic unity. In Kant, then, Ideas present three aspects: they are undetermined with regard to their object, but nonetheless determinable with regard to the objects of experience, and bear the ideal of a complete determination with regards to the concepts of the understanding.

Because he held fast to the point of view of conditioning, however, two of these three moments remain as extrinsic characteristics in Kant. In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze aims to develop a theory of problematic Ideas that is genetic and not merely conditioning, following Maimon’s contention that the duality between concepts and intuitions can be bridged only by positing ideas of difference within sensibility itself. The formal criteria Deleuze uses to define Ideas are largely derived from Leibniz and the model of the differential calculus, which provides a mathematical symbolism for the exploration of the real: things or beings are virtual and problematic multiplicities composed of singularities-events, which are prolonged in converging and diverging series, forming zones of indiscernibility where the multiplicities enter into perpetual becomings. Drawing on the work of Jules Vuillemin and Albert Lautman, among others, in
the philosophy of mathematics, Deleuze defines the three moments of the Idea in a purely intrinsic and differential manner: (i) it implies elements that in themselves are completely undetermined \((dx, dy)\); (ii) these elements are nonetheless determinable reciprocally in the differential relation \((dy/dx)\), which (iii) defines their complete determination as a singular point (values of \(dy\) and \(dx\)). For Lautman, the conditions of a problem are constituted by the nomadic and virtual distribution of these singular points, and the solution appears only with the integral curves that constitute the actualization of certain singularities. Deleuze thus defines the problematic structure of an Idea as an internal multiplicity, a system of multiple, nonlocalizable connections between differential elements, in which difference is related to difference through difference. The genesis takes place in time, not between one actual term and another, but between the virtual and its actualization, that is, it goes from the condition of the problem to cases of solution, from the differential elements and their ideal connections to the actual terms and diverse real relations that constitute the actuality of time. Whereas Kantian Ideas are unifying and conditioning, Deleuzian Ideas are differential and genetic.

Perhaps Deleuze’s most famous – and most misunderstood – concept is that of the virtual, which has nothing to do with an alternate or transcendent reality (as in the notion of “virtual reality”). Rather, it is a concept Deleuze utilizes in order to designate the modal status of problematic Ideas, and which he systematically contrasts with the concept of the possible: an Idea is not a locus of possibilities, but a field of virtualities. We tend to think of the possible as somehow “pre-existing” the real, and we think of the real as something more than the possible, that is, as the possible with existence added to it. But the drawback of this conception of the possible is that the identity of a thing is already given in the concept, and simply has existence added to it when it is “instantiated” or “realized.” This process of realization, Deleuze suggests, is subject to two rules: resemblance (the real resembles the possibility that it realizes) and limitation (in the process of realization, some possibilities are repulsed or thwarted, while others “pass” into the real). But this is where the sleight of hand becomes obvious: if the real is supposed to resemble the possible, is it not because we have retrospectively “projected” a fictitious image of the real back into the possible? In fact, it is not the real that resembles the possible, but the possible that resembles the real. For this reason, the concept of the possible can never grasp the production of the new, or the genesis of difference. Deleuze’s proposal, therefore, is to replace the possible–real couple with the virtual–actual couple. The reality of the virtual is the reality of the problematic, that is, the reality of the Idea, while the rules of actualization are not resemblance and limitation, but differenciation or divergence (creation). The concept of the virtual is synonymous with the Deleuzian notion of differen-t/c-iation: a problematic is completely differeniated (by its
differential relations and singularities), while every actualization of a problem is a movement of differenciation, that is, the production of a new difference. As such, the concept of the virtual fulfills the demands of a philosophy of difference: difference is related to difference through difference itself.

2. Aesthetics (Theory of Sensation). What are the implications of a principle of difference for aesthetics? Kant had dissociated aesthetics into two halves: the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience (the “Transcendental Aesthetic”), and the theory of art as a reflection on real experience (the “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment”). In Deleuze’s work, these two halves of aesthetics are reunited: if the most general aim of art is to “produce a sensation,” then the genetic principles of sensation are at the same time the principles of composition for works of art; conversely, it is works of art that are best capable of revealing these conditions of sensibility. Deleuze’s writings on the various arts – including the cinema (Cinema I, Cinema II), literature (Essays Critical and Clinical), and painting (Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation) – must be read not as works of criticism, but rather as philosophical explorations of this transcendental domain of sensibility. Deleuze locates the conditions of sensibility in an intensive conception of space and a virtual conception of time, which are necessarily actualized in a plurality of spaces and a complex rhythm of times (for instance, in the nonextended spaces and nonlinear times of modern mathematics and physics).

Deleuze’s interpretation of Leibniz’s famous theory of perception provides a useful example of his method. Leibniz argued that a conscious perception must be related not to objects situated in space and time, but to the minute perceptions of which it is composed. I apprehend the noise of the sea or the murmur of a crowd, but not the sound of each wave or each voice of which it is composed. These unconscious perceptions are related to conscious perceptions, not as parts to a whole, but as what is ordinary to what is remarkable or singular: a conscious perception is produced when at least two of these elements enter into a differential relation that determines a singularity. Or consider the color green: yellow and blue can be perceived, but if they reach a point where they become indiscernible, they enter into a differential relation that determines the color green \( \frac{db}{dy} = G \); in turn, yellow or blue, each on its own account, may be determined by the differential relation of two colors we cannot detect \( \frac{dx}{dy} = Y \). These unconscious perceptions constitute the “ideal genetic elements” of perception, or what Maimon called the “differentials of consciousness.” It is such a virtual multiplicity of genetic elements, and the system of connections established between them, that constitutes an Idea: the relations are actualized in diverse spatiotemporal relationships, just as the elements are actualized in diverse perceptions and forms. Rather than perception presupposing an object capable of affecting us, it is the reciprocal determination of differentials \( \frac{dx}{dy} \)
that entails both the complete determination of the object as perception and the determinability of space-time as conditions. Space-time ceases to be a given in order to become the totality or nexus of differential relations in the subject, and the object ceases to be an empirical given in order to become the product of these relations in conscious perception.

3. Ethics (Theory of Affectivity). Deleuze has similarly developed a purely immanent conception of ethics, an “ethics without morality.” If morality implies an appeal to transcendent values as criteria of judgment (as in Kant’s moral law), ethics evaluates actions and intentions according to the immanent mode of existence they imply. One says or does this, thinks or feels that: What mode of existence does it imply? This is the link Deleuze establishes between Spinoza and Nietzsche, his two great precursors as philosophers of immanence: each of them argued, in his own manner, that there are things one cannot do or think except on the condition of being base or enslaved, unless one harbors a ressentiment against life (Nietzsche), unless one remains the slave of passive affections (Spinoza); and there are other things one cannot do or say except on the condition of being noble or free, unless one affirms life or attains active affections. The transcendent moral opposition (Good/Evil) is in this way replaced by an immanent ethical difference (good/bad). A bad or sickly life is an exhausted and degenerating mode of existence, one that judges life from the perspective of its sickness, that devalues life in the name of higher values. A good or healthy life, by contrast, is an overflowing or ascending mode of existence, capable of transforming itself depending on the forces it encounters, always opening up new possibilities of life, new becomings.

For Deleuze, modes of existence can be evaluated according to the purely immanent criteria of affectivity, that is, by their capacity to affect and to be affected – a capacity that is not a simple logical possibility but is necessarily actualized at every moment, thus fulfilling the demand for a genetic principle of the real. If the greatness of Nietzsche’s theory of nihilism was to have analyzed the process of becoming-reactive, the aim of Spinoza’s Ethics was to outline the process of becoming-active. These two processes, however, necessarily coexist in any mode of existence, and for Deleuze the aim of ethical theory is to determine, not universal grounds or normative foundations, but rather the conditions under which the attainment of active affections is possible – or more precisely, the conditions under which the production of new modes of existence is possible, since the “activity” of a mode is defined by its ability to affect or transform itself. In his later work, Foucault, under a Deleuzian inspiration, coined the term “subjectivation” (“subjectivation”) to define the means through which modes of existence are produced. In the later volumes of The History of Sexuality, Foucault analyzed the variable forms these affective processes took in the Greek
4. Politics (Socio-Political Theory). This immanent conception of ethics leads directly into Deleuze's political philosophy, which he developed most fully in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, coauthored with Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*, under the guise of a critique of psychoanalysis, is in effect an immanent reworking of Kant's theory of desire in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. For Deleuze, the link between ethics and politics is redefined as the link between desire and power: *desire* (the difference between active and reactive forces in a given mode of existence) never exists in a spontaneous or natural state, but is always “assembled” (*agencé*) in variable but determinable manners in concrete social formations, and what assembles desire are relations of *power*. Deleuze remains a “Marxist” in that his social theory is necessarily tied to an analysis of capitalism, which he defines by the conjunction or differential relation between the virtual quantities of labor and capital. What he calls “schizophrenia” is an absolute limit that would cause these quantities to travel in a free and unbound state on a desocialized body: this is the “Idea” of society, a limit that is never reached as such, but constitutes the ideal “problematic” to which every social formation constitutes a concrete solution. For Deleuze, the central political question concerns the means by which the singularities and states of difference of the transcendental field are assembled in a given socius. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* consequently outlines a typology of four abstract social formations—“primitive” or segmentary societies, states, nomadic “war machines,” and capitalism itself—that aims to provide the conceptual tools for analyzing the diverse dimensions of concrete social structures: How are its mechanisms of power organized? What are the “lines of flight” that escape its integration? What new modes of existence does it make possible? These types of social formations are not to be understood as stages in a progressive evolution or development; rather, they sketch out a topological field in which each type functions as a variable of coexistence that enters into complex relations with the other types.

5. Analytics (Theory of the Concept). Finally, Deleuze's dialectic (the constitution of problems) leads directly into his analytic (concepts as cases of solution), which he presented in his late book *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze defines philosophy as the creation of concepts, as knowledge through pure concepts. But for Deleuze, the highest concepts are not *a priori* universals applicable to objects of...
possible experience (categories), but singularities that correspond to the structures of real experience. What Is Philosophy? defines philosophical concepts in terms of three components:

(i) *Endo-consistency.* A concept is composed of a finite number of heterogeneous and singular components that it renders consistent in itself; concepts have no extension, but only what Deleuze terms “intensive ordinates.” For example, the Cartesian concept of the cogito presents three components – doubting, thinking, and being – each of which has certain phases (perceptual, scientific, obsessional doubt) and between which there are zones of neighborhood (myself who doubts, I cannot doubt that I think).

(ii) *Exo-consistency.* Concepts enter into determinable relations of consistency with other concepts, both internally (a concept’s components can be considered as concepts in their own right) and externally (concepts create their own bridges or links with other concepts). In Descartes, the idea of infinity provides an external bridge leading from the concept of the cogito to the concept of God, a new concept having three components that form the “proofs” for the existence of God.

(iii) *Self-referentiality.* Finally, concepts have no reference, but posit both themselves and their object in being created. When Kant “criticized” Descartes by introducing time as a component of the cogito, he effectively created a new concept with a new object.

More than most of his contemporaries, Deleuze insisted on the autonomy of philosophy as a discipline, arguing forcefully for the irreducibility of philosophical concepts to scientific functions or logical propositions. Deleuze contrasts the reference of functions with the consistency of concepts: what Deleuze calls a “function” is always defined in relation to an actualized virtual (which finds its reference in a state of things, an object, or lived experience), whereas philosophical concepts are defined by the consistency they give to the virtual as such. Consequently, philosophical concepts are not propositional, and do not form a discursive whole; they are rather fragmentary totalities with irregular contours that “freely enter into relationships of nondiscursive resonance.”

Taken together, these five rubrics, although certainly not exhaustive, nonetheless serve to present the broad outlines of a systematic philosophy of difference as it appears in Deleuze’s work. Critics have posed objections in each of these domains: How can a differential “logic of sensation” imply a theory of art without first addressing the conceptual question “What is art?” – a question Duchamp’s

works threw down like a gauntlet to the twentieth century? According to what criteria can one assess the validity of a philosophical concept if it creates its object simply by being posited, and has no “referent”? Does not a differential ethics amount to a kind of moral nihilism in which all differences are in turn affirmed as equally valid (as Jürgen Habermas has charged), or an aestheticism in which ethics is reduced to a private search for autonomy or self-invention (as Richard Rorty claimed)? Such criticisms, and others like them, can be summed up in the reproach that a philosophy of difference seems unable (or unwilling) to put forward normative criteria of judgment in any domain, and in this sense it fails in the “critical” task that Kant himself assigned to philosophy. In response, Deleuze insisted that one of the significant consequences of a philosophy of difference is its shift in emphasis away from the universal toward the singular and the new: only a principle of difference is capable of providing a rigorous response to the question of heterogenesis: “What are the conditions for the production of the new?” (artistic creation, conceptual innovation, social change).40

MAJOR WORKS


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40. This essay is dedicated to the memory of François Zourabichvili, who was both a great friend and a great philosopher, and whose writings on Deleuze set such a high standard of rigor and insight that those of us who follow in his wake can only vainly hope to emulate it.


Jacques Derrida was born in El-Biar, near Algiers. While Derrida’s school and university education ultimately followed a path similar to that of other prominent French philosophers of his generation, it was marked by many interruptions and delays. Local policies restricting Jews during the Vichy period led to his expulsion from school in 1942, and he failed his first attempt at the baccalauréat in 1947. After moving to Paris in 1949 to attend the highly regarded Lycée Louis-le-Grand, it was only on his third attempt, in 1952, that Derrida passed the entrance exam to the École Normale Supérieure (ENS). At the ENS


during this time, notable faculty were Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Jean Hyppolite, and Derrida’s fellow students there and at Louis-le-Grand included Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Deguy, Louis Marin, Pierre Nora, and Michel Serres. In 1953 Derrida conducted research at the Husserl Archive in Louvain and in 1954 he submitted his diplôme d’études supérieures (more or less equivalent to a Master’s thesis), *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Philosophy,* written under the direction of Maurice de Gandillac. Derrida passed his agrégation (qualifying him to teach philosophy in secondary schools) on his second attempt in 1956, spent time researching Husserl at Harvard University in 1957, taught French and English in Algeria in 1957–59 to fulfill his military service, and held a post at a lycée in Le Mans from 1959–60. From 1960 to 1964 Derrida taught at the Sorbonne, and in 1964 he returned to the ENS where he taught until 1983. It was only in 1980 that Derrida was awarded his doctorat d’état, a prerequisite for holding a professorial Chair in a French University (he received his doctorat du troisième cycle, roughly equivalent to a PhD, in 1967 for *Of Grammatology*). This was granted for ten previously published works, and the title “The Inscription of Philosophy: Research on the Interpretation of Writing,” named what was in fact the third topic for which Derrida had registered; he had abandoned the first topic, registered in 1957 under the title “The Ideality of the Literary Object,” and the second, registered in 1967 on Hegel’s semiology. Derrida’s travels through established institutions of education in France were completed in 1983 with his move to the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, where he taught until his death.

Presented thus, the narrative of Derrida’s academic itinerary tells a slightly erratic and less than stellar journey through some of France’s more prestigious institutions. But it is less than half the story, and two further histories of engagement greatly enrich the picture. First, throughout his career Derrida was actively involved in less traditional “institutions” in France. From 1965 to 1970, he was one of several prominent intellectuals to publish frequently in the avant-garde journal *Tel Quel,* linking him to figures such as Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes. As a result, and taking into account the several essays appearing in the similarly hard to classify *Critique,* the venues of Derrida’s publications from the 1960s divided evenly between established journals of philosophy (such as *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*) and other journals more readily associated with literature and the human sciences. In 1975 Derrida helped form Le Groupe de Recherche sur l’Enseignement Philosophique (GREPH; other

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Jacques Derrida members included Sarah Kofman, Michèle Le Doeuff, and Jean-Luc Nancy), a group that combated proposed cutbacks to the philosophy curriculum in French schools and undertook research examining broader issues in philosophical education. At the invitation of the French government, in 1982 Derrida cofounded with François Châtelet, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt the Collège Internationale de Philosophie, a non-degree-awarding institution that promotes cross-disciplinary philosophical research not possible within the academy. Finally, among other politically oriented commitments, in the 1980s Derrida was active in groups campaigning against apartheid, and throughout the 1990s he supported the rights of refugees, immigrants, and undocumented workers through involvement with organizations such as SOS-Racisme and the International Parliament of Writers.

The second necessary supplement to Derrida’s institutional history concerns the United States. Certainly, the United States was not the only country outside France relevant to Derrida’s biography, for he taught, lectured, and received honors across the globe. Nevertheless, it occupies a privileged place in that Derrida – unique among French philosophers in this respect – had a continuous association with American universities that spanned virtually the entirety of his career. Bracketing the early visit to Harvard mentioned above, the story begins at the conference held at Johns Hopkins University in 1966, “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man.” Alongside prominent participants including Hyppolite, Barthes, and Jacques Lacan, Derrida made a notable impression in his challenge to the then prevailing structuralist discourse. It was also here that he first met Paul de Man, beginning a long and fruitful friendship that would be responsible for the rise of deconstruction as an academic movement. The centers of this movement mirrored the visiting positions that Derrida subsequently held in the United States, most notably at Johns Hopkins (1966–75), Yale University (1975–86; this was the most famous site of deconstruction, where Derrida’s colleagues included de Man, J. Hillis Miller, and Geoffrey Hartman*), and the University of California at Irvine (1986–2004). Other institutions at which Derrida was a visiting professor included Cornell University, New York University, and the New School for Social Research. With the exception of the New School, these appointments were in departments other than philosophy – the humanities, French, English, and comparative literature.

These institutional facts go beyond biographical interest, and are significant for reflection on the meaning and legacy of Derrida’s work. For after his initial training, Derrida’s publishing and professional affiliations, both in France and the United States, were predominately located at philosophy’s margins, sometimes

*4. For further discussion of the “Yale School” and deconstruction, see the essay in this volume by Jeffrey T. Nealon.
occurring well outside its officially sanctioned boundaries. This suggests that one should not try too hard to claim that Derrida belongs in philosophy, at least as it is traditionally conceived. It is not only the case that he has inspired research in many other academic disciplines – including literary theory, gender studies, cultural studies, law, architecture, theology, and political theory – and in culture more broadly understood. Derrida actively pursued sites other than traditional philosophy in which to develop his work. Of course, this was often done with a view to challenging and transforming philosophy as it is standardly imagined and practiced, and I will discuss this further below in relation to Derrida’s reading of both philosophical and literary texts. But it remains that Derrida’s institutional profile cuts across more usual schemes of classification, a fact that is related to the claims he made in his work itself.

II. WRITINGS FROM 1962 TO 1972

Turning now to this work, Derrida’s first publication – a translation and long introduction to Edmund Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry* – appeared in 1962, and was followed in 1967 by the publication of three books, *Speech and Phenomena*, *Of Grammatology*, and *Writing and Difference*. These works made a strong impact in intellectual circles in France, and Derrida’s reputation as an important and original thinker was further enhanced when three additional books – *Margins of Philosophy*, *Dissemination*, and *Positions* – were published in 1972. The central targets of these writings of the 1960s and early 1970s were two of the dominant intellectual currents in France at that time: phenomenology and structuralism. Derrida challenged fundamental assumptions made in these movements through detailed readings of a number of thinkers, most notably Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas in phenomenology, and Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss in structuralism. Discourses antecedent to these twentieth-century movements were also interrogated, with extended attention given to Plato, Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and G. W. F. Hegel. To characterize his claims at a very general level, Derrida argues that all of these thinkers privilege presence over absence, which he identifies as the central characteristic of metaphysical thinking, at the same time (in the case of the phenomenologists and structuralists) as they seek to move beyond traditional metaphysics. The valuation of presence goes together with a priority given to identity conceived as the unified self-presence of an entity, and any differences interrupting this self-presence are viewed as secondary. Crucially, Derrida does not then propose that one should avoid valuing presence and identity, and thus truly escape metaphysics. Many of the thinkers analyzed in fact try to do this, and Derrida shows how this precisely amounts to a reinstallation of the original
values. But nor does Derrida claim that one should go in the other direction to pursue a thinking of full presence and so completely embrace metaphysical thinking. Rather, he argues that neither option is viable. He demonstrates that privileging absolute presence and a completely unified self-identity is impossible, as is their full repudiation, and thinking remains caught in a negotiation of these two poles.

Even as it was one of Derrida’s targets, Heidegger’s work had a strong influence, in particular in the identification of presence as the fundamental value in traditional metaphysics and its exposure through the “destruction” (Destruktion) of the history of philosophy. Derrida first proposed the term “deconstruction” as a translation of both Destruktion and a related word in Heidegger’s and Husserl’s lexicon, “Abbau” (dismantling). Other important influences on Derrida’s thinking at this time were Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud. Derrida appealed to the Freudian unconscious and to Nietzschean play at certain key moments in his readings of others, although one should note that these thinkers were themselves subject to scrutiny, with him arguing that even as some of their ideas show promise, they too are complicit with metaphysical thinking. Finally, Derrida uncovered further possibilities for challenging the limits of traditional thinking (again never suggesting that a complete break was possible) in several early essays devoted to reading a number of modernist and avant-garde literary authors, including Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, Edmond Jabès, and Stéphane Mallarmé.

“Deconstruction” began as a term of translation, but it was not long before Derrida used it in relation to his own work. He insists that deconstruction should not be thought of as a method, as this suggests a procedure or set of rules that one applies to a text from the outside. Rather, he describes it as a “strategy” or “intervention” that could be said to be already at work within a text, where “text” is to be understood not simply as literal writing on a page, but extended to any structure involving inscription and repetition understood in a very wide sense, including institutions, consciousness, and experience. There has been much debate concerning the appropriateness of using deconstruction in reference to Derrida’s work. He himself expressed reservations toward the term on a number of occasions, and took pains to distance himself from many of its more popular associations. Nevertheless, he consistently referred to it across his career in order to describe what he was doing. Given his continual use of the term, even

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5. For Heidegger’s most famous description of the method of destruction, see Heidegger, Being and Time, section 6.

*6. Nietzsche’s and Freud’s influence on Derrida are discussed in this volume in the essays by Alan D. Schrift, and Rosi Braidotti and Schrift, respectively.
with the occasional hesitation, deconstruction thus remains a reasonable term to invoke when describing Derrida’s writings.⁷

While deconstruction cannot be reduced to a set of rules or a simple definition, there are several recognizable patterns that recur in the interventions Derrida performed in his writings. In his early works, the most prominent involves the overturning and displacement of binary oppositions. Derrida gave a famous description of this strategy in an interview in 1971, republished in Positions.⁸ Here he speaks of the negotiation I mentioned above, whereby deconstruction avoids “both simply neutralizing the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply residing within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming [the closed field].” Instead, Derrida argues that “it is necessary [il faut] to proceed using a double gesture.”⁹ The first half of this gesture is termed a “phase of overturning.” Binaries, Derrida contends, are never innocent or neutral – they form “a violent hierarchy” as one of the terms is always valued higher than the other. For example, one opposition to which Derrida gave much attention in the 1960s is that between speech and writing. He argues that the metaphysical tradition is “logocentric” – a term derived from the Greek work “logos” meaning, among other things, “word,” “speech,” “reason,” and “principle” – in that philosophers from Plato to Heidegger invariably have understood writing to be a mere copy of speech, a secondary representation that has no originality of its own. These two terms thus form a hierarchy, with speech valued more than writing. The phase of overturning challenges the opposition by inverting the hierarchy, in this case giving writing a greater value than speech. However, such a move on its own is not sufficient, for if this were all deconstruction involved then there

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⁷ One of Derrida’s most common strategies for dealing with deconstruction’s resistance to a definition was to multiply its associations, leading him to equate it with terms as various as “hospitality,” “that which happens,” “justice,” “the im-possible,” and “America,” to name just a few. Such statements were almost always proposed hypothetically or in the conditional, and almost always withdrawn, suggesting that they serve more as provocations to further thinking than definitive answers to the question “What is deconstruction?”

⁸ Jacques Derrida, Positions, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 41–2, translation modified; originally published as Positions (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 56–8. A more detailed account of this strategy also appears in his Dissemination, Barbara Johnson (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3–7; originally published as La Dissémination (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 9–13. Dating Derrida’s texts can be confusing, since while most were published first in French, on occasion they appear originally in English, or, more rarely, in another language. Further, many texts were published in journals or collections prior to their reprinting in the book that is most commonly referred to in the secondary literature (as in the present case – commentators refer exclusively to Positions rather than the journal in which this interview was first published). To give the most accurate sense of Derrida’s itinerary, the dates I mark throughout this chapter refer to the first publication of the text in question, regardless of its language or location.

⁹ Derrida, Positions, Bass (trans.), 41; Positions, 56.
would remain a metaphysical opposition, the only difference being that the term previously devalued now has the upper hand. Writing would be higher than speech, but the terms would still be opposed. There is thus a second phase to the strategy, involving “the irruptive emergence of a new ‘concept,’ a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime.”\textsuperscript{10} The second phase acknowledges that through the initial inversion there arises a new “concept,” something that exceeds what was previously ordained. The particular name of the third term depends on the context, and in the analyses of speech and writing some of the more common names appealed to were “archi-writing,” “supplement,” and “\textit{pharmakon}.” These names were all formerly associated with the devalued term – writing – but in the inversion, they come to stand for the generalized traits that are shown to underlie both elements of the original opposition. Derrida described this part of his strategy as “\textit{paleonomy} … the occasional maintenance of an old name in order to launch a new concept,”\textsuperscript{11} and it is a necessary step in the transformation taking place. Coming from within, the third term exceeds the original structure without thereby passing completely beyond it.

The outcome of this deconstructive intervention is thus a displacement of the opposition, where the two original terms are shown to share a relation to a new “concept” that exceeds them both. Concerning this strategy, there are several points to note. First, it is a mistake to see these two phases as ordered chronologically or indeed cleanly separated. The hierarchy is not first inverted, and then followed by the generation of a third term that displaces the oppositional structure. Rather, the two phases operate simultaneously, for it is the third term that motivates the overturning in the first place. Otherwise put, Derrida does not just claim that writing is superior to speech; he demonstrates it by showing how a generalized understanding of writing is presupposed by the supposedly more original term. Second, when describing the third term as a “concept,” Derrida places it in scare quotes in order to mark its undecidable status. Derrida refers to these terms as “undecidable” because they cannot be reduced to either term in the original opposition; they mark a remainder that falls outside existing frameworks of understanding. They cannot, therefore, be properly called “concepts” in any clear sense. Third, Derrida stresses that this strategy is not to be understood dialectically, either as understood by Hegel or in the form practiced by Derrida’s Marxist contemporaries. It neither relies on a logic of contradiction nor seeks to fully overcome the binary opposition, aiming instead for a nonoppositional displacement that maintains an unresolved tension. In the interview just cited, Derrida distinguishes the kind of difference here theorized from the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, Bass (trans.), 42; \textit{Positions}, 57.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, Bass (trans.), 71; \textit{Positions}, 95–6.
\end{itemize}
Hegelian conception by referring to his neologism “différence.” This term, built from the French verb “différer” which means both to differ and to defer, marks a spatial difference and a temporal deferral that cannot be recuperated into a stable identity, and is proposed as a third term underlying the opposition identity/difference. Derrida developed its logic most fully in the essay “Différence” (1968; reprinted in Margins of Philosophy), but it appears throughout his early works and reappears across his oeuvre as a whole as a provisional name for the relation arising within and between concepts in deconstruction.

Without prior exposure to Derrida’s writings, the above description of deconstruction may well be opaque, and even if the strategy is clear one might still wonder what is at stake in such an intervention. Further, traditional philosophical inquiry does not consider the opposition between speech and writing to be central or even interesting, suggesting that if this was one of the main themes of Derrida’s writings in the 1960s, these writings would be more or less irrelevant to broader philosophical questions. Needless to say, this is not Derrida’s view, and to demonstrate why he thinks the opposition between speech and writing is important, as well as to give a richer account of his early strategy of intervention, I will now present one example in some detail.

In “Plato’s Pharmacy” (1968, reprinted in Dissemination), Derrida analyzes the relationship between speech and writing in Plato’s work, producing a reading that has strong similarities to the deconstructions of these terms previously undertaken with respect to Rousseau, Saussure, and Lévi-Strauss (in Of Grammatology). Derrida’s essay centers on the closing discussion of Phaedrus (274b–279c) where, after a long exchange distinguishing acceptable from nonacceptable rhetoric in the art of speeches, Socrates and Phaedrus turn to the question of writing. Socrates begins by recounting an Egyptian myth in which the god Th euth, the inventor of writing, seeks approval for his invention from the God-king Ammon. Th euth presents writing as follows: “This discipline, my King, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories: my invention is a recipe (pharmakon) for both memory and wisdom” (274e; 75/85). Th euth thus proposes that writing is a desirable aid to the mind. In his response, however, Ammon denies this, stating:

The fact is that this invention will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it because they will not need to exercise

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their memories, being able to rely on what is written, using the stimulus of external marks that are alien to themselves rather than, from within, their own unaided powers to call things to mind. So it’s not a remedy (pharmakon) for memory, but for reminding, that you have discovered. And as for wisdom, you’re equipping your pupils with only a semblance of it, not with truth … (275a; 102/116)

Ammon thus judges that writing is not a remedy for the mind, but a poison, for it encourages a laziness in thinking that can produce only a semblance of the truth. True thought from inside the mind produces knowledge, while writing only ever reminds one of what is already known.

After recounting this myth, Socrates affirms Ammon’s position, and adds to it a second argument that condemns writing’s inability to adapt to particular contexts, for it repeats the same thing no matter who is reading or what questions it is asked. Writing is said to be:

truly analogous to painting. The painter’s products stand before us as though they were alive, but if you question them, they maintain a most majestic silence. It is the same with written words … And when it is ill-treated and unfairly abused it always needs its parents to come to its aid, being unable to defend itself or attend to its own needs. (275d–e; 136, 143/156, 165)

Socrates then consolidates writing’s inferiority through a comparison with a different kind of discourse, “the sort that goes together with knowledge and is written in the soul of the learner, that can defend itself, and knows to whom it should speak and to whom it should say nothing.” Phaedrus confirms this as “the discourse of a man who really knows, which is living and animate,” of which written discourse is “only a kind of ghost” (276a; 148/171).

Socrates thus condemns writing for being not only a copy of living speech, but a poor copy at that, corrupting the mind’s powers and lacking its own power of response and adaptation. A hierarchy is thereby established opposing speech to writing. If Derrida’s intervention is to follow the pattern outlined above, an inversion of this hierarchy together with the emergence of a third term that exceeds this system must take place. The inversion occurs in underlining Socrates’s recourse to the figure of writing in describing the true, living discourse, as it is said to be “written in the soul of the learner.” This might seem an arbitrary choice of words, a metaphor irrelevant to the intended meaning, but Derrida maintains that it is in fact a necessary consequence of Plato’s metaphysics. Through an extensive reading that goes far beyond Phaedrus, including analyses of passages from Laws, Republic, Philebus, and Timaeus, Derrida argues
that Plato always appeals to scriptural metaphors when he accounts for irreducible difference, and that difference is inescapable given the relationship set up between the original and its copies. In short, Plato requires that the intelligible and the true be capable of being repeated, a capability that precisely characterizes writing. Plato must therefore appeal to something like writing when he describes the good repetition necessarily performed by the man with knowledge. As a consequence, Derrida argues that “the conclusion of the Phaedrus is less a condemnation of writing in the name of present speech than a preference for one sort of writing over another” (149/172). The valorized term should thus be writing, not speech, for writing is fundamental. Writing encompasses both speech and writing in the original opposition.

Put in these terms, one sees the need for what was described as the second phase of the intervention, namely the emergence of a third term. For it makes no sense to say that writing encompasses both speech and writing, if “writing” is here taken to designate the same thing. The term that Derrida here highlights as more appropriate is the Greek word “pharmakon.” “Pharmakon” means both “remedy” and “poison,” and so any description that appeals to it is fundamentally ambivalent, requiring an interpretive judgment to decide whether it is of benefit or harm. Perhaps the most accurate translation of “pharmakon” in contemporary English is “drug,” a term marking both the most demonized substances in society that carry death and destruction as well as the most valorized substances that promise long life and happiness. In the passage cited above, Theuth presents writing as a “recipe (pharmakon) for both memory and wisdom.” His surrounding words suggest that he thinks it is a good recipe, one that “will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memories,” but note that on its own the word “recipe” need not be valued in this way. It is through exploiting this ambivalence that the King delivers his judgment: “it’s not a remedy (pharmakon) for memory, but for reminding, that you have discovered.” As a remedy for reminding (and here the translator could have preserved “recipe,” but “remedy” brings out more clearly the positive valuation that Ammon is contesting), writing is in fact a poison, so still a pharmakon, but not understood in the sense Theuth proposed. In first identifying writing as a pharmakon, Plato makes possible the contest over value that then takes place between the King and Theuth.

This excerpt from Phaedrus appears to fix the pharmakon’s value as negative, but Derrida’s reading demonstrates that this word and other terms related to it (such as “pharmakeus [magician]”) are used equally across Plato’s dialogues to describe valorized terms, including Socrates himself and the method of dialectic that is said to lead to truth.13 Thus both the so-called living speech that

13. Important in Derrida’s reading is the word “pharmakos [scapegoat].” While Derrida notes that Plato does not himself use “pharmakos” in any of his writings, he justifies his appeal to it by
would be closer to the truth and the writing associated with error and death are presented as *pharmaka*, and so *pharmakon* emerges from this deconstruction as the third term: fundamentally ambivalent, both poison and cure, the *pharmakon* exceeds the Platonic system. Its ambivalence can be arrested at any given moment through an act of interpretation, a determination of it as here good and there bad, but the possibility that it would be its opposite remains in reserve, always threatening to turn any such determination on its head. The *pharmakon* cannot be mastered once and for all.

This is a very brief account of the extremely dense reading Derrida offers in “Plato’s Pharmacy,” and I have picked out only one theme among the several Derrida explores (other prominent motifs include the relationship between the inside and the outside, inclusion and exclusion, life and death, the functioning of memory, and the familial tropes at work in the text). But it provides some idea of the kind of reading that Derrida performed early in his career and for which he became renowned. One point to note is what one might call the “immanence” of this reading. Plato’s claims are not contrasted with Derrida’s own. Rather, all of the claims advanced, both those consolidating the opposition between speech and writing and those working toward its displacement, come from the Platonic text. This explains Derrida’s hesitation in characterizing deconstruction as a technique that one applies to a text. It is just as appropriate to say that Plato’s text stages its own deconstruction as it is to claim that Derrida deconstructs it. As the deconstruction does not depend on the appeal to the *pharmakos*, one might wish to resist such a move “beyond” the Platonic text. But Derrida himself uses this move as evidence for the claim that there does not exist “in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its outside” (130/149). This reminds the reader that the “text” being deconstructed is not simply the literal words on the pages united under the signature “Plato,” but a whole field of ideas and relations with which these pages are associated. This field is constituted both by the Greek language in which Plato was writing, as well as a whole tradition of interpretation, translation, and inheritance of Plato. This is always the case in Derrida’s writings; his target is not just the words of a text, as if one could isolate these in their purity, but also the resonance of these words with the language in which they are written, along with the accepted institutional interpretations of the thinker in question.

 claiming that Plato’s text cannot avoid communicating with this word through its close relation to the other terms from the same family. As the deconstruction does not depend on the appeal to the *pharmakos*, one might wish to resist such a move “beyond” the Platonic text. But Derrida himself uses this move as evidence for the claim that there does not exist “in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its outside” (130/149). This reminds the reader that the “text” being deconstructed is not simply the literal words on the pages united under the signature “Plato,” but a whole field of ideas and relations with which these pages are associated. This field is constituted both by the Greek language in which Plato was writing, as well as a whole tradition of interpretation, translation, and inheritance of Plato. This is always the case in Derrida’s writings; his target is not just the words of a text, as if one could isolate these in their purity, but also the resonance of these words with the language in which they are written, along with the accepted institutional interpretations of the thinker in question.

14. In “Plato’s Pharmacy,” Derrida maintains a singular focus on texts signed by Plato, but he did not always restrict himself in this way. In other essays, he juxtaposed several authors in order to draw out tensions that inhabit a tradition more broadly understood. Thus, for example, surrounding the concentrated reading of Saussure in Part I of *Of Grammatology* is an engagement with a long list of figures including Gottfried Leibniz, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Roman Jakobson, and Louis Hjelmslev. Even in texts such as this, where a whole tradition is shown to be in deconstruction, it remains that all of the claims advanced come from the works being read, rather than from an external position that one might readily identify as Derrida’s own view.
deconstruction begins in a seemingly marginal location – the apparently frivolous opposition speech/writing discussed briefly at the end of one dialogue – but in fact appeals to statements from across Plato’s corpus. As a consequence the target here is not just one binary in one dialogue, but fundamental elements of the Platonic system as a whole, in particular Plato’s belief in the purity of the Forms and his account of truth.

As I have already noted, in the same period as “Plato’s Pharmacy” Derrida provided readings of the opposition between speech and writing in several other authors. This was not the only binary he investigated, for, as is suggested in the reading of Plato, it is related to a whole series of oppositions that govern traditional schemes of thought including presence/absence, identity/difference, signified/signifier, same/other, life/death, father/son, inside/outside, seriousness/play, nature/culture, and peace/violence. Each time Derrida intervened into a text that promoted such hierarchies he followed a strategy resembling the one just outlined, although it is important to note that these readings were not identical. The third term in each case depends on the particular context, and other emergent words include archi-writing, trace, grammē, différance, supplement, spacing, and iterability. None of these have the status of a master-term, governing the rest, for Derrida’s readings aim to show precisely why there can be no pure position of governance, no position immune to all corruption. All identities are constituted through a repetition open to difference, and this applies to the new “concepts” that emerge out of these analyses. A further difference among Derrida’s essays of this time can be seen when comparing his readings of philosophical and social scientific texts against those of works of literature. In general, Derrida’s readings of the former tended to follow the strategy just detailed, challenging their attempt to maintain systematic coherence through the demonstration of singular eruptions from within. By contrast, Derrida chose to read literary authors who seem to display no pretension to systematicity. His interventions in these texts consist more in simply highlighting isolated moments that share much in common with the singularities disrupting philosophical texts. Thus, while Derrida called into question the traditional distinction between philosophy and literature, he did so in a very particular manner. Works of philosophy are shown to exhibit certain features of literature, but one does not find the symmetrically corresponding phenomenon of literature being corrupted by philosophy. Philosophy is called into question in a way that literature is not.15

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15. It is interesting to note in the context of this distinction that in Spurs (1976), and indeed throughout his writings, Derrida reads Nietzsche more as a literary author, insofar as he privileges the resistance to systematicity contained in Nietzsche’s writings. This is in part a response to Heidegger’s attempt to characterize Nietzsche as a metaphysical thinker.
While Derrida never again matched the extraordinarily prolific output of the 1960s and early 1970s, he continued to publish at a steady rate on an ever-increasing number of thinkers and topics. Commentators have proposed various schemes for characterizing different stages in Derrida’s oeuvre, but none have proved satisfactory and all have been resisted by Derrida himself. Nonetheless, it is the case that Derrida’s strategies of intervention and the topics most prominently addressed changed as time passed. After 1972, structuralism and phenomenology ceased to be the main sites of engagement, and the relation between speech and writing disappeared from explicit view. Further, several thinkers who received extended treatment in the early work – most notably Husserl, Saussure, Rousseau, Mallarmé, and, after the exhaustive reading in Glas (1974), Hegel – were rarely mentioned in subsequent texts.\textsuperscript{16} Instead, in the 1970s Derrida engaged more thoroughly with several other intellectual movements and figures that would remain important to him for the rest of his career. Psychoanalysis came under increasing interrogation, with Derrida giving extensive readings of Freud and Lacan in The Post Card (1980) (later texts devoted to Freud and psychoanalysis include Archive Fever [1995] and Resistances to Psychoanalysis [1996]), and Freud was often invoked in the course of readings of other thinkers. Derrida also developed a sophisticated account of mourning out of the psychoanalytic work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. This began in Glas, was thematized at length in “Fors” (the preface to Abraham and Torok’s The Wolf Man’s Magic Word [1976]\textsuperscript{17}), and was revisited in later works, especially in texts devoted to honoring lost friends such as Memoires for Paul de Man (1986) and the many essays gathered together in The Work of Mourning (2001). Derrida examined philosophy’s treatment of femininity and sexual difference in several works, beginning with a reading of Nietzsche in Spurs (first delivered at the 1972 Cerisy conference on Nietzsche, then published in a quadri-lingual edition in 1976), followed by engagements with Levinas (“At this very Moment in this Work Here I am,” [1980; reprinted in Psyche, Vol. I]), Heidegger (“Geschlecht: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference” [1983; reprinted in Psyche, Vol. 2]), as well as a famous interview entitled “Choreographies” (1982;\textsuperscript{18})

\textsuperscript{16} Among these, Husserl is a partial exception, since late in his career Derrida did engage with his work in On Touching (2000; a long book devoted to Jean-Luc Nancy that also contains readings of several phenomenologists) and in the second essay of Rogues (2003).

reprinted in Points\textsuperscript{18}) that discussed the rise of feminism in the academy. J. L. Austin’s speech act theory first received Derrida’s attention in the 1972 essay “Signature, Event, Context” (published in Margins of Philosophy, then again, together with the long exchange with John Searle from 1977, in Limited Inc [1988]), and the distinction between performative and constative utterances was a regular point of reference in subsequent writings, even as its ultimate coherence was always contested. With the formation of GREPH in 1975, Derrida started to focus on issues in philosophical education, and over the following decade and a half published over a dozen essays examining the writings of past philosophers on related topics as well as the functioning of existing educational institutions (these are collected in Du droit à la philosophie [1990]). Derrida also continued to offer readings of works of modernist and avant-garde literature, beginning in the 1970s an extended engagement with the work of Maurice Blanchot (most of these essays are gathered in Parages [1986]). Other authors to whom he devoted substantial attention in the following years included Jean Genet, Francis Ponge, James Joyce, Paul Celan, and Hélène Cixous. These writings generally followed Derrida’s earlier practice of focusing on concentrated moments that displayed inassimilable singularities at work within the texts. Aesthetics became a new concern, with essays in the 1970s on Immanuel Kant, Heidegger, and the artists Valerio Adami and Gérard Titus-Carmel gathered in The Truth in Painting (1978). Derrida also regularly wrote on or collaborated with numerous artists and architects in the subsequent years, including Artaud, Jean-Michel Atlan, Simon Hantaï, Colette Deblé, and Peter Eisenman, and in 1990 published Memoirs of the Blind, the book accompanying the exhibition for which he was curator at the Louvre.

Finally, it is worth recognizing that unlike some other thinkers prominent in Derrida’s early work, Heidegger never ceased to be of central importance and remained a constant point of reference. Every few years Derrida published an essay engaging Heidegger’s thought, and particular themes, in addition to art and sexual difference already mentioned, included the latter’s understanding of time (in “Ousia and Grammê” [1968; reprinted in Margins of Philosophy]), the distinction between the human and the animal (in “Geschlecht II: Heidegger’s Hand” [1987; in Psyche, Vol. 2], Aporias [1996], and The Animal That Therefore I Am [2006; the text of a long lecture from 1997, one chapter of which concerns Heidegger]), Nazism (in Of Spirit [1987]), and friendship (in “Heidegger’s Ear: Philopolemology [Geschlecht IV]” [1993]). Other works that contain important discussions of Heidegger even as he is not their central focus include “The Ends

of Man” (1968; first published in *Margins of Philosophy*), *The Post Card* (1980), *Given Time* (1991), *Specters of Marx* (1993), “Faith and Knowledge” (1996), and *Rogues* (2003). These texts are fascinating to read, not least because of Derrida’s attempts to distinguish himself from Heidegger in the face of his unique proximity to Heidegger’s thinking. The need to always return to Heidegger and explore new themes in his work suggests that he remained the most important and challenging of Derrida’s influences, one with whom Derrida perhaps never fully came to terms.

In the 1980s, Derrida focused his work more explicitly on ethical and political themes, an interest that expanded in the 1990s to also encompass religious topics. It is inaccurate to conclude from this that Derrida thereby became political, ethical, or religious, both because (as he himself always insisted) these themes were already at work in his earlier writings and because such a view wrongly suggests that he began to advocate a particular politics, ethics, or religion. Rather, what was new was that Derrida provided more direct analyses of a large number of normative concepts coming from these fields. Thus in “The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration” (1986; reprinted in *Psyche, Vol. 2*), Derrida began examining the relationship between justice, the law, and responsibility, a theme he then pursued at length in “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’” (1990), which also encompassed a long analysis of Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence.”19 These themes were taken up in *Specters of Marx* (1993), where Derrida provided an extended reading of the figure of the ghost in Karl Marx’s writings (alongside a reading of *Hamlet*) in order to deconstruct some of the metaphysical assumptions at work in Marx’s thought (and indirectly in French Marxism). This text also introduced the notion of the messianic, which Derrida interrogated alongside faith, religious violence, sacrifice, and salvation in “Faith and Knowledge” (1996). Nationalism, National Socialism, and European identity were examined in *Of Spirit* (1987), “Interpretations at War: Kant, the German, the Jew” (1990; on the German-Jewish identities of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig, reprinted in *Psyche, Vol. 2*), and *The Other Heading* (1991; on European identity in Paul Valéry). *Politics of Friendship* (1994) expanded Derrida’s political investigations further by examining the connections between friendship, fraternity, and democratic citizenship in the history of Western thought (with a special emphasis on Aristotle, Montaigne, Nietzsche, and Carl Schmitt). Democracy was also the central theme, together with sovereignty, of *Rogues* (2003). In *Given Time* (1991), Derrida analyzed the concept of the gift in the work of Marcel Mauss and

Charles Baudelaire, and this continued in readings of Jan Patočka, Kierkegaard, and Levinas in *The Gift of Death* (1992), which also focused on the notions of sacrifice, responsibility, and decision. And hospitality was subject to deconstruction in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (1997), “On Cosmopolitanism” (1997; also discussing, as the name suggests, cosmopolitanism), and seminar transcripts from 1996 and 1997 published as *Of Hospitality* (1997; reading the figure of the foreigner in Plato and Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus*) and “Hostipality” (2002; reading hospitality and forgiveness in Levinas and Louis Massignon).

This list – and it is not exhaustive – testifies to the wide range of Derrida’s analyses of normative concepts. Among the theorists engaged, Kant and Levinas deserve special mention. The ethical frameworks of these two thinkers loom large in Derrida’s writings of this period, constituting both his greatest resource and thus the views whose insufficiencies he demonstrates most forcefully. Derrida argues that while Kant’s understanding of duty and the law is a necessary element in any normative structure, it fails to reckon with the dimension of incalculability required by any satisfactory account of responsibility. In his emphasis on alterity, Levinas goes much further in addressing responsibility, yet his position too is shown to be inadequate as it presupposes a humanism that undermines the coherence of the otherness involved and fails in its goal of articulating an ethics beyond violence. As always, Derrida does not propose to remedy these faults by offering an alternative approach that would avoid such errors. Rather, he underlines the insufficiencies as characteristic of the inevitable complexities faced by all theorizations of normativity.

As with his early work, while Derrida’s later writings involve multiple approaches and styles of intervention, one strategy does emerge across several contexts and themes. All of the normative concepts mentioned above involve inherited injunctions: prescriptive commands that are passed down across the Western tradition. One of Derrida’s most persistent claims is that for any given notion, the inherited injunctions that constitute it are multiple, and these multiple prescriptions conflict with one another at the very same time as they rely on one another. Derrida argues that such a division is both necessary for the coherence of the norm in question and makes possible its perversion and transgression. The concepts thus cannot successfully function as norms in a manner that would render them immune to all danger or corruption. For example, hospitality is tied to a series of prescriptions concerning the welcome of visitors in all sorts of situations, and these prescriptions are embedded in customs and traditions. Through reading a number of texts in the “Abrahamic” tradition (designating Judaic, Christian, and Islamic cultures, including their secular derivations), Derrida argues that these prescriptions divide into two regimes. The first consists of a single, unconditional law of hospitality that mandates an openness to all, regardless of who or what may come, and without
limitations on what the welcomed might thereby do. The second regime consists of the many conditional laws of hospitality, laws that determine which actions are appropriate in which situations and to whom, thereby articulating limits beyond which hospitality need not be offered. These two regimes of law are in tension with one another – one commands to welcome unconditionally, the other to welcome according to certain conditions – but Derrida argues that they nonetheless rely on one another. The unconditional law, he claims, is impossible. Hospitality cannot be given without condition, if only in order to master the space within which another is welcomed. As impossible, this law thus calls for the determination of conditions and in this way is tied to the conditional laws of hospitality. Now if this were all that Derrida proposed, then there would be no tension here, since it suggests that hospitality does not involve an unconditional law at all. For this reason, it is essential to Derrida’s argument that he show a relation of dependence in the reverse direction. This he does by arguing that a purely conditional understanding could never qualify as one of hospitality, since it would be reduced to a system of exchange; hospitality would be granted only at the price of certain conditions being met. Derrida thus claims that the conditional laws, if they are to be laws of hospitality and not simply rules for an economic transaction, must gesture toward that which exceeds them, namely, the openness beyond all limits that the unconditional law decrees.

The legacy of hospitality thus consists of a divided injunction, and the very meaning of hospitality depends on such a division. To be hospitable is to engage with the dual imperatives of conditionality and unconditionality. At the same time, this structure shows that the norm of hospitality is linked to its own failure or perversion, in at least three senses. First, since this norm requires a continuing engagement with contradictory laws, no single attempt to be hospitable can ever fully succeed. Second, this structure inscribes the possibility of co-opting the norm of hospitality for other ends, since one can always appeal to the necessity of conditional hospitality as an alibi for the limits imposed in any given instance. Third, the reliance on unconditional hospitality means that every welcome opens itself to danger, since it decrees that one be open to both the friend and the enemy, the chance and the threat. Thus, in addition to making possible what are often seen as desirable outcomes – such as increased inclusion and a greater acceptance of difference – the attempt to be hospitable also calls forth the greatest dangers. For this reason it does not follow from Derrida’s analyses of hospitality that one should do one’s best to approximate unconditional hospitality, even as it is impossible. Such an action is not inherently desirable and has no guarantee of safety: being more open means also being more open to what can come in and destroy the host. The unconditional law of hospitality thus does not function as a regulative ideal or a form of the highest good. Rather, if
Derrida is correct, what is required is the constant negotiation with both regimes of law, the unconditional and the conditional. In some situations, one might well choose to promote a greater conditionality in the attempt to bring about what is considered to be a better state of hospitality.

This final claim is not always advanced in work commenting or building on Derrida’s analysis of hospitality. Indeed, the opposite view – that Derrida’s work implies the constant promotion of a greater openness – seems to be supported by Derrida’s own appeals to the unconditional law of hospitality when criticizing current limits in the immigration policies of First World nations, particularly when it is a question of admitting individuals from less privileged regions of the world. However, these discussions are themselves highly conditioned, and one can easily think of situations in which the same politics would advocate greater closure. Should one, for example, demand that Third World countries open their borders further to First World investment? And to First World armies? A politics aiming to approximate unconditional hospitality must say yes, for this is what the simple goal of greater openness requires. To respond by saying that of course one needs to decide each case separately is precisely to recognize that unconditional hospitality is not the guiding ideal. It is also worth recalling in this context that Of Hospitality closes with an extremely violent example, where Lot offers his daughters to be raped by the Sodomites in order to protect the angels he has welcomed.20 Greater openness need not coincide with, or even approach, what is considered to be good.

Across his later writings, Derrida argued that similar structures were functioning in several other normative concepts. On some occasions, such as in his work concerning the gift and forgiveness, he explicitly invokes the language of unconditionality and conditionality in order to diagnose conceptual configurations virtually identical to the one just outlined. More often, most notably in his analyses of democracy, national identity, responsibility, law and justice, friendship, and the decision, the same vocabulary is not always literally used, but the structures articulated share much in common, always involving dual regimes of injunction that are in tension even as they require one another. As a result, Derrida demonstrates how norms cannot serve as the basis for an ethics, politics, or religion that would be beyond the threat of destabilization. All are threatened by perversion from within. In addition, Derrida’s writings from this period also consistently drew attention to the impurity of these domains themselves. He underlines the ways in which ethics, politics, and religion are always entwined, arguing at length that the priority of one over another cannot be sustained in

any given instance. The legacy of Derrida’s later work thus does not consist in the emergence of a thinker advocating ethical, political, and religious principles or beliefs, a thinker who was somehow more ethical, more political, or more religious than before. Rather, these texts bequeath a profound demonstration of how fraught and unstable the central concepts and boundaries of the fields in question really are.

IV. LEGACY

Turning to the question of Derrida’s legacy as a whole, one is struck by the transdisciplinary impact of his work, noting at the same time that this impact is unequally distributed. With respect to the traditional institution of philosophy in France, his influence has been minimal. Several French philosophers owe much to Derrida’s writings, including Kofman, Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Catherine Malabou, and Bernard Stiegler, but while he gained some recognition within the traditional academic system, most philosophers in France seem more or less untouched by his thought. Derrida’s influence on anglophone philosophers has been even more reduced, and outside those that focus on continental philosophy, most departments of philosophy in the English-speaking world would reject outright the possibility of teaching courses on his work. The situation is different within anglophone continental philosophy, where Derrida is generally recognized as an important figure and, in addition to his work being studied in its own right, his readings of other thinkers remain key points of reference in many ongoing debates.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that Derrida thus failed to transform philosophy in a wider sense, for since the 1970s there has been a rapid growth in the prevalence of philosophical thinking. This thinking has more often than not appeared in English-speaking countries under the name of “theory,” usually preceded by an adjective – architectural, critical, feminist, film, literary, postcolonial, queer, race, and so on – and its practitioners are located in academic departments across the humanities. Taking these new regions of academic inquiry into account, philosophy now unfolds in a variety of guises. The unprecedented response to Derrida’s death – over 5,000 signatories honored his memory in response to the dismissive obituary of The New York Times, and since 2005 at least twenty-five academic journals have published special issues dedicated to his work – is evidence of the importance he holds in the wider academy. This importance reflects the choice, discussed earlier, that Derrida made to occupy and develop theoretical and institutional spaces at the margins of – and outside – philosophy as a discipline. In locating himself thus, Derrida encouraged an engagement with philosophy and its history in areas far outside
its institutional borders, and in doing so he played no small part in the birth and development of theory as it exists today.\(^{21}\)

As with any legacy, Derrida’s remains to unfold in the future, and any pronouncement on its status will necessarily need revision.\(^{22}\) But it cannot be doubted that his writings and teaching have already made a profound impact, one that is unique among the thinkers of his generation.

**MAJOR WORKS**


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\(^{21}\) Charting the extension of philosophy beyond its traditional disciplinary boundaries in the years following the emergence of poststructuralism is the focus of the essay by Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti in _The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7_.

\(^{22}\) There are plans to publish transcripts of all of Derrida’s seminars, the first of which to have appeared are _The Beast and the Sovereign, Volumes 1 and 2_. If the currently available seminars are any guide, these are likely to contain extensive readings of many more thinkers and texts than are found in the works published during Derrida’s lifetime.


The Work of Mourning. Edited and translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago,
Jean-François Lyotard was one of the great philosophical essayists of the twentieth century. It will be argued here that he contributed to a renewal of the essay form and wrote on a series of important questions with subtlety, humor, and style. His choice of the essay form, from his early political essays, through his important books on the role of figure in discourse, on the libidinal and on the importance of radical difference, and on to his many later essays on art, philosophy, and politics, reflects two key aspects of his work: a suspicion of theories that encompass a multitude of different themes and positions under a single unifying account; and a sense that how something is argued – its aesthetic form and emotional charge – is as important as its logical structure. The essay form and the production of many different essays on varied topics are then one of his ways of resisting a return to a totalizing philosophy.

If the lasting value of his work is to be recognized, the distinction drawn between philosophical arguments and essays is essential. Two commonplace questions often asked of philosophers determine an approach to Lyotard’s work that fails to do it justice: “What is your main idea or concept?” and “Can you describe your key philosophical concern and method?” Both questions set up

what he came to call a “differend” with his approach, that is, a difference or opposition that cannot be bridged on terms that are just toward both sides of an argument. If the views or position defined by one side are imposed on the other, there is in Lyotard’s terms a “tort,” a wrong that cannot be rectified according to a system of justice set up by the side that does the wrong. In misrepresentations of his work, the wrong comes partly from the reasonableness of the questions. Why not inquire about a philosopher’s main idea, key concern, and method? Would it not be suspicious were the thinker unable or unwilling to answer? Would this not be a clue to a failing in the thought, perhaps a basic lack of clarity or a malign desire to confuse issues? In response to these questions, I will show how Lyotard seeks to use the flexibility of the essay form to allow historical events and aesthetic works to demand our attention, but also to appear free of any conceptual reduction, in particular in relation to the intractable differences at play in their conflicts or material richness.

Much of his emphasis on historical events and their social and political consequences can be drawn out of Lyotard’s biography, although any simple equation of life and work would be far too abrupt, since the works seem to prefigure and go beyond events rather than merely follow them. Lyotard’s earliest works describe the effects of the Second World War and, in particular, the Holocaust on young postwar thinkers. He argues that neither orthodox Marxism, nor liberalism, nor techno-scientific rationalism can allow us to comprehend and do justice to those events. It is not that reason and socialism are not necessary; they are and will continue to be for Lyotard, but they are not enough. After passing his agrégation, he taught in the early 1950s at a lycée in Constantine, Algeria. This experience led directly to his involvement, from 1954 to 1963, in the French revolutionary group Socialisme ou Barbarie, seeking to encourage revolution and independence for Algeria. Algerian independence was won in 1962 after a long and bloody conflict but, according to Lyotard’s analyses, revolution failed. Later, after teaching at both the Sorbonne and Nanterre, he took up a university post at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, where he worked with Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, and many other key French academics of the time. While at Nanterre, he played an active role in the May ’68 student revolts, but again, this revolution was betrayed according to Lyotard’s reading, in particular in the way socialist principles were diluted by the French socialist party when it took power in the 1980s. Later, Lyotard helped form the Collège International de Philosophie (with Jacques Derrida and François Châtelet, among others). He then took on the role of an international academic and intellectual with a series

2. Many of his essays for the group are collected in Jean-François Lyotard, Political Writings, Bill Readings and Kevin Paul Geiman (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
of posts and lecturing assignments around the world, notably the University of California-Irvine and Emory University.

The early critical reception of Lyotard’s work has often concealed the deep value of his essays: their multifaceted sensitivity and balance. A thinker who sought to avoid generalization found himself at the center of a widely followed and denigrated truism. Lyotard’s “main” idea was never that we now live in a postmodern age characterized by postmodern artworks and politics – where modern would mean united and responsible for unity, and postmodern would mean disjointed and cynically celebratory of fragmentation. Only a very limited reading of his *The Postmodern Condition* and a failure to read, for example, his *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982–1985* would allow such conclusions. One of his claims was indeed that we live in an epoch of fragmentation marked by the failure of “grand narratives.” These narratives are accounts of history and of progressive development that bring together many strands of human effort into a single vision of a better future. This utopian focus emerges out of a past that it makes sense of but also repudiates in favor of a new beginning. Some of the more simplistic Marxist and liberal democratic commentators fit this description (for example, Francis Fukuyama’s famous thesis on “the end of history” in capitalist liberal democracy). However, Lyotard never claimed that the failure of these grand and totalizing visions should simply be celebrated and accomplished in a postmodern art, politics, and philosophy associated with a particular epoch.

Owing to this erroneous ascription of satisfaction with late-capitalist postmodernity, Lyotard is accused of being a poor philosopher with a weak grasp of key forms of argumentation and with a typically postmodern unwillingness to broach key ethical and political aims in a clear, consistent, and principled manner. This critical argument is found in its most strident form in Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut’s *La Pensée 68*, a denunciation of French left-wing thought around and after the revolutionary events of May 1968. Lyotard strove to renew the energy and rigor behind philosophical forms of justice, but free of the crudeness and violence of certain types of modern thought and politics. This was never to be achieved once and for all in a postmodern epoch or in fragmented works; instead, a creative philosophical resistance had to draw on resources found at all times, on the margins and in the avant-garde, but also in “canonical”

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works. These resources themselves demand to be drawn out in new forms, rather than as critical overviews or judgments. Far from defending fragmentation, his philosophy is much closer to a view of an ongoing transformation of works taken as “difficult wholes.” This transformation is guided by a resistance to wrongs and has the goal of testifying to differends, that is, to enduring differences that are unjustly hidden or eliminated.

I. BEYOND THE MODERN AND THE POSTMODERN

There is then something of the modern and of the postmodern in Lyotard. His work reflects notions of difficulty and complexity that combine a modern desire for unity and a postmodern sense of fragmentation. This combination extends into his understanding of the roles and forms of argument and position-taking in philosophy. Style and form must reflect the paradoxes and contradictions necessary for the expression of multiple positions that cannot be reduced to one another. Ethical and political concerns cannot lead to final categorical truths, but rather must lead to testimonies to the need for further varied thoughts eschewing exclusive positions, while trying to do justice to many positions and to the richness of the matter at hand.

Lyotard’s work therefore consists of a series of essays – some of them book-length – as opposed to a series of philosophical positions or arguments. The essays are experimental attempts to think round a problem or challenge, while at the same time drawing our attention toward a wide set of delightful but also shocking and puzzling aspects of a topic. They are artworks with a style, originality, and complexity that resist simple reductions to primary ideas and methods. They are also crafted political interventions, philosophical because designed to prompt and guide thought, yet resistant to a definition of philosophy as, essentially, a clearly argued form of problem-solving and bridge-building. This resistance is not perverse or willfully obstructive; rather, it stems from the intuitions that, first, the problems at hand cannot be truly resolved through simple methods and concepts and, second, that the matter encountered by artists and thinkers of all kinds deserves a rich and expressive medium, rather than any reductively clear categorization or definition. Broadly, this is because events exceed any conceptual apparatus designed to present them and because matter demands a rich expressive medium capable of conveying that excess and of overcoming our tendency to become satisfied over time that an established medium is in fact satisfactory for giving a full presentation of events and matter.

*7. Lyotard is discussed in the context of postmodernism in the essay on this topic by Robert Eaglestone in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
Lyotard comes closer, in French philosophical lineage, to the tradition that includes Montaigne, Voltaire, Diderot, Alain, and Barthes, rather than Descartes, Fourier, Comte, and Bergson. His work updates the essay form because he adapts it to a series of features that have determined the twentieth century, without being exclusive to it. Lyotard’s thought is deeply marked by the events of his century and by the relation of those events to a set of philosophical ideas, methods, and thinkers. In parallel, it is also marked by a long series of aesthetic works, primarily in literature and painting, but also in architecture and film. The first source means that his work is an ongoing attempt to intervene politically and philosophically within key trends and events, but with an acute awareness of the failings of many forms of thought in the face of events. This failure can be explained by the roles that thought has played in the event – although these need not be central or active. Lyotard belongs to the set of thinkers troubled by the relation of ideologies, including rationalism and Marxism, to catastrophic events. However, he is again misunderstood if the conclusion is drawn that there is a necessary connection between ideology and violence. When we read him as an essayist, we move from an emphasis on the necessity of that relation to an understanding of his work as charting cases of it, in all their complexity, but also as resistant to any debilitating fatalism or exclusive judgments.

II. RESISTANCE IN ART AND PHILOSOPHY

A key companion intuition to Lyotard’s connection of events to the failings of ideology is that this flaw is avoided by some artworks, or more precisely, by the relation of artwork, matter, and affect. So the second main source of his thought provides a counterpoint to the first. This is because artworks are seen as reflecting the necessity of failure while refusing to allow it to smother them. He is then attempting to pass somewhere between the thwarted desire to change the world forever for the better and the despair at the impossibility for success. Lyotard is aware of the value of the desire, but he is equally aware of its historical attraction to violence and to nihilism as a loss of values and of belief in political reform. Art can express its own limits in the attempt to grasp matter, but that expression becomes an affirmation of matter in its capacity to stun and to energize. This power is a counter to a threefold cause for despair after historical events: first, events cannot be represented while still doing justice to what has

8. Lyotard’s philosophy of events differs from those of Badiou and of Deleuze. For Lyotard, the event is a radical break, while for Deleuze, as set out in The Logic of Sense, the event is a disjunction in a series. And in contrast with Badiou, who in Being and Event and Logiques des mondes sees the event as open to a positive presentation and acts of fidelity, for Lyotard, the event is unpresentable and a moment of profound passivity. [*] For a discussion of
occurred in them; second, events are signs of the impossibility of final reconciliations; third, they occur beyond any predictive logic. In its combination of expression, limitation, and productive materiality, art can provide testimony to events while avoiding representation and the reduction of fault lines to false resolutions. It is important for Lyotard that this materiality be seen as elusive in terms of linguistic descriptions and theories.

Lyotard’s life and career follows cycles of dispiriting events that he later identified through a series of names (Auschwitz, Budapest, 1968). His writing is then a form of struggle against discouragement but with a determination not to resort to false consolations or to inaccurate images of the past, the present, or even the future. His essays use the historical and contemporary resources of philosophy, but in an ironic manner, thereby creating literary assemblages rather than works of pure theory (this irony comes out most strongly in the collection *The Inhuman*). So, in parallel to events, we find a series of theoretical focus points corresponding to different stages in his output. These range from a very early and popular critical introduction to phenomenology (*Phenomenology*) through an engagement with structuralism and psychoanalysis (*Discours, figure*) to reflections on Marx and Freud (*Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud; 1973*) and a Nietzsche/Klossowski-inspired dynamic philosophy (*Libidinal Economy*). These are then followed by a turn to ancient philosophy and a revival of paganism (*Instructions païennes; 1977*), then developed into works that draw on Kant and Wittgenstein around questions of justice and incommensurability (*Just Gaming, The Differend*). After these, Lyotard’s most mature period of essay writing begins with the important collections *The Inhuman* and *Postmodern Fables*. Although his output was very great, it is arguable that it was still cut short since his most beautiful essays, on Malraux (*Signed, Malraux and Soundproof Room: Malraux’s Anti-aesthetics*), are followed by important posthumous works on Augustine (*The Confession of Augustine*) and *Misère de la philosophie*.9

*Misère de la philosophie* is Lyotard’s last collection of essays. It connects to nearly all of the work that precedes it, not only in terms of content but also through its styles and reflection on earlier ideas. For instance, the allusion to Marx in the title is a reprise of the frequent engagements with Marx and Marxist themes throughout Lyotard’s career, not only in the early works for *Socialisme ou barbarie* and in *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*, but also in the

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Badiou's philosophy of the event, see the essay by Bruno Bosteels in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*. 

later *The Differend*. This latter discussion is important because it shows how Lyotard remained committed to thinking through Marx but in ways consistent with the developments of Lyotard’s thought: “This is the way in which Marxism has not come to an end, as the feeling of the differend.”¹⁰ This connection is not surprising given the consistency of issues and ideas throughout his philosophy. This is not to say that there are a few lines that draw his work together, but rather that there are many different ones, present in each essay in different ways and to varying degrees. The late collection is then a good example of the transformation of the essay form achieved by Lyotard. Theory and conceptual innovation become key components of the form, but are not allowed to dominate it. Instead, an ironic juxtaposition of style, theoretical argument, aesthetic moments, and careful autonomous descriptions of “external topics” (such as artworks or historical cases) forms an unstable unity where none of the subparts is allowed to dominate, but where all work together as a critical and creative ensemble. The essay form then moves beyond the model of an open discussion, or of an aesthetic intervention, to become a “transformer” and “resistor” on the margins of other forms of pure theory, artworks, historical cases, philosophical argument, and social commentary. The concepts of the transformer and of resistance allow us to understand Lyotard’s political positions in their relation to art and to aesthetics. The artwork as transformer disrupts structures through the introduction of novel intensities or feelings, thereby prompting the emergence of different structures in tension with the earlier ones. He used the former in a short essay on Duchamp and, among others, Kant: *Duchamp’s TRANSformers*. The latter is one of the dominant themes of the works on Malraux through Lyotard’s sense that Malraux’s life (and any well-lived life) is an ongoing resistance to infamy.

### III. NARRATIVE AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Narrative is one of the main concepts transformed and resisted by Lyotard, because an overarching narrative is one of the main ways in which different positions and tendencies can be reduced to a single account. His work studies what he sees as the necessary but not sufficient role played by narratives in the constitution of selves, communities, political groups, and social movements. This necessity comes from the way identity grows out of a primary flux that unfolds over time and requires organization and limits. Identity is then a form of narrative order and selection over a much larger and disparate set of events.

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individuals, and characteristics – as well as their multiple and varying relations. The insufficiency of narratives comes from the way in which events exceed their attempts to give them shape over time. A narrative brings order to a matter that it depends on but cannot control. This matter is not only what we could term the external event (what happened and how it was perceived) but also the internal matter (the language that has to be bent into a narrative shape). Both of these decay and renew themselves in ways that go beyond the original attempt to capture and to express.

Unlike philosophers who stress conceptual or ideal identity in a Leibnizian or Platonic vein, where a sense of definition comes from a set of conceptual predicates or an independent idea (“I or we are X”), Lyotard is interested in the way a story or account draws together and relates some elements while also excluding others. Lyotard is wary of the conceptual model because it does not have the capacity for flexible patterns and evolutions offered by a narrative, where many different and contradictory strands, some present and others defunct, can be held together without having to be sifted for consistency and ultimate order. Thus, the narrative “My past runs through Y and leads to my present X” is opposed to the conceptual “I was X, but now I am Y.” It can be argued, following Lyotard’s study of discourse in Discours, figure, that conceptual clarity always hides a minimal narrative in the conjunct of the “but,” which introduces a form of narrative account into the present concept through the story of how one becomes what one is. Moreover, the bald statement “I am X” cannot escape the subtext “But I was Y,” unless it denies any historical development, thereby plunging identity into a series of atomic moments rather than a development through time. Concept-formation assumes narrative, which in turn assumes a struggle of narrative with excessive events, as well as the inevitable occurrence of new events in each later attempt to narrate earlier events. Narrative provides a conscious line of identity, but it hides an unconscious line that it cannot legitimately ignore and yet cannot finally include in the conscious line.

Grand narratives, as described in The Postmodern Condition, maintain a relation between a drive toward a better future and a past that remains a threat and a lesson, for example, in the thought “Never that again.” This relation is then allied to an account of how the tools necessary for achieving the passage from past to future came into being (for instance, in the edifying narrative of Enlightenment as able to draw us out of obscurantist dogmatism thanks to reason deployed in the sciences and ethics). In The Differend, Lyotard explains how political communities emerge from a founding definition of their values and principles, for instance, in the signing of a constitution. This founding moment is then narrated so that later parts of the community can both interpret it and feel they belong. For him, simply having an idea of Enlightenment values or a concept of a constitution is not sufficient for the emergence of identity because those
original sources are themselves divided and divisive. On a territory inhabited by many different groups, with a history of many different social and political systems, a single nation emerges through a narrative that always imposes unity. In a community formed around a constitution, where there does not appear to be quite such an imposition, Lyotard is concerned with the problem of how the few signatories of a constitution are connected to the many who are signed up to it by proxy. They must be made to belong and this belonging comes from a narrative that explains how “we” are represented by “them,” or are continuous with “them” in some way.

In a parallel manner, he sees how the many stages of an individual self require a narrative that connects the very different aspects of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, not only in terms of maturity but also in terms of the individual tensions that run through any life. This contributes to the acuity of his Signed, Malraux and The Confession of Augustine because Lyotard can both describe those tensions and the difficult attempts to reconcile them in autobiographical fictions. It also contributes in Lectures d’enfance (1991) to his interest in childhood as a positive state detrimentally hidden in adulthood. However, this requirement to narrate always has a cost, because the continuity and integrity of a recounted life are built on a series of exclusions. These are the necessarily unconscious aspects of a life that each narrative generates as it tells the life. He is particularly concerned with the form and extent of this cost for two reasons: the exclusions beget injustices that cannot be righted easily insofar as the exclusion banishes one outside the law, for example, by denying a right to be heard; and the exclusions can involve forms of violence that are hard to render visible, such as the denial of roots and culture. The function of Lyotard’s essays is then often to reveal the unconscious exclusions behind narratives and the theories dependent upon them.

IV. EXCLUSION AND INJUSTICE

Lyotard’s concern with narratives of identity, whether communal or of the self, is that they necessarily involve exclusions both in terms of their external borders – those or that which does not belong – and in terms of their internal construction – that which is at work in the founding moment or process but not avowed. These exclusions lead to differences to which justice cannot be done in terms of the original narrative. Contemporary cases of this kind of exclusion might take in those rejected in tales of the emergence of an intrinsically “superior” set of values based on gender, religion, or ethnicity, but they could also take in those banished through an appeal to a narrative about original owners of a land, or those expropriated because unable to make “reasonable” claims to original
ownership, or those discriminated against for failing to be “rightful” heirs to a religious tradition or authority, or those excluded or mistreated because they fail to recognize the “validity” of a dominant economic or social discourse, or market values, or certain forms of liberal democracy. This process should be seen not only as one of unjust exclusion, but also one of unjust inclusion. Lyotard’s point is not only that narratives leave something out, but also that they construct a false identity. There is never a pure inside that others are excluded from; rather, both sides of the process are based on an illegitimate obscuring of more complex and irreducible differences at the outset. This is why his account also extends to the self, where the narrative that accompanies the emergence of a given self-identity creates a false view of the self because it necessarily fails to take account of all aspects behind this emergence.11

I wish to raise three possible objections to Lyotard at this point. (i) Is he committed to an amoral position where all narratives are equally at fault in terms of illegitimate exclusions and inclusions? (ii) What alternatives does Lyotard propose to narrative and, if he fails to have any, is he not offering us a council of despair? (iii) Is it not possible for some narratives to respond sympathetically and positively to what they have excluded or failed to include properly? The first two questions allow for simple answers in Lyotard’s defense. He does not believe that all narratives are equal in the violence of their exclusions. On the contrary, certain narratives are viewed as paradigms of violence and wrongdoing, hence his denunciation of Holocaust deniers in The Differend and his continued critique of racism and colonialism that began in his essays on Algeria. The view that all narratives involve exclusions does not imply that all narratives are the same in the violence or scope of that exclusion. The notion of paradigmatic wrongs or exclusions does not commit Lyotard to an overarching tale that allows him to relate different narratives. Instead, the cases he takes as exemplary are determined by the extreme nature of the wrong, when taken from the point of view of how to do them justice. Attempts to put witnesses to the Holocaust in the purportedly impossible position of providing irrefutable evidence as to exact numbers of dead when traces were so systematically erased, denials of humanity in racism, and the eradication of cultural history in colonialism are therefore recurrently attacked in his work because of the call to testify for those who cannot express a wrong done to them.

11. Lyotard’s approach at this point is close to Derrida and to deconstruction. His work can be interpreted as an extended dialogue with Derrida, starting with the explicit adoption of deconstruction in Discours, figure, through a more severe critical stance in Libidinal Economy, and then back, in The Differend, to a detailed interaction with Derrida on questions of how to pursue ethics and politics, once philosophy opens itself to the call of an absolute otherness and to the necessity of viewing text and narrative as unavoidably beyond clear signification.
Nor does Lyotard think that there are no alternatives to narrative. Rather, his argument is that there are no positions standing completely above and beyond narrative and its power to bequeath identity. Narratives must therefore be supplemented by critical accounts that show exclusions and illegitimacy in order to replace and improve on given positions. These critical moves cannot finally "win." Nevertheless, we are rightly driven to continue to testify to injustice and to wrongs even if this cannot be in the context of an overall grand narrative or of a reliable improvement determined by stable and enduring principles and values. It is not nihilistic to think that violence and its causes will return and cannot be replaced by some utopian peace, so long as motivations remain for reforming and just action. Nor is it nihilistic to claim that such action is relative, not only in its own capacity for injustice, but also in its failure to have external and inviolable principles. This relativity must not be confused with claims to equivalence with respect to different moral acts. The relativity concerns the necessary persistence of some exclusions and false inclusions, rather than the equivalence of specific exclusions across different cases. There are always illegitimate exclusions, but some are worse than others. The assumption that there will always be new exclusions does not imply that it is not worth struggling in the name of particular injustices. It means that we should never be satisfied that a social situation, political theory, or philosophical methodology are finally good and therefore beyond reproach.

The third objection is more difficult to answer. It is in connection to it that Lyotard turns to many different interpretations of the role of the unconscious in narrative and to philosophical concepts that define experiences, events, and feelings as approachable through narrative and discourse but as never fully captured by them. The fact that he develops such concepts could be seen as a contradiction, since he would be providing a conceptual argument for nonconceptual things, but this serves only to emphasize the importance of his work as an essayist, where concepts and methods cannot be separated from a form of communication that adds expression, style, and feeling to them in order to deny both that all we have is the concept and that the concept can stand independent of emotion. Indeed, this emotion or affect is Lyotard’s link to the unconscious in all his works. This explains the variety and persistence of accounts of the relation of feeling, structure, and unconscious drives in his works, from the role of figural events in discourse in *Discours, figure*, to intensities dissimulated in dispositions in *Libidinal Economy*, to the feeling of the sublime undoing and yet also feeding into Ideas of reason in *The Differend*. It also explains his deep impatience with the accusation of "performative contradiction" in his rational defense of the irrational. Lyotard’s defense was never simply rational nor a simple appeal to reason. The argument never accepted the far too simple dichotomy drawn between reason and that which lies beyond it.
dynamism are inextricably linked and their separation is an illusion, a temporary conjuring trick, rather than a permanent achievement of argument and analysis. Narratives can and should attempt to address what they have excluded, but Lyotard’s point is that this will not stop further unconscious exclusions. Moreover, there are some aspects of narratives which give rise to such profound differences, differends, that we can only surmount them by changing to a new narrative, rather than inflecting the old one.

V. TIME AND THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

Lyotard’s study of time (for example, in “Emma,” in Misère de la philosophie) reveals a series of arguments as to why certain events necessarily escape narrative and why he thinks of this in terms of the unconscious through a critical reading of Freud. The first and perhaps most important argument is about the nature of time in narrative or, more precisely, the limits that time sets for narrative in its relation to feelings and affects. Lyotard divides time into a series of diverging but also interfering lines. There is not a single and united time, but many timelines running alongside each other with points of contact and capacities to transform one another. One line, the one we are most familiar with, stands for the way conscious recollection can return to earlier events. Such conscious recollections follow one another in the familiar linear manner, that is, according to a straight line passing from past, through present, to future. The forward momentum of this line, its “passing away” and “moving toward,” describes a loss or insufficiency and a counter possibility for novel creation. This is because, when we remember earlier events, we do so in a manner that is necessarily limited, that is, the early event can never be entirely and accurately brought back. Instead, the earlier event has to be renewed in the present through a narration (this is what happened …). However, another line departs from the same early event and drifts away from the straight line of successive conscious recollections and narrations. This other line describes the unconscious life taken on by aspects

12. Given this connection of time and narrative, it is worth recalling that Lyotard worked with Paul Ricoeur in the 1960s and that there are many connections to Ricoeur’s work in Discours, figure, notably his work on hermeneutics and on Freud. Later, Lyotard does not mention the author of Time and Narrative (Vols I, II, III) very much, perhaps because he had already covered much of the same ground in Discours, figure while developing a very different position, but also perhaps because of their opposed sides during the events of May 1968 when Ricoeur was dean at Nanterre. Lyotard made severe comments on what he saw as Ricoeur’s compromises with political authority and repression in his essay “Nanterre, Here, Now,” reproduced in Political Writings, 46–59. For a discussion of Ricoeur’s Time and Narrative, see the essay by Wayne J. Froman in this volume.
that escaped consciousness at the time of the event but that were nonetheless inscribed unconsciously. A very simple example of this would be cases of missed insults and slights. At the time of the initial injury we consciously perceive no sign of malevolence and hence have no evidence for later cognitive analysis or associated narration. We cannot say “she did it to hurt,” because there is no it. To all intents and purposes nothing happened. But something did happen, and it returns unexpectedly, this time signified not by the actual injurious fact, but by a disturbing feeling (Hold on a minute! What did she say exactly?) This feeling occurs on the familiar conscious line but sets it in relation to another unconscious one, where the unconscious event has bubbled away independently of our blithe conscious thoughts.

It could be assumed from the distinction drawn between conscious and unconscious times that we have only two lines and that the second can be folded back on to the first, but an important feature of the difference between the two times is that it sets up a wider fragmentation and incommensurability. This is because, first, each time the lines interfere they set off new divergences and, second, because different aspects of the original event lie on different unconscious lines. For example, an original meeting may involve an unconscious slight (immature fool – she thought), but also an unconscious attraction (the reddening in his cheeks betrayed his attraction and revolted her all the more). These may return to the conscious line in different and incompatible manners, setting up interferences between each other and with the conscious line. The attraction and the insult bubble along independently of one another; they are triggered to return into consciousness at different times; and when they do they set off new relations to one another (for example, the attraction becomes doomed and hence even more troubling when we realize the slight). An event fans out into a set of time lines, which then fold back on to one another. Time therefore unfolds in a complicated manner, not as a simple stream, but as a series of connected but unpredictable whirls and eddies.

Lyotard denies that conscious reflection or narratives can somehow regain full control of unconscious processes. He accepts that these processes must reappear in perceivable and knowable forms, but he points out that this return is particularly troubling and disruptive. The reappearance of something hidden involves an undoing of control through the disruption of current conscious lines of knowledge, understanding, and narration in their relation to the past. This is why he is interested in Freudian psychoanalysis through its studies of deep-seated neuroses triggered by the return of twofold past events. An event in the past is twinned with another later event and this twinning explains the particularly troublesome return in the present. It is not that a new fact occurs to be added to a set of ongoing accounts. It is rather that two combined and hitherto concealed events return to question and undermine those ongoing
processes. So the unconscious returns with the power of a betrayal rather than as an innocent discovery. This return is doubly difficult to handle because it disrupts the accounts we have formed for our conscious recollections and resists further incorporations through its dual nature. We do not only have to handle one returning event but two apparently incompatible ones.

This series of unconscious lines and their power to disrupt chaotically yet with great intensity is detrimental to the claims of narrative. Our conscious tales have the role of setting up identities over time against the necessary failure and waning of memory, but these narratives are themselves prey to different aggressions and failures in relation to unconscious events and timelines. It is crucial to note that throughout his work, Lyotard viewed this fragility in relation to the return of the unconscious as a positive platform for the resistance to false inclusions and exclusions. Narrative is reminded of its necessary limitations and injustices through the affects and feelings that express what has been unconsciously concealed. His philosophical essays can be seen as repeated efforts to conduct this unconscious power, not only in the name of justice, but also for the renewal of creative narratives themselves. This explains his concern with Freudian psychoanalysis and its work on suggested recollection or anamnesis, but it also explains why he criticizes and adds to this sense of recollection. Lyotard agrees that anamnesis is necessary, but once it is set as a specific practice with a set psychoanalytic theory, then it is constricted and misunderstood. There can never be a final theory of the unconscious, but only essays that attempt to express why there could be no such finality. This is not a dishonest attempt to “say what cannot be said.” It is rather an attempt to think through the nature of our sources of knowledge and identity, to work out their limits, and therefore to see how we may begin to reflect on how to remind ourselves of those limits, given the precise nature of necessary forms of exclusion and forgetfulness.

VI. AFFECTS AND MATTER

This return of a forgotten or repressed unconscious is described in terms of figural events in *Discours, figure*, of libidinal ones in *Libidinal Economy*, of sublime ones in *The Differend*, the *Inhuman*, and *Postmodern Fables*, and of emotion-laden bodily events in Lyotard’s last works. In each guise, he also constructs theories of how these events erupt into economic, narrative, and cognitive structures. The political point of these constructions lies in the way they make space for further events and creations designed to allow us to be reminded of what has been left out, necessarily and unknowingly, in our current forms of understanding and valuing of the world, of others, and of ourselves. His essays then have the task of giving voice to that which is not and cannot
be known. This is not a simple contradiction. It is a paradox that lies behind the emotive and aesthetic style of his work: to write in order to make space for events, rather than close them off; to write in order to do justice to wrongs that have not been recognized; to write in the awareness that philosophy often sets itself goals inconsistent with this sense of otherness and injustice.

The aesthetic and political power of events is frequently described by Lyotard in terms of the combination of matter and affect. This connection is designed to answer the problem of how consciousness and unconscious events come into contact and can be worked with. It allows him to subvert and transform oppositions drawn between a scientific and naturalistic view of matter and a more aesthetic, phenomenological view of emotions. For him, affects are transforming and disturbing bodily events; they should not be identified with standard feelings, sensations, or emotions in relation to a form of intentionality – although they can overlap with them. Instead, an affect combines a cognitive challenge, in the sense that something occurs that resists knowledge yet registers as something that has an effect on our structures of knowledge or intention. For example, an affect could be the occurrence of a strange background distaste that does not fit with our current senses of taste but changes their value and status. This distaste is an affect, since it transforms our senses in relation to our knowledge of them while resisting incorporation, but also registering a longer-term and troublesome event (meat lost its savor, after the stench of the abattoir).

The importance of affects is twofold. First, they are Lyotard’s way of convincing us of the limits of knowledge and of established narratives. This conviction is a matter not of argument, but of providing a framework of concepts and ideas for readers to either sense that they have also undergone such affects, or recognize that they have not. Again, the essay form of his writing, as well as his work through art and artists, is important here. Lyotard has to enact and dramatize affects and their occurrence as events in order to transmit their possibility to readers (this is done particularly well in Libidinal Economy through literary descriptions, or in his later ironic use of dialogue in The Inhuman and Postmodern Fables, or in his late poetic style in Soundproof Room). Second, affects are a way round the problem of having to present something that resists identification. Lyotard often describes this as the challenge of having to “present the unpresentable” and he connects it to his deep interest in Judaism, for instance, in Heidegger and “the Jews” or the late “D’un trait d’union” in Misère de la philosophie. For him, the ineluctable demand in Judaism to testify but without representing connects to the demand to follow on from an affect but with the impossibility of accurately representing it. Thus, for Lyotard, the demand to bear witness to the Holocaust is necessarily without end because the affect that drives the demand can never be assuaged yet must always be answered. This state of being “beyond measure” is important for his treatment of affects, since measure
would allow for cognitive treatments and comparisons of affects. This does not mean that we should eschew knowledge; on the contrary, it means that knowledge must be supplemented by testimony to the event. Justice requires knowledge and affect.

Affects are material events. They happen in the body and in relation to other material occurrences (the taste happens in response to an external prompt, a smell or a foodstuff). However, as much as affects resist ordered representation so does the prompting matter (sounds, visions, things touched, things read). So Lyotard is committed to a view of matter as different from objects or any scientific determination of objective reality, because the matter that accompanies affects must allow for their capacity to resist identification and knowledge. This view recurs through his work and allows him to counter forms of naturalism, but it also lays him open to criticisms concerning a form of dogmatism with respect to material reality. Lyotard would appear to have a nonscientific and in principle unverifiable definition of matter, because he claims that matter is not solely determined by the natural sciences nor defined through philosophical definitions of objective reality. Yet this is not the case, because he resists offering a definition counter to naturalistic ones. Instead, he seeks to convince us that we should allow for the moving nature of matter on the evidence of the occurrence of affects and in addition to scientific accounts. Lyotard does not offer a pure theory about the form of matter, but a combination of descriptions of what matter must be given the occurrence of affects and given our creative responses to them (where we create new forms with them rather than seek to represent and identify them within established frameworks).

VII. ART AGAINST RECUPERATION

The connection of matter and affect comes out most strongly and is explained best in Lyotard’s studies of art and artists. He describes artists as working with a matter that drives them to experiment through affects. The artist is then both working through an affect, in an echo of Lyotard’s work on Freudian anamnesis, and creating new affects by allowing matter to stand as something that is not simply an object of knowledge. For example, in his many references to Cézanne, Lyotard describes the painter as attempting to create colors that “vibrate” in such a way as to trigger sensations in the viewer beyond sensations of specific colors. The colors go beyond their objective frame; they are not the colors of something. They also go beyond set meanings and narratives; they do not carry a specific sense but call for new ones. So although we have scientific definitions of matter, we must also have ones that leave a space for matter that drives artistic creation, provides a material for it, and becomes its effect. So when he speaks of
the importance of “motion” for Cézanne, this must supplement objective and
psychological approaches to motion with a sense of matter and affect as disrup-
tion, including the disruption of exclusive claims to understanding.

The sensitivity and precision of Lyotard’s work comes out well in this discus-
sion of painting. He is not saying simply that there are emotions beyond our
understanding, nor that the artist “sees” differently, nor that we can have a
romantic view of nature beyond a scientific one. Instead, his point is that there
is a cycle of affects prompted by and carried through matter, where the artist is
both driven by a material event and creator of one. Matter in the artwork must
be thought of in conjunction with affects, so there is never simply matter, nor
simply affect. All the relations are essentially circulating and driven onward on
a cycle of physical demands and creative replies. This is a “donation,” a given to
and a given by art as affect and matter, where neither of them nor any of their
combined individual instances can be separated out as the grounding moment
for true knowledge or true ungraspable feeling:

It is not the search for the condition, impersonal or not, of the given
which immobilized Cézanne before his mountain; it is the search
for its donation. Phenomenology cannot reach donation because,
faithful to the philosophical tradition of the Occident, it is still a
reflection on knowledge, and the function of such a reflection is to
absorb the event, to recuperate the Other in the Same.13

In parallel to this resistance to the desire to recuperate the otherness of matter
and affects into knowledge, Lyotard’s essays resist recuperation into final theo-
ries or argument, ideas or visions. This is not out of any preciousness or elitism,
much less out of a desire to fool readers or to adopt a false depth. Rather, his
essays lead us to the connection of fields with their “Others,” that is, with that
which is supposed to be kept outside them, or lies unconscious within them,
denied but at work in strange and unpredictable ways. Like the art he spends
so long describing and interacting with (much longer than any other topic),
his works repay greater attention to their detail rather than a focus on their
final points or arguments. Detail here means a combination of material with
sensation: how an ironic style can connect distant arguments by revealing and
triggering strange yet accurate sensations. So The Differend, for instance, can
be read as a thesis about certain types of legal and extra-legal conflicts, but
its aphoristic style is also suited to a retracing of influences and consequences
between multiple political desires and philosophical positions. This is not in

13. Lyotard, “Discours, Figure,” in The Lyotard Reader and Guide, Keith Crome and James
order to finally condemn any single position, but to get a better sense of what it presupposes and leads to, of which political desires and dreams and with which commitments about the resolution – the false resolution – of underlying disputes and claims it may commit us to. Lyotard’s works are therefore deliberately suggestive in a sense taken from Freudian anamnesis. Yet, even in this link to Freud as key influence, we learn little from Lyotard if we think of him as Freudian or anti-Freudian. He is a critical, constructive, and inventive essayist in his own right, always helping us to read in ways that point us toward unexpected omissions and rich associations. This should not be seen as a luxury, something we can afford only when all goes well – that is – never. It is rather a necessity driven by the requirement to remind ourselves of what we have excluded illegitimately, triggered by an affect we cannot ignore, that we must attempt to testify to, while never letting ourselves rest with the illusion that we have succeeded with a final just outcome: “The articulated phrase and the affect-phrase can ‘meet’ only in missing each other. From their differend, there results a wrong. If articulation and inarticulation are irreducible to one another, this wrong can be said to be radical.”

MAJOR WORKS


Pierre Bourdieu1 is normally considered to be primarily a sociologist, but he was trained philosophically and developed a philosophy of sociological practice that deserves attention. The purpose of this essay on Bourdieu is, first, to consider the philosophical origins of Bourdieu’s “negative philosophy”; second, to discuss the development of his philosophy of social science; third, to follow his articulation of a conceptual framework that he then applied to understand a range of kinds of social behavior; and, finally, to return to Méditations pascaliennes and other texts to discuss the way in which this framework was applied to the practice of philosophy. This is both a chronological sequence and a thematic progression.

On leaving the École Normale Supérieure, Bourdieu taught philosophy at a provincial lycée before he was conscripted to serve in the French Army in Algeria in the early years of the Algerian War of Independence (1956–58). On returning to France in 1961, he became secretary to the research group that had been established by Raymond Aron: the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, Paris. During the 1960s, he carried out research in relation to student life, their studies, and culture. In the same decade, he also carried out research on cultural production and reception. As a result of the translations into English of his educational research, he was at first primarily associated with the sociology of education, but the analyses of photography and art museums were the prelude to work on aesthetics and taste that was most clearly presented in his Distinction: A Social

Critique of the Judgement of Taste. It was this work that most firmly established his reputation as a sociologist of culture. From 1975, he edited his own journal – *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* – and, briefly (1989–97), an international review of books entitled *Liber* that was initially published simultaneously as a supplement to five European newspapers.

From the mid-1990s until his death, Bourdieu was an influential public figure in France and his disposition to favor the cause of the underprivileged gained for him a following in an international political context as well as in the field of international social science. His socioanalytical method and his political engagement were both demonstrated in the project that he directed that was published as *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. To these last years belong engaged texts such as *Acts of Resistance*, but it was his last course of lectures as professor at the Collège de France, *Science de la science et réflexivité*, that best represents the balance of his intellectual and social project.

Late in his career, in April 1997, just less than five years before his death, Bourdieu published his *Méditations pascaliennes*. There had been little overt reference to the work of Pascal in his earlier texts. Only hindsight enables us to detect “nuances” or “influences.” There was, of course, the suggestion, implicit in the title, of a revision or tacit critique of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*, but the significance of the positive choice of Pascal is not to be ignored and Bourdieu devoted the introduction to his book to an explanation of this choice. There Bourdieu claimed that, when questioned about the relation of his thinking to Marx, he had for a long time adopted the habit of replying that “all in all, if I really had to affiliate myself, I would say I was more of a Pascalian.”

For Bourdieu, the supreme indication of his sense of affinity with Pascal was that Pascal had been “concerned …, devoid of all populist naivety, for ‘ordinary people’ and the ‘sound opinions of the people’” and, inseparably from this, had always sought:

> the ‘reason of effects,’ the *raison d’être* of the seemingly most illogical or derisory human behaviors … rather than condemning or mocking them, like the “half-learned” who are always ready to “play the philosopher” and to seek to astonish with their uncommon astonishments at the futility of common-sense opinions. (PM 2)

The corollary of this shared distrust of academic, or scholastic, or intellectual interpretations of ordinary experience was that Bourdieu was “convinced that Pascal was right to say that ‘true philosophy makes light of philosophy’”

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In truth, Bourdieu always had a philosophical urge to disclose truths but always exhibited ruthless skepticism about the capacity of the institutionalized discourse of Philosophy, with all its accumulated autonomous traditions, to effect that disclosure. In writing *Méditations pascalienes*, he became aware of “the strangeness of my project, a kind of negative philosophy that was liable to appear self-destructive” (PM 7), but he was cautiously confident that his lifetime of social scientific inquiry would empirically suggest ongoing answers to ongoing questions about evolving humanity that would not be revealed in the self-referential speculation about transcendental human values of socially disengaged philosophers:

I do not know if I have succeeded, but I have in any case acquired the conviction that the social world would be better known, and scientific discourse about it would be better understood, if one were able to convince oneself that there are not many objects more difficult to understand, especially because it haunts the brains of those who try to analyze it, and because it conceals under the most trivial appearances, those of daily banality for daily newspapers, available to any researcher, the most unexpected revelations about what we least want to know about what we are. (PM 8)

As the title given to an interview of 1985 with Axel Honneth and others implies, Bourdieu’s commitment was to “Fieldwork in Philosophy.”

Before gaining entry to the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, where he studied from 1950 to 1954, Bourdieu had first been sent away from the rural environment of his childhood to board at the lycée in Pau, the main town of the Béarn in southwest France. His early social trajectory embodied a tension between the indigenous cultural influences of his family and the culture that he needed to acquire in order to succeed educationally and to compete effectively in the market of Parisian intellectual exchange. This cultural schizophrenia was reinforced linguistically, so Bourdieu himself claimed, between the spheres of deployment of the Béarnais dialect and French. There was, therefore, an experiential source for Bourdieu’s subsequent intellectual interest in the relationship between affective and cognitive understanding. In short, his intellectual endeavor came to focus somewhat incestuously on the nature of its own account of preintellectual feeling.

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I. BOURDIEU’S EARLY PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

In the 1985 interview to which I have already referred, Bourdieu tried retrospectively to define his intellectual situation during his student years. Bourdieu mentioned the influence on him of Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem, Henri Gouhier, Martial Guéroult, Alexander Koyré, Jules Vuillemin, and Eric Weil. Elsewhere, he added Pierre Duhem to this list. He commented:

All these people were outside the usual syllabus, but it's pretty much thanks to them and to what they represented – a tradition of the history of the sciences and of rigorous philosophy … – that I tried, together with those people who, like me, were a little tired of existentialism, to go beyond merely reading the classical authors and to give some meaning to philosophy. (FP 4)

In the same interview, Bourdieu remarked that “When I was a student in the fifties, phenomenology, in its existentialist variety, was at its peak, and I had read Being and Nothingness very early on, and then Merleau-Ponty and Husserl” (FP 3). In summary, therefore, we can say that Bourdieu’s retrospective view in 1985 was that there were two main strands of influence on his thinking in the early 1950s: one derived from his knowledge of the work of professors specializing in the history and philosophy of science and the other derived from his reading of phenomenology. There is no space here to explore in detail the likely impact of all of these acknowledged influences on the development of Bourdieu’s thinking. But some key points can be made regarding, first, Bourdieu’s familiarity with the history and philosophy of science by reference simply to the work of Guéroult, and, second, Bourdieu’s comments about phenomenology with respect to the French reception of Husserl in the period after the Second World War. I shall suggest that Bourdieu’s early knowledge of Leibnizian rationalism and of interpretations of that rationalism in the history and philosophy


6. Martial Guéroult (1891–1976) was among the leading historians of philosophy of his generation. He taught at the University of Strasbourg from 1933 to 1945, held the Chair in the History of Modern Philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1945 to 1951, and was elected in 1951 to the Chair in the History and Technology of Philosophical Systems at the Collège de France, which he held until his retirement in 1962. In addition to his work on Leibniz, Guéroult wrote texts on Descartes, Berkeley, Malebranche, Spinoza, and Fichte. [†] Guéroult’s work on Spinoza is discussed in the essay by Simon Duffy in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
of science led him toward what he was later to call a “constructivist” theory of science and away from the positivist philosophy of social science that was the legacy of the Durkheimians. Acquaintance with the work of Husserl consolidated this sense of the philosophical inadequacy of positivist empiricism and reinforced Bourdieu’s consistent opposition to any form of psychologism, but it was only the “discovery” of the orientation of the late Husserl in the post-Second World War period that enabled Bourdieu to reinsert a kind of empiricism and to reconcile his philosophical interests with the practice of social science.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

We know that Bourdieu produced, under the supervision of Gouhier for a diplôme d’études supérieures in 1954, a dissertation that was a translation of, and a critical commentary on, Leibniz’s Animadversiones in Partem Generalem Principiorum Cartesianorum. Unfortunately, it seems likely that no copy of this study is extant and we can, therefore, only speculate about the nature of its content in relation to the development of Bourdieu’s thinking. Speculation is helped by Bourdieu’s recollection, in the “Fieldwork in Philosophy” interview, that while at the École Normale Supérieure, he had followed the classes of, among other philosophers of science, Guéroult at the Collège de France. In his Esquisse pour une auto-analyse, Bourdieu especially highlighted Guéroult’s Dynamique et métaphysique leibniziennes as one of the two great works – the other being Vuillemin’s Physique et métaphysique kantiennes – that enabled him to resist the influence of existentialism. Guéroult’s text was written quite specifically to reopen discussion of the relationship between dynamics and metaphysics, or, more generally, between science and philosophy in the work of Leibniz. The classical thesis had been that Leibniz’s philosophy followed exclusively from his science whereas the scholarship of the first decade of the twentieth century, notably that of Russell in his The Philosophy of Leibniz, translated into French in 1908, and that of Couturat’s La Logique de Leibniz (1901), had argued the reverse: that Leibniz’s metaphysics had followed completely from his logic and, above all, from his mathematical research.

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7. For a discussion of Durkheim, see the essay by Mike Gane in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
8. Henri Gouhier (1898–1994) taught at the University of Lille from 1929 to 1940, then came to the Sorbonne where, in 1948, he became Chair of the History of Religious Thought in France since the Sixteenth Century, a position he held until he retired in 1968. Gouhier published many texts on the history of French philosophy, including several books on Descartes as well as books on Malebranche, Pascal, Rousseau, Maine de Biran, Comte, and Bergson.
Guéroult’s text followed in detail the development of Leibniz’s philosophy of science. In his earliest works, of the 1670s, Leibniz opposed modern physicists such as Galileo and Wren who supposed that laws of motion could be deduced from the simple observation of the movement of bodies. For the early Leibniz, abstract, *a priori* laws of motion make possible the understanding of sensible movements. Although he was inclined to oppose crude empiricism, he nevertheless realized that there often appeared to be a disparity between the laws of abstract and concrete physics. As Guéroult puts it, Leibniz tried to overcome this disparity by arguing that:

> to pass from abstract laws to the concrete world, we have to suppose the intervention of the wisdom of God who creates an economy in the world such that the proximate effects of abstract laws are modified by their distant effects, so much so that there result entirely different real effects which are sensible phenomena.\(^\text{10}\)

This hypothesis enabled Leibniz to advocate the discovery of the causes of current phenomena by regarding them as distant enactments of their abstract origins. However, Guéroult shows that this conception did not enable Leibniz to understand the conservation of motion in the world and he was led to posit not just a principle of prime movement but, rather, a principle of ongoing participatory motion.

However, the consequence of Leibniz’s transposition of God from abstract, metaphysical prime mover of the material world to immanent spiritual presence in the physical world had the effect of liberating a vitalist, nonmechanical physics from metaphysics. To re-establish the unity of metaphysics and physics following this dissociation, Guéroult suggests that there were two possible ways of thinking available to philosophers. The first, he claims, was the way to be taken by Kant in his *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* (*Versuch den Begriff der negativen Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*) of 1763, whereby the opposition of forces in the physical world are taken to be the basis for rethinking metaphysics, whereas the second was the reverse way taken by Leibniz in his mature philosophy of locating physical opposition in the purely rational.\(^\text{11}\)

There are two important points to make here with respect to the influence of this history of the philosophy of science on the development of Bourdieu’s philosophy of social science. The first is that Leibniz rejected the empiricism of

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his contemporaries, but also rejected the Cartesian separation of mind and body, of thought from extended matter. Leibniz struggled to advance the idea of an immanent, participatory logic involved in suffusing physical and metaphysical explanation as well as suffusing physical and metaphysical forces. For Leibniz, there were separable truths of reason and truths of fact, but the two constantly interrelated. The second point is that Guéroult’s text on several occasions explicitly cites Leibniz’s Animadversiones in evidence that Leibniz, by the time that it was written in 1692, had articulated clearly his view of the inadequacies of Cartesianism. Following Guéroult’s reading of Leibniz’s Animadversiones, the formal and substantive dimensions of Bourdieu’s intellectual activity were to be deliberately anti-Cartesian, on the one hand opposing the intellectual detachment of Sartre’s supposed political “engagement” and, on the other, attacking the biologically a priori status of Chomsky’s “generative grammar.” Leibniz’s project of reconciling individual freedom with logical and theological necessities thus provided the model for Bourdieu’s notions of agency and habitus, whereby, like “monads,” individuals interact neither wholly mechanistically in predetermined ways, as was suggested by the class determination of crude Marxism, nor wholly finalistically, dictated by goal-setting objectives. Instead, individuals act strategically by constantly making fluid adjustments to changing situations that balance mechanism and finalism pragmatically.

III. VARIETIES OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL INFLUENCE

As far as the influence of Husserl is concerned, we can revert to the passage quoted above in which Bourdieu commented that during his student days, “phenomenology, in its existentialist variety, was at its peak.” As stated, his comment also suggests that he was led back toward the work of Husserl by first reading Sartre and then Merleau-Ponty. Asked by his questioners whether he had ever been interested in existentialism, Bourdieu replied later in the same interview:

I read Heidegger, I read him a lot and with a certain fascination, especially the analyses in Sein und Zeit of public time, history and so on, which, together with Husserl’s analyses in Ideen II, helped me a great deal – as was later the case with Schutz – in my efforts to

analyze the ordinary experience of the social. But I never really got into the existentialist mood. Merleau-Ponty was something different, at least in my view. He was interested in the human sciences and in biology, and he gave you an idea of what thinking about immediate present-day concerns can be like when it doesn’t fall into the sectarian over-simplifications of political discussion … (FP 5)

Notice here that Bourdieu specifically highlights Husserl’s *Ideen II*, which were only first published in German in 1952, rather than *Ideen I*, which had been first published in German in 1913 and translated into French in 1950. This point is important because it indicates that Bourdieu was influenced by the “late” Husserl. There is a great deal of debate in Husserl studies about whether Husserl’s representation of phenomenology remained essentially consistent from his earliest work of the 1890s to the late and posthumous publications of the late 1930s. There is one view that insists that throughout his life Husserl experimented with different ways of saying the same thing, always searching for new ways of “introducing” phenomenology. There is another view that argues that there was an important shift in his thinking in the 1930s, partly in response to the divergent thinking of Heidegger and partly as a result of the mediation of his disciples and editors. I do not want to enter into this debate, but I do want to try to outline some of the differing responses to Husserl’s work in France and these differences do relate to the different textual sources for the representation of the meaning of “Husserl.” To summarize rather brutally, Husserl began by opposing the view that our knowledge is dependent on our psychological makeup. Instead, he emphasized the importance of logic and seemed to be searching for the universal characteristics of logic. This seemed to be a form of *a priori* idealism or transcendental phenomenology. The influence of Heidegger was to move toward an emphasis on Being rather than knowledge or consciousness. Husserl seemed to go some way in that direction but, in the

14. I emphasize this because the English translation of this passage published in *In Other Words* wrongly footnotes the English translation of *Ideen I*.
15. See, for example, the discussions of Husserl in the essays by Thomas Nenon and Diane Perpich in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.
1930s, emphasized the view that logic is grounded in our experience of the social world, or what he called the “life-world.”

In the 1930s and early 1940s, there were three dominant tendencies in the French reception of Husserl’s thought. The first was a tendency to consider Husserl’s work as a form of modern scholasticism. Bourdieu had no interest in the content of this pre-existential or neoscholastic strand of Husserl interpretation nor, formally, in its appropriation of the phenomenological movement for academic philosophy. The second response to Husserl’s work sought to constitute existentialism out of phenomenology, and pushed further the ontological interpretation of phenomenology advanced by Heidegger. Levinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Ricoeur are the French thinkers most associated with the existentializing of Husserl that followed from the publication of Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit in 1927. There is often a whiff of Sartrean influence in Bourdieu’s early work, particularly, for instance, in Bourdieu’s rejection of the self-expressive nature of artistic creation in favor of a view, outlined in “Intellectual Field and Creative Project,” that artists constitute themselves and their works through encounters within a field of production. However, Bourdieu did not want to produce a philosophy of identity construction but, instead, to analyze encounters sociologically. Although he would have been sympathetic to Sartre’s rejection of the essential self, Bourdieu was not interested in developing an existential psychology in opposition to Freudianism.

The third tendency, which can be called “epistemological” insofar as it treated Husserl as a logician and philosopher of science, was led by Jean Cavaillès, who had a profound influence on some of the figures specifically mentioned by Bourdieu (Canguilhem, Vuillemin, and Merleau-Ponty). Before his conscription to the army, Bourdieu was about to register to carry out research under the supervision of Canguilhem on “the temporal structures of affective life,” which most likely would have reflected the interest of Canguilhem and Merleau-Ponty in physiology and medicine rather more than the phenomenology of “emotions” offered by Sartre in his Outline of a Theory of the Emotions. Bourdieu related to the work of Merleau-Ponty in two ways. The first way, I suggest, is

18. Full bibliographic information for the various essays by Bourdieu mentioned in what follows can be found in the Bibliography.
19. Jean Cavaillès (1903–44) was a philosopher of mathematics and science whose interest in logic led him to Freiburg to study with Husserl in 1929. He taught at the École Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne. One of the founders of the French Resistance, Cavaillès was captured by the Nazis and executed. [*] Cavaillès’s work is also discussed in the essay by Pierre Cassou-Noguès in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.
21. For Bourdieu on Canguilhem, see Esquisse pour une auto-analyse, 40–45.
that he was influenced by Merleau-Ponty in the way he developed the notions of *hexas* and *habitus*, the mechanisms of cultural adaptation adopted by people. These concepts became parts of Bourdieu’s analytic apparatus but, at the same time, he was also influenced by Merleau-Ponty’s response to Husserl in being inclined to favor noncognitive responses to social reality: where Merleau-Ponty was to elevate perception above scientific explanation, Bourdieu’s use of photography was, arguably, an experiment in trying to bypass science in representing social phenomena.

Ricoeur published a translation of Husserl’s *Ideen I*, with a detailed translator’s introduction, in 1950 – the year in which Bourdieu commenced study at the École Normale Supérieure. Ricoeur’s philosophical exegesis was an attempt to distinguish Husserl’s transcendental idealism both from Cartesian *apriorism* and from Kantian transcendental idealism. Ricoeur argued that:

Husserl’s ‘question’ … is not Kant’s; Kant poses the problem of *validity* for possible objective consciousness and that is why he stays within the framework of an attitude which remains natural. … Husserl’s question … is the question of the origin of the world …; it is, if you like, the question implied in myths, religions, theologies and ontologies, which has not yet been elaborated scientifically.23

At the same time that Bourdieu was reading discussions of the implications of Kant’s critical philosophy for the elaboration of a philosophy of science, Ricoeur’s exposition opened up the possibility, of which Bourdieu would have been aware, that Husserl’s work could help in attempting to analyze the foundations of Kantian *apriorism*. Phenomenology was not to be understood as another philosophy but as a method for analyzing all modes of thought, including *philosophical* thought. This is the origin of Bourdieu’s “reflexivity,” or, better, his use of Bachelard’s idea of “epistemological break” to expose the social origins of all “objective” accounts of the social. It was this interpretation of Husserl – found in Lyotard’s introduction to phenomenology of 1954 (to which Bourdieu never

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22. Bourdieu took many photographs in Algeria. These have been exhibited internationally since his death. Some are reproduced in Bourdieu, *Images d’Algérie: une affinité élective*, which also contains a discussion of the use of photography as a research instrument in social science. Bourdieu’s discussion of photography was sustained in Pierre Bourdieu et al., *Un art moyen: Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1965).

referred in print)\textsuperscript{24} – that enabled Bourdieu to make a link between the legacy of Husserl and the influence on the theory of scientific method of Bachelard’s “historical epistemology.” This integration was most evident in \textit{Le Métier de sociologue}, which Bourdieu published in 1968 in collaboration with Jean-Claude Passeron\textsuperscript{25} and Jean-Claude Chamboredon. Subsequently, in the 1970s, it was the kind of differentiation between Husserl and Kant made by Ricoeur that enabled Bourdieu to deploy Ernst Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms to develop a sociology of culture.\textsuperscript{26}

With the posthumous translation of Husserl’s \textit{The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology} and \textit{Experience and Judgment}, subtitled \textit{Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic}, published in German respectively in 1954 and 1948, the view developed that Husserl’s thought was an attempt to articulate the prelogical foundations of logical systems. Two articles by Jean Wahl, both published in 1952, emphasized this reading.\textsuperscript{27} The first offers some notes on \textit{Experience and Judgment} and the second goes further in arguing that \textit{Experience and Judgment} highlights a potentially empirical dimension to Husserl’s late work. According to Wahl, Husserl argues in \textit{Experience and Judgment} that

\textsuperscript{24.} I refer here and later to Lyotard’s introduction to phenomenology (\textit{La Phénoménologie} [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954]; published in English as \textit{Phenomenology}, Brian Beakley [trans.] [Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991]), because it provides a useful indicator of reactions to Husserl for Bourdieu’s generation at the date when Bourdieu was completing his studies at the École Normale Supérieure. I have no evidence to suggest that Bourdieu read or used the Lyotard text, and Bourdieu’s attitude toward Lyotard was subsequently affected adversely by the association of Lyotard with “postmodernism,” which, as a movement of thought, Bourdieu disliked. Nevertheless, Lyotard taught at a lycée in Constantine, Algeria, during the 1950s and there are points of connection with Bourdieu’s thinking, in that they were both influenced by phenomenology and by the tangible complexity of the Algerian War of Independence to become skeptical about the claims of Marxism to provide universal explanations of the nature of capitalism and of the potential for revolution of the proletariat. Comparison between the work of Bourdieu and Lyotard is fruitful if we transcend crude differentiations between “modernism” and “postmodernism.”

\textsuperscript{25.} Jean-Claude Passeron was a contemporary of Bourdieu at the École Normale Supérieure and, like Bourdieu, served in the army in Algeria. On returning to France in the early 1960s, he became research assistant to Raymond Aron and worked with Bourdieu in the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. They ceased their collaboration in 1972 and Passeron’s main publication since that date is \textit{Le Raisonnement sociologique} (Paris: Nathan, 1991).


\textsuperscript{27.} Jean Wahl, “Notes sur la première partie de \textit{Erfahrung und Urteil},” \textit{Revue de métaphysique et de morale} 57 (1952), and “Notes sur quelques aspects empiristes de la pensée de Husserl,” \textit{Revue de métaphysique et de morale} 57 (1952).
“intentionality” is grounded in a sphere that precedes judgment. Wahl sees this as a form of realism that can be exposed in a form of empirical inquiry. Interest in Husserl, therefore, shifted toward an interest in the sociohistorical production of forms of knowledge. In terms of the interpretation of Husserl, the issue in relation to this fourth, “empiricist,” response to his work, neither scholastic nor existential nor epistemological, relates to the debate about the development of Husserl’s thought to which I have referred. However, the important point for understanding Bourdieu is to realize that his involvement in empirical social science inquiries throughout his career was an involvement that did not take the claims of empiricism at face value but, instead, situated them within a framework of thinking that was a consequence of working through the progression of Husserl’s thought.

Quite possibly, Bourdieu (and Lyotard) were also both directed toward a new way of grounding social science by a book published in 1946 by Jules Monnerot, entitled Les Faits sociaux ne sont pas des choses. As the title suggests, this was an attempt to use phenomenology to expose the formula of positivist social science advanced by Durkheim in The Rules of Sociological Method, first published in 1895. For Monnerot, there was an important distinction to be made between the understanding and the explanation of social phenomena. Durkheim’s work enabled us, instead, to see sociological explanation as one form of understanding that can itself be understood sociohistorically. This use of Husserl enables us to understand Bourdieu’s uneasy relationship to the sociological tradition as outlined in his Le Métier de sociologue (1968). When, in 1950, Aron reprinted the book he had written in 1933 after a research visit to Germany, entitled La Sociologie allemande contemporaine, in which he gave the first detailed exposition in French of the work of Max Weber, he inserted a reference to Monnerot’s book as a footnote. Differentiating the work of Weber from that of Durkheim, Aron wrote in his original text: “To grasp the distinction between [Weber’s philosophy] and the philosophy of Durkheim, shall we say that, thanks to understanding, the world of history is no longer a collection of things [choses], but human lives in a state of becoming.”29 Aron added a footnote here, commenting that “J. Monnerot has taken up these suggestions in his book, Les Faits sociaux ne sont pas des choses.” But Monnerot was not taking these ideas up in a way that was favorable to the Weberian philosophy of social science, as Aron was wanting to imply. Instead, Monnerot’s text

pointed toward the kind of participatory social critique of sociological explanation, based on a phenomenological orientation, that was to be the basis of Bourdieu’s efforts to understand social phenomena.30

IV. THE EARLY TENSION BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Bourdieu gained a reputation as a social scientist and was appointed to the Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France in 1981, but it is crucial to understand that his social research should never be seen as a detached, Cartesian, observation of social reality, but, rather, as the activity of a participatory social agent, deploying various explanatory languages to seek to establish their socially constructed prepredicative limits. Bourdieu’s understanding of the relationship between social science and philosophy, as well as the rationale for his attempted social scientific critique of philosophy, can be clarified with the help of Lyotard’s representation of phenomenology. In his consideration of “The Relation of Phenomenology to the Human Sciences” (Phenomenology, ch. IV), Lyotard argued that phenomenology “was led inevitably, by the very fact that it is not a metaphysics but a philosophy of the concrete, to take hold of sociological data in order to clarify itself, and equally to put into question the procedures by which sociologists obtain this data, in order to clarify sociology.”31 Similarly, Lyotard wrote that “Phenomenology’s discussion of its own historical meaning can be pursued indefinitely, since this meaning is not fixable once and for all.”32 Like Lyotard, Bourdieu was not interested in becoming a phenomenological philosopher, but, unlike Lyotard, Bourdieu chose to relate to the contingency of philosophical thought by subjecting it to a form of social scientific analysis that was simultaneously aware of its own philosophical shortcomings.

The tension between philosophy and sociology had already been apparent in Bourdieu’s first book, Sociologie de l’Algérie. Bourdieu’s intention was to transfer his philosophical interest in the phenomenological analysis of emotions and intersubjectivity to the larger issues of crosscultural adaptation that he witnessed


31. Lyotard, Phenomenology, 75. This could be taken as an anticipation of the position that Bourdieu articulated in “Thinking about Limits.”

32. Lyotard, Phenomenology, 133.
in relation to the Algerian response to French colonial intervention in North Africa. He needed to establish a status quo ante of Algerian cultures in order, subsequently, to analyze processes of cultural adjustment. This was the motive forcing Bourdieu to find ways of describing the traditional organization of Algerian tribes. A descriptive sociology was a necessary instrument to develop a descriptive phenomenology of acculturation processes. Bourdieu’s accounts of the original social organization of the Algerian tribes were mainly of interest to him inasmuch as they could be regarded as objectifications of the putative subjective values of those people whom he was to interview in their new situations in Algiers. The accounts were discursive exercises. Although the first edition of the book was entitled Sociologie de l’Algérie, the English translation of 1962 was entitled The Algerians, by which time, also, the findings were differently presented. By 1962, Bourdieu, back in France, had attended some of the research seminars of Lévi-Strauss and the English text contains diagrammatic representations of the social/spatial organization of a Kabyle house that anticipate “The Berber house or the world reversed.” This was Bourdieu’s most “Lévi-Straussian” article, but it subsequently became clear that there was no more conviction on Bourdieu’s part about this ethnological gloss than there had been in his use of Weberian discourse in Sociologie de l’Algérie to describe the Islamic fundamentalism of the Mozabite tribe. What we see in Bourdieu’s own critique of some of his earlier Lévi-Straussian pieces in the first part of Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique is not so much the discovery of a new methodological position but the articulation of a position that was able to accommodate the artificiality of the explanatory discourses that he had exploited in his formative intellectual apprenticeship in North Africa.

After returning to France from Algeria, Bourdieu first lectured at the University of Lille before establishing himself as a lecturer in the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales and as a researcher in Aron’s research group, the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. He undertook studies of the experience of students in French higher education, particularly students of philosophy and sociology, at the University of Lille when he was teaching there. The same mixture of concerns was present in this work as had been present in the Algerian research. Les Héritiers, les étudiants et la culture, coauthored with Passeron, focused on the curriculum as a mechanism of acculturation and Bourdieu published the results of questionnaires that attempted to generate a profile of the cultures of students prior to their academic studies.

In the mid-1960s Bourdieu was involved with a project on photography and photographic clubs that resulted in the publication of Un art moyen: Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie in 1965 and also involved in a project analyzing the attendance at French, and then selected European, museums/art galleries that resulted in the publication of L’Amour de l’art in 1966. That year
also saw the publication of “Condition de classe et position de classe” and “Une sociologie de l’action est-elle possible?,” both of which were essentially theoretical, the former in relation to structuralism and the latter in opposition to Alain Touraine, but there had been very little reason to anticipate the developed argument of “Champ intellectuel et projet créateur” – neither the articulation of the concept of “field” nor the application to cultural history. Bourdieu argued – against writers such as Lucien Goldmann – that the sociology of knowledge in general and of artistic production in particular should not be predicated on the autonomization of historical producers studied in relation to a currently imposed construction of their supposed social contexts. Rather, it should be founded on the analysis of those impersonal, objective systems within which communication takes place and within which meanings are immanently established. “Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945: Death and Resurrection of a Philosophy without a Subject,” published with Passeron in 1967, was an attempt to bring together the two perspectives in relation to their own scientific practice. Within the article, they attempted to provide an objective social history of intellectual relations in France between 1945 and 1966 from a systematically sociological perspective adopted at the end of this period, while, at the same time, they endeavored to contextualize their own intellectual agency during those years. In Les Héritiers, Bourdieu and Passeron had already inspected the social contingency of the student selection of these subjects of study and it could be said that they were now analyzing the social contingency of how these subjects were themselves constituted for student consumption. It was an approach that anticipated the abstract discussion of the “arbitrariness” of curriculum content in La Reproduction, but the constant, tacit frame of reference

33. Alain Touraine (1925– ) is a leading French sociologist who has been mainly concerned with the analysis of social movements. He founded the Centre d’Étude des Mouvements Sociaux in the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Bourdieu criticized what he took to be a determinist philosophy of social action, linked with a Marxist view of history, that he found in Touraine’s Sociologie de l’action. Bourdieu needed to make clear that his developing theory of practice implied a completely different view of social agency. Since the 1960s, Touraine has written numerous books, few of which have been translated into English. His political and intellectual position shifted somewhat, but there was never any other direct confrontation between Bourdieu and Touraine. For a comparison between the research methodologies of Bourdieu and Touraine, see Jacques Hamel, “Sociology, Common Sense, and Qualitative Methodology: The Position of Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Touraine,” Canadian Journal of Sociology 22 (1997).

34. Lucien Goldmann (1913–70) was an influential Marxist literary critic, sociologist, and philosopher, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. His Le Dieu caché: Étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine (The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine) is useful background reading in relation to Bourdieu’s Méditations pascaliennes.
was Bourdieu’s own position-taking between the two intellectual disciplines: the one within which he was trained and the other that he was employed to transmit.

Having initially dabbled with Lévi-Straussian thinking in the early 1960s, Bourdieu had then been tempted, in seeking to present himself as a sociologist, by American quantitative methods. The detailed statistical appendices to *L’Amour de l’art* suggest this temporary temptation. This was the period in which Bourdieu developed the conceptual framework, or interlinking explanatory system, on which much of his reputation as a sociologist depends. The core concept was the “habitus” by which, in his own words, he meant:

> The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.35

Many of the components of Bourdieu’s model of social reality are contained within this dense sentence. He advocated a “soft” determinism: human behavior is semi-conditioned by class background but everyone has a degree of freedom (and the extent of that degree of freedom is a function itself of class position) to exercise choice by which that semi-conditioned original can be modified. We all inherit the parameters of cultural disposition, which we can modify by making our own subsequent cultural choices throughout our lives. Bourdieu distinguished between class “condition” and class “position” and suggested that we all seek to modify our originating condition by deploying the status of objective symbols to alter our social positions. We start life with an originating “cultural capital” derived from our family backgrounds and we then construct our social trajectories by absorbing the social significance of a range of objects such as artifacts or educational qualifications. These objective symbols themselves only possess the capacity to influence individual social trajectories because status differentiation is itself constructed within a market or competition of values. The cultural capital we acquire that modifies our inherited cultural capital derives its value from its own recognition within “fields.” We find our ways through life by acting strategically to assimilate values and attitudes that are latently present at our disposal in a range of competitively self-fulfilling and self-validating objective fields of discourse or activity. If, for instance, we are brought up in a disadvantaged inner city and choose to join a golf club and move out to the country or

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to a suburb to live, we are deploying the socially constructed estimation of golf club membership and suburban living to modify our originating social status.

V. BOURDIEU’S EMERGING RECONCILIATION OF SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

This framework of thinking developed as if it were an adequate, or at least debatable, sociological account of social reality. However, by 1966/67, Bourdieu was committed to establishing a new reconciliation between philosophy and sociology that would underpin the empirical practice of the research group that he was to lead from 1968. These were very productive and significant years for Bourdieu. In 1967 he published his translation into French of Erwin Panofsky’s *Gothic Architecture and Scholastic Thought*, concluding with a “postface” whose argument is, in part, repeated in “Systèmes d’enseignement et systèmes de pensée.” Panofsky was a disciple of Cassirer and Bourdieu was clearly interested in Cassirer’s thought throughout this period. Not only did he cite Cassirer’s “Structuralism in Modern Linguistics” and his “Sprache und Mythos” in articles but, as general editor of the “Le Sens Commun” series for Éditions de Minuit, Bourdieu was responsible for organizing the translations into French of five works by Cassirer between 1972 and 1977, notably the three volumes of *La Philosophie des formes symboliques* (1972) and *Substance et fonction: Eléments pour une théorie du concept* (1977). In collaboration, Bourdieu produced *Le Métier de sociologue* in 1968. This was subtitled “Epistemological preliminaries” and was intended as the first of several volumes that would be of practical value to research students. It offered a blueprint for the theory of sociological knowledge that he was counterposing against structuralism. Indeed, this was the title of an article – “Structuralism and Theory of Sociological Knowledge” – that appeared in 1968 in *Social Research*, almost as a companion piece with “Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945.” In 1970, Bourdieu and Passeron published *La Reproduction: Éléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement*. The following year Bourdieu published both “Une interprétation de la théorie de la religion selon Max Weber” and also “Genèse et structure du champ religieux.” There were other significant texts in these years but I want to highlight the section of the first chapter of *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique,*

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*36. For a discussion of Cassirer, see the essay by Sebastian Luft and Fabien Capeillères in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.*
38. This article was never published in French.
39. See note 30.
précédé de trois études d’ethnologie kabyle, which was published separately in translation in 1973 as “The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge.” Bourdieu positioned himself within sociology by reference to a perceived inadequacy of Weber’s methodology. Weber’s use of “types” was an artificial or arbitrary imposition on phenomena that possessed inherent systemic meaning. In defining the boundaries of sociological explanation, however, Bourdieu was aware that sociological explanation as such represented a discursive imposition that was as artificial or arbitrary as “typological” imposition within the discourse. Necessarily, therefore, Bourdieu was forced to “situate” his own explanatory model of social action and to recognize that explanation is a form of action that is susceptible to analysis as much as what it purports to explain.

In spite of Bourdieu’s criticism of Merleau-Ponty in “Sociology and Philosophy in France since 1945,” Bourdieu had only strategically renounced his earlier phenomenological interests. The philosophical influence of Merleau-Ponty’s La Structure du comportement (1942) was particularly evident in “Célibat et condition paysanne” and in Bourdieu’s development of the concepts of habitus and hexis. And Merleau-Ponty’s La Phénoménologie de la perception was reworked in Bourdieu’s “Eléments d’une théorie sociologique de la perception artistique,” in which Bourdieu’s inclination was to relate varieties of art perception to the social positions of perceivers and, therefore, to “sociologize” phenomenological insights in a way that anticipated the detailed analysis of Distinction.

At the same time that Bourdieu was defining the limits of social scientific explanation, he was also reflecting on the prelogical, ontological realities that social science purported to describe. The framework of Le Métier de sociologue was based on an adoption of Bachelard’s emphasis on the need to make epistemological breaks so as to understand the social conditions of production of scientific explanation. It appeared, therefore, to advocate a sociology of sociology or a reflexive sociology as a necessary procedure for constructing and verifying sociological findings. The epistemological breaks were presented as the means by which sociological explanation could be refined. However, by the time that Bourdieu published “The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge” in 1973, the epistemological breaks were serving a broader purpose. They were functioning to allow the sociological analysis of sociological objectivism to become a means by which ontic realities might be disclosed. The first epistemological break advocated by Bourdieu in “The Three Forms of Theoretical Knowledge” – away from the knowledge possessed in primary experience – enables objectivist scientific knowledge, but the objectivism remains within the domain of Husserlian “natural” attitudes. The second epistemological break, however, enables a different perspective entirely to be achieved in relation to all natural attitudes. The second break requires a sociological analysis of the grounds of all kinds of objectivism, including sociological objectivism. It liberates what,
for a short while, Bourdieu called “praxeological” knowledge. This third form of knowledge is enhanced because it is the consequence of continuing dialectical encounter between primary and objective knowledge. By this reconciliation or synthesis of a philosophy of science derived from Bachelard and the process of phenomenological reduction derived from Husserl, Bourdieu was able to maintain a strictly subjectless or antihumanist methodology of social science while allowing for the agency of beings within a life-world. Bourdieu’s criticism of Merleau-Ponty and Lévi-Strauss had been that they both allowed their philosophical positions to distort the truly positivist scientificity of sociological investigation. Bourdieu’s accommodation of philosophy and sociology allowed for a clear demarcation between the possible achievements of sociology and ontology. Bourdieu’s second epistemological break is therefore not a meta-scientific posture within the field of sociology. Instead, it represents a sociological path to phenomenological reduction. Bourdieu’s insistence that “tout est social” enabled him to identify ontological and sociological analysis such that he tried to subject all discourses to sociological reduction without privileging the sociological practices of the natural attitude.

VI. BOURDIEU’S DUAL DEPLOYMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

Bourdieu’s dual use of sociological inquiry has to be clearly stated. In the 1960s, he played the game of the dominant sociological discourse, behaving as if explanation corresponded with an objective reality. By the end of the decade, he was finding ways to distance himself from this kind of scientific objectivism and began to emphasize a theory of practice that would include an analysis of the practice of the observing scientist. By the 1980s, Bourdieu was willing to move thoroughly away from a still detached analysis of the social action of others toward a reflexive analysis of his own situation as an immanent component of phenomena-to-be-observed. His *Homo Academicus* was an attempt to offer a sociological analysis of the intellectual field that generated Parisian social science within its higher education institutions in the 1960s and this attempt included a reflexive account of his own position. In the same decade he wrote an account of the genesis of his own conceptual framework, making it clear that the concepts that he had developed in the 1960s had been instruments that had engaged with social reality and had not been statically representative of it. Bourdieu was prepared to understand his own social trajectory sociologically.

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and also to recognize that his concepts were sociohistorically contingent. Similarly, he recognized that the established fields of intellectual discourse, including that of sociology, had to be analyzed relative to the historical conditions of their production. This ambivalence about the status of sociological explanation explains the way in which Bourdieu throughout his career sought to shift intellectual perspective between differing public discourses or fields, sometimes presenting himself as an anthropologist, a sociolinguist, a cultural sociologist, or philosopher, without relinquishing his fundamental commitment to a sociological approach.

The same ambivalence was displayed in relation to philosophical discourse. We have seen that Bourdieu used reference to Pascal as a way of defining his own position in relation to philosophy. Earlier he had attempted a sociological analysis of the work of Heidegger that constitutes an objective case-study of the confrontation of the claims of sociology and philosophy that Bourdieu experienced subjectively throughout his career. Although *L’Ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* was published as a book in 1988 – probably stimulated by the Parisian “Heidegger debate” at that time in which contesting positions were held about whether Heidegger’s philosophy was inextricably associated with and contaminated by his involvement with Nazism – it was nevertheless only a modified version of an article that Bourdieu had published in an early number of his own journal in 1975. Although *L’Ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* was published as a book in 1988 – probably stimulated by the Parisian “Heidegger debate” at that time in which contesting positions were held about whether Heidegger’s philosophy was inextricably associated with and contaminated by his involvement with Nazism – it was nevertheless only a modified version of an article that Bourdieu had published in an early number of his own journal in 1975. Given that I argue that Bourdieu’s use of sociological explanation was pragmatic and subordinate to his phenomenological agenda (which he tried to carry out by deploying sociology at a different level), the discussion of Heidegger is particularly interesting in that Bourdieu was attempting a criticism of one strand of phenomenological work from a position that he had developed in response to an alternative strand.

The ambiguity of Bourdieu’s relation to the work of Heidegger is apparent and has to be understood in the context of Bourdieu’s thinking in the 1970s, between *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique* and its English “translation” as *Outline of a Theory of Practice* in 1977, and, in particular, in the context of several articles of the period on language, such as “La Critique du discours lettré,” and others that were collected in his *Ce que parler veut dire*. In 1975, Bourdieu was analyzing Heidegger’s use of philosophic language only as a case-study of the use of language in all objectivist discourse. Bourdieu’s contention tended to

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43. It is important to look at the relationship between these two texts rather than to regard *Outline* as simply a translation of *Esquisse*. In the five years that separated the original from the translation, Bourdieu clearly moved from articulating dissatisfaction with “structuralism” toward arguing positively for a methodology that might be called “poststructuralist,” and this shift is reflected in the way the text was transformed and altered.
be that in order to secure effective detachment, scientific language has to be a self-contained, technical language, adhering to the rules of its own game. The ideal, extreme form would be mathematical language. He accused Heidegger of appropriating the language of everyday experience (that, at the time, was laden with volkisch sentiments) and importing it into the language of philosophical discourse. He argued that Heidegger gave everyday fascist expressions an academic philosophical respectability and betrayed the capacity of scientific discourse to acquire a socially, historically, and institutionally constructed detachment from everyday prejudice. Bourdieu’s solution to the problem of the relationship between the language of primary experience and the language of science/philosophy was that both should remain discrete and that the deployment of language in science should be scrutinized sociologically. For Bourdieu, Heidegger destroyed the pragmatic autonomy of science/philosophy precisely by manufacturing a “pure” philosophy out of vulgar prejudice. Heidegger had transgressed the boundaries between Pascal’s “orders” as Bourdieu was to reformulate them. The tension, for Bourdieu, was that although he was sympathetic to Heidegger’s ontological orientation, he thought that Heidegger had perverted the function to be served in society by the reflexive exercise of reason.

Bourdieu exploited phenomenology while rejecting its transcendental pretensions. In effect, phenomenological reduction was, for Bourdieu, a heuristic device within the natural attitude that owed its pragmatic results to claims of transcendence that he did not accept. We can conclude that Bourdieu’s relationship to the classical tradition of western European sociology was unique but also that in seeking to maintain an instrumental integrity for a reflexively delimited sociological orientation, Bourdieu tried to establish an equally unique relationship with the classical tradition of western European philosophy.

**MAJOR WORKS**


Michel Serres’s career began at a moment when structuralism was becoming an important intellectual paradigm in France. His mathematical approach to the question set him apart from those who came to structuralism from a more linguistic or phenomenological perspective. He quickly developed a broader research agenda that concentrated on the cross-disciplinary potential suggested by structuralism. Communication emerged as a crucial concept, opening on to the broader question of how order emerges from disorder (just as a message emerges from background static in a communicational channel). Serres has by no means been a “technical” philosopher in the mode of phenomenologists or language philosophers. A rereading of Lucretius allowed him to imagine an intellectual method that could combine philosophy, history, and literature, ultimately prompting him to claim that the literary text creates knowledge that is as crucial as that produced by philosophical work or scientific discovery. A key essay on Émile Zola developed this insight by describing a Zola who wrote at the crossroads of nineteenth-century science and technology. Moreover, Serres’s broad view of the vocation of the philosopher reconnected in productive ways with the project of the encyclopedia as first imagined in the eighteenth century and led to his editorial and collaborative participation in a number of projects aimed at presenting the state of knowledge in a variety of fields.

Although it can be said of any philosopher that his or her intellectual perspective is the product of a particular, personal biography, Michel Serres’s work regularly reminds us explicitly of the importance of a philosopher’s life experiences and thus gives real substance to this notion, since Serres’s philosophical writing could be characterized in part by the way he weaves personal anecdotes,
moments, and memories into the very fabric of his arguments. “My peasant memories recall this vanished culture. Animals and humans lived together in a convivial space, the barnyard, day and night in all four seasons,” he comments in *Hominescence*, as he describes the end of the culture (in the broadest sense) of an agricultural mode of existence, brought about by technologies that redistribute human societies in a different pattern. In the first pages of *Les Cinq sens: Philosophie des corps mêlés – 1*, an anecdote about a fire aboard a ship on which Serres was serving provides a narrative of the sensations provoked by this dangerous lived experience and transforms the particular of a biographical incident into a striking preface to an argument about how the senses connect human beings to their world.

Innumerable similar moments occur in other essays, but the two different periods of Serres’s life to which the preceding examples allude, his rural upbringing and his subsequent experiences as a naval officer in the 1950s, are particularly exemplary. It would not be stretching things too much to say that the rural landscape and the marine seascape are the domains of predilection for Serres’s thinking and that they represent, not unexpectedly, two of his principal analytical tendencies: on the one hand, a fascination for the details, asperities, irregularities, in short, the seemingly stochastic disorder of the lay of the land if it is adhered to infinitely closely, and, on the other hand, the abstract geometry of the navigator, an absolutely indispensable mathematical perspective for successful travel in a realm of sameness (the sea) upon which a burgeoning, even infinite, number of possible paths make the abstract, precise calculations of the navigator essential. The irregularities of the land in a rural environment preclude immediate and broad abstraction, while the implacable sameness of a marine environment invites it.

Small wonder that the tutelary deity chosen by Michel Serres to symbolize his work has always been Hermes, messenger of the gods and thus intrepid traveler and guide of travelers (navigator), god of ruse and trickery, of commerce (inventor of weights and measurement) and of exchange, but also god of shepherds (the rural and the pastoral) and inventor of the first musical instrument

1. Michel Serres (September 1, 1930– ; born in Agen, France) was educated at the École navale (1949) and École Normale Supérieure (1950–55), and received a *doctorat ès lettres* from the Sorbonne in 1968. His influences include Bachelard, Brillouin, Canguilhem, Dumézil, Foucault, Girard, and Monod, and he has held appointments in philosophy at Clermont-Ferrand (1958–68), in philosophy at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes (1968–69), in history of science at the University of Paris I–Sorbonne (1969–96); in French and Italian at Stanford University (1984– ); and at the Académie Française (1990– ).
(the father of Pan).³ It is worth mentioning that one of Jacques Derrida’s foundational essays, “La Pharmacie de Platon” (“Plato’s Pharmacy,” in La Dissémination [1972]), is centered on the Egyptian deity Thoth, whom the Greeks associated with Hermes.⁴ Philosophers of the same generation in the French higher education system, and classmates at the École Normale Supérieure, Serres and Derrida gravitate toward a mythological figure who is at the heart of the invention of measurement and knowledge.⁵ Characteristically, however, their interests in this mythological divine figure diverge radically. Whereas Derrida chooses to emphasize Thoth’s activities as inventor of writing, thereby constructing an analysis that is all about the origin of writing and how this origin undercuts the notion of original meaning, Serres’s references to Hermes mobilize the gamut of the deity’s potential as a creator of passages – among geographical spaces, domains of knowledge, or social communities. Derrida’s article is about the end of philology; Serres’s aim in returning regularly to Hermes is a sustained narrative about reconfiguring disciplinary knowledge and establishing connections that the confines of traditional disciplines have prevented us from making.

I. SERRES’S EARLY WORKS

The geometry and topology of Hermes’s itineraries lead us inevitably to mathematics, a discipline at the heart of Serres’s endeavors from the beginning. His first book, his doctoral thesis entitled Le Système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques, appeared in 1968, the same year as the first volume of the Hermès series.⁶ The focused argument of Le Système de Leibniz doubtless meant that it would always be reserved for a relatively small number of specialists, but its central concern with mathematics carried over into Hermès and well beyond. The first Hermès volume appeared at the height of the structuralist period in France. Serres weighs in on the structuralist method in the introduction to the volume, in which he argues that a mathematical approach offers the only way to conceptualize structure in a formal manner: “The notion of structure is a formal notion. … A structure is an operational set with an undefined meaning … grouping elements, of any number, whose content is unspecified, and a finite

⁴ For a detailed discussion of Derrida on this point, see the essay by Samir Haddad in this volume.
⁵ The first volume of Serres’s five-volume Hermès series, Hermès I: La Communication, appeared in 1968.
⁶ The five Hermès volumes are collections of essays loosely tied together by Serres’s themes of predilection and published between 1968 and 1980.
number of relations whose nature is unspecified.”

The formal and mathematical nature of the definition of structure proposed here emphasizes the fact that the operational set at stake, defined within its own domain, is imported elsewhere without a content (the term “importation” is used explicitly by Serres himself) and brings with it mainly the relations that construct its coherence in its original domain. The mathematical abstractness of the structuralist model is what separates a structure from an archetype: the archetype always brings with it a baggage of meaning that anchors it in its original context and limits its portability. Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of myth was the central conceptual act of the structuralist revolution, and later, in Hermès IV (1977), Serres will call Lévi-Strauss’s method an algebra: “Today the richest methods concerning myth in general are ordered by an algebra, more precisely, a combinatory algebra.” This is an allusion to the Liebnizian Ars combinatoria explored by Serres in his earlier essay on Leibniz. To see structuralism as the confluence of the mathematical notions of relation and of combination is the best way to understand the explanatory power that its abstractness allowed in reasoning about cultural productions.

Importation is one example of a series of terms Serres will use to describe the circulation of knowledge and of models of knowledge: “communication,” “interference,” “translation,” and “distribution” grace the covers of the first four volumes of Hermès as subtitles. “Distribution” parallels – but simultaneously radically diverges from – Derridean “dissemination.” The notion of distribution is a means of expressing the way domains of knowledge are related to one another in a world marked by disorder: “Disorder precedes order and only the first is real. … Laws, series, order are always exceptions, something like miracles.”

What the nineteenth-century development of the scientific theory of thermodynamics and of the complex mathematics of topology taught us, Serres suggests, is not only that time is irreversible, but also that stochastic systems, characterized fundamentally by disorder and a broad tendency toward entropy, do nevertheless give rise to ordered systems. Those ordered systems are like islands in a sea of disorder, and to think their relation in the absence of the abstraction characteristic of classical reason is our challenge. Deprived of the fundamental principles of classical epistemology – fixed points and the simplicity and clarity of geometrical relations – the nineteenth century found itself plunged into a new context of thermodynamics and entropy in which epistemology had to

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find different ways of expressing the relation between the aleatory moments and places when ordered systems occur: “Under the empire of fire [the rise of thermodynamic theory in the nineteenth century] ... the irreversible was born ... and then the stochastically aleatory.” One should note that in the series of terms used by Serres to express the transporting of concepts carried out when knowledge circulates among different domains, the term “metaphor” is conspicuously absent, although the philosopher does not back away from it when Bruno Latour proposes it in *Éclaircissements*.

Unlike critics and thinkers who imagine this transporting as a textual or linguistic operation, Serres regularly insists on the fact that such transformations can be methodologically and rigorously justified and are operational. The term “distribution” points to this sort of conceptual work and has an altogether different ring to it than the Derridean notion of “dissemination,” which, one might argue, is a key notion in Derrida’s project to reveal the ruse of metaphor.

The importance given to the epistemological change provoked by the rise of thermodynamic thinking in Serres’s presentation of the nineteenth century ought to remind his readers that the philosopher studied with Michel Foucault and began his university career as Foucault’s colleague in the same French university (Clermont-Ferrand). Foucault argued in *Les Mots et les choses* (1966) that historical periods are characterized by certain discursive configurations establishing the conditions of truth in the given period. He calls the discursive configuration producing such truth the “*epistēmē*” of the period. It organizes thought over time, but there are moments when a break between configurations is discernible, after which the *epistēmē* of the following historical period differs significantly from the preceding one, providing a context in which different truths are expressed. This highly schematic description of Foucault’s propositions in his 1966 text is meant simply to suggest that Serres’s view of the nineteenth century, increasingly colored during the 1970s by his fascination with the rise of nineteenth-century thermodynamic theory, bears more than a passing resemblance to the Foucaultian perspective on epistemology. For Serres, thermodynamics is clearly some form of new *epistēmē*, and its rise represents a break from the Laplacian synthesis that marked physics and mathematics at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. One should

11. Ibid., 32.


13. Pierre Simon de Laplace (1749–1827) was a French mathematician and astronomer who developed and furthered Newtonian classical mechanics in his five-volume *Celestial Mechanics* (1799–1825). This was a crucial synthesis of classical mechanics published just as the first theories of classical thermodynamics were being developed.
not gloss over the debt that both Foucault and Serres owe to Gaston Bachelard,\textsuperscript{14} moreover, who first coined the term \textit{coupure épistémologique} (epistemological break), which he conceptualized in his \textit{Le Nouvel esprit scientifique} (1934) and \textit{La Formation de l'esprit scientifique} (1938). In Bachelard’s view, an epistemological break occurred as the modern conception of scientific thinking was formulated, allowing this new kind of thinking to correct what Bachelard termed the errors of preceding modes of thought – thereby breaking with them definitively.\textsuperscript{15} Both Foucault and Serres scoff at the notion of error as Bachelard wields it, but nonetheless a perspective that identifies moments of rupture between modes of thinking surely owes something to Bachelard.

The importance of mathematics and its history in this first phase of Serres’s career cannot be overestimated. In a brief but very suggestive essay in \textit{Hermès I}, the philosopher makes an argument about Platonic dialogue that connects it to the founding moment of mathematics in Greek culture. He maintains, in essence, that one would not have appeared without the other. In this 1963 essay, Serres points out that writing is not the only pathology of communication (\textit{pace} Derrida): in fact, all communication is characterized by background noise, jamming, interruptions, and the like; in other words, noise is essential to communication. Given this theoretical perspective on communication, Platonic dialogue can be seen, precisely, as a way of conceptualizing the elimination of noise: “To dialogue is to posit the existence of a third person and to seek to exclude him; successful communication is the exclusion of this third term.”\textsuperscript{16}

In a similar way, the invention of the mathematical concept occurs when two parties agree that a form is the same in the abstract, no matter how imperfect its concrete realizations, in other words, when they agree to set aside the interference and imperfections that are necessarily introduced when forms are actualized in reality by drawing them, for example (Serres has geometry principally in mind here). Platonic dialogue, the founding philosophical form, and geometry, the founding mathematical form, are produced in more or less the same cultural

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} For a discussion of Bachelard, see the essay by Pierre Cassou-Noguès in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4}.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} In important ways, Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–96) remained more faithful to Bachelard in \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions} than did either Foucault or Serres. Kuhn argues that the development of scientific theories is not linear, but is characterized by what he calls “paradigm shifts,” which abruptly reorganize fields. The relation of this perspective to the Bachelardian “\textit{coupure épistémologique}” is evident.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Michel Serres, “Le Dialogue platonicien et la genèse intersubjective de l’abstraction,” in \textit{Hermès I}, 41. Serres’s view of communication is clearly related to the one pioneered by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver as they theorized communication, particularly by giving it a mathematical basis, during and after the Second World War. Shannon and Weaver’s \textit{The Mathematical Theory of Communication} popularized their mathematical approach to communication, incorporating Norbert Wiener’s work on probability.
\end{itemize}
moment in ancient Greece, because they represent the same sort of intellectual operation at the basis of the structure of communication, namely, the attempted exclusion of noise.

II. COMMUNICATION: ORDER FROM DISORDER

This perspective on communication resonates richly in Serres’s work. His 1980 essay, *Le Parasite*, is an extended reflection on the notion of noise and its relation to communication, as well as to the emergence of systems from stochastic disorder. The philosopher profits from the rich semantic field contained in the term *parasite* in French, which refers not only to the cultural (the person who lives off someone else) and the biological/ecological (organisms needing and using other organisms to sustain their own existence), but also to the static and background noise in a communicational channel. This confluence of meanings allows Serres to expand the suggestive analysis of Platonic dialog in *Hermès I* and to claim more broadly that in all communication, whether it be narrowly defined as the relation between two entities established along a channel or the richly complex communicational interweaving that characterizes emerging relations in communities – human, animal, microbial – noise and parasites are necessary elements that cannot be defined negatively as impurities simply to be excluded, but are, in fact, fundamental elements to be integrated into the definition of any relational system. One can see Serres moving past the earlier structuralist definition of relational constellations, in which the relation remained a relatively abstract concept, to a different perspective from which the relation takes on a centrality and complexity of its own.

*Le Parasite* begins with a reading of La Fontaine’s fable, entitled “The City Rat and the Country Rat,” in which the country rat visits his city cousin, only to be dismayed and ultimately chased away by the noises of the city, which seem to threaten danger at every turn. In the course of a humoristic, even ironic, reading of the fable, the philosopher demonstrates crucially that the very parasites themselves, the rats, are also the victims of parasites and thus that every relational structure is a parasitical one, in an endlessly cascading series. There is no relation at the origin without noise, that is, no relation before parasites

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17. The work of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana illustrated by their coauthored *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*, was beginning to suggest methods of conceptualizing the auto-organization of systems that escaped the dead end of Wiener’s cybernetics – and Serres was certainly aware of their work.

18. Jean de La Fontaine (1621–95) was among the most widely read French poets of the seventeenth century.
inserted themselves into the circuit. Third parties are, by definition, always present, siphoning off for themselves part of whatever is produced (messages, food, energy). Every system falls prey to this logic. Serres uses the fable to argue ultimately that the Cartesian method, meant to be a recipe for starting over again at the beginning, eliminating all the noise of custom and history in order to retain only the pure abstractness of a chain of reasoning moving from one stage to the next without deviation or distraction, is a gesture akin to burning down a house to chase away the rats. Inevitably, as the house is rebuilt, the rats return, because they were always already there. In a broader sense, then, this argument goes in the same direction as Serres’s description of the revolution of thermodynamic thinking of the nineteenth century: disorder is at the origin, not order.

This period in Serres’s career was also marked by the publication of *La Naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce*, in which the philosopher reminds us that Lucretius’s physics is a suggestive source for understanding the emergence of order from stochastic chaos. Lucretius argues that the universe is composed of atoms in laminar flow and that at a certain moment and in a certain place, turbulence in the laminar flow creates a disturbance that gives rise to a system. The “inclination” in the flow that creates the turbulence is the famous Lucretian *clinamen*. Serres’s reflections on Lucretius introduce a complexity into the conception of the history of science that leads Serres away from the Foucaultian mode. Lucretian physics has always been presented as absurd, an example among many others of a prehistory of science that could be left behind only by the Galilean break. Only because readers of Lucretius refused to envisage his argument from a perspective other than a physics of solids did they find it absurd. If one takes the notion of “flow” seriously in the context of a physics of liquids, then the validity and vitality of the theory become evident. Serres thus takes to task the notion of the epistemological break, suggesting instead that the history of science may just as well be envisaged as the reconstruction of the epistemological context of preceding arguments, a circular or spiral trajectory, looping back to incorporate pieces of its past into new constructions. This suggestive proposal finds its full expression in *Les Origines de la

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19. One cannot resist thinking about Jacques Derrida when reflecting on this analysis in *Le Parasite*. In some sense, Serres’s argument is also all about the absence of the purity and identity of an origin.

20. Gilles Deleuze’s argument in *Différence et répétition* (1968) that difference, not identity, is at the origin is clearly related to Serres’s argument here.

21. Serres treats the historian’s obsession with historical breaks with irony here and qualifies it as ideological: “Ideologies, of the religious or any other sort, are recognizable by their calendar pathos: before or after the birth of Christ, before or after the foundation of Rome … before or after the Galilean break” (*La Naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce: Fleuves et turbulences* [Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977], 9).
géométrie, in which Serres tackles the history of mathematics as a sort of test case of the history of science. Mathematics clearly has a certain unity that precludes the forgetting of its origins and first steps, but how is this ancient knowledge incorporated into the body of mathematics as the field gains complexity and precision over time? The notion of the epistemological break is supplanted by an attempt to describe an evolution of knowledge that recuperates past syntheses at certain unpredictable intervals and stages of reorganization in a spiraling movement quite different from linear teleology. In a passage of Éclaircissements, Serres compares historical time to the baker’s map in dynamical or topological systems: as a flat surface is folded, points that were originally far apart suddenly find themselves close together. The refusal to conceive of history as linear and the suggestion that history “percolates” in such a way as to bring vastly different historical moments together in surprising ways puts Serres at odds with historians who insist on sequencing history on a linear trajectory.

III. LITERATURE AND SCIENCE: A COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE EMERGES

Serres’s interest in Lucretius is not simply in the abstract outlines of the physics of liquids, but arises more fundamentally from the fact that Lucretius’s philosophy is simultaneously mathematical/scientific and cultural/social. The comprehensive nature of Lucretius’s endeavor, a view of the world one might say, makes of Lucretius a literary figure and an anthropologist, as well as a philosopher, and thus in some sense a model for Serres himself. Serres’s own epistemology refuses to draw boundaries between domains and disciplines, relentlessly attempting to position itself as comprehensively as possible within the whole field of creative and inventive thought. Take the use of La Fontaine’s fable in Le Parasite: the exemplary position occupied by the fable in Serres’s argument is not simply the result of an “appreciation” of the literary text, but of a veritable opening toward the literary and toward aesthetics that is a fundamental characteristic of his thinking. Literature is a cultural production in which precise and valid epistemological thought – scientific and philosophical – is essayed. Given the place of the literary in Serres’s project, one must recast the question of Bachelard’s influence by remarking that Serres implicitly defined himself at a certain point in his career as deeply anti-Bachelardian. Bachelard had a double intellectual career: on the one hand, he was a philosopher and philosopher of science, writing about the advent of the rational epistemology of science, while, on the other, he was writing essays about the poetics of space, about dreams, or about the

four elements the Greeks considered to be fundamental. In Bachelard’s case, however, there is a near total disconnect between his own more phenomenological and literary musings and the philosophical and epistemological dimensions of his work on scientific thinking. It is almost as if Serres set out in his career, at the very Sorbonne where Bachelard had taught – after having written his mémoire d’études supérieures with Bachelard – to prove that this disconnect was theoretically untenable. “Bachelard consummated the break … between the sciences and the humanities: the waking, working mind, on the one hand, and, on the other, the material, sleeping imagination, dream and illusion – a traditional and definitive way to bury the humanities in the slumber of reason,” he comments in his conversations with Latour.

The defense and illustration of this position appeared in 1975, when Serres published a long essay entitled Feux et signaux de brume: Zola, on Émile Zola’s Les Rougon-Macquart series of twenty novels, published from 1871 to 1893, about a family under the Second Empire in France. The title of Serres’s essay, rather difficult to render in English, simultaneously alludes to fire (feux), the central energy source in thermodynamic theory, and to the signals – foghorns or lights – broadcasted by ships or lighthouses during periods of thick fog (signaux de brume). Coupled in this title, therefore, are the two centers of interest that mark Serres’s thought throughout the 1970s and early 1980s: thermodynamics and the dynamics of communication. The essay opens by suggesting that the relation between science and literature has not been properly appreciated, although, Serres insists, literary works are produced in the same intellectual and cultural context as the science of any given historical period. The structuralist approach had led to a productive exploration of the relation between the human sciences (les sciences humaines: history, sociology, economics, geography, psychology) and literature, but this was the easiest cluster of disciplinary relations to establish and explore. The success of the structuralist method came at a price: it exacerbated the separation between human sciences (now to include literature) and what we often call hard or exact sciences. The history of literature and the history of science, however, are not separate. The methods and perspectives of science in a given historical period are also to be found in the

24. Roughly equivalent to a Masters thesis, Serres’s mémoire was on the difference between the Bourbaki algebraic method and the method of classical mathematicians.
25. Serres, Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time, 31 (translation modified); Éclaircissements, 50.
literature of the period: “Contrary to what has been claimed, science does not render non-science null and void.”

This remark could not be more bluntly anti-Bachelardian: literature occupies an important place in helping to formulate the structures of rigorous, scientific thinking within any historical period. It is impossible to understand the richness of Zola’s text if one does not know the history of science from which it emerges:

I am not saying that the *Rougon-Macquart* series … constitutes a set of purely scientific results. I am only saying, but this is already enormous, that the theses, the method, the epistemology that I discover here are faithful to what is best, to what we judge to be the best, in the scientific work of the period.

The fact that Zola manipulates the concepts of thermodynamics and genetics with the best of the scientists of his time means that his work had as much to do with bringing those concepts into the cultural mainstream as the scientific treatises of his day.

The fact that *Feux et signaux de brume* became and has remained an important touchstone in Zola studies illustrates the very thing that the book’s argument had set out to prove: the disciplinary barriers that specialists have erected to divide the continuum of knowledge are impermanent and meant to be overturned. Just as Zola roamed freely through key areas of the exact sciences of his own period, Serres himself does not hesitate to range beyond the scientific and philosophical and into the literary. In fact, literature ultimately becomes much more a home for the philosopher than the domain of purely philosophical reflection, too technical and prone to specialized language and its elaborate constructions: “In some respects, a well-told story seems to me to contain at least as much philosophy as a philosophy expressed with a profusion of technical means.”

Most of the attention of readers of Serres’s essay on Zola has been focused on the seductive and convincing exploration of thermodynamics and genetics that Serres reveals to be at the heart of the novelist’s project, but afterwards, in his reflections about the successes and failures of his own interpretive perspective, Serres saw that certain complex and recurring spatial structures had not been incorporated into his argument. This discovery led to a further and somewhat

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27. Ibid., 39–40.
28. Zola’s novels explored the implications of scientific concepts in ways related to what Robert Musil and Thomas Pynchon would do for their respective generations in the twentieth century.
different claim, namely, that narrative – and particularly the narrative of myth – could be viewed as an operation whose principal effect is to join together disparate spaces. As Serres puts it, *discours* (discourse) is, in fact, a *parcours* (an itinerary across spaces – the wordplay allowed by the common root of the two words in French is missing in English). In a short essay published in *Hermès IV*, entitled “Discours et parcours,” the philosopher reads the myths of Oedipus and of Ulysses as exemplary cultural productions in which the Greeks invented the uniformity of a single type of space, Euclidean in nature, by connecting and weaving together the numerous spatial varieties encountered in the myths, thus creating a seamless space by means of the very narrative gesture that juxtaposes varieties and then enacts the bridging of their disconnectedness. In fact, he claimed, this operation was successful enough to relegate the question of space to a minor and secondary role in Western philosophy for centuries, making the question of time the crucial philosophical problem. Serres then hinted at a further hypothesis, namely, that the return of the importance of myth in the second half of the nineteenth century, evident in Zola, Nietzsche, the French Parnassian poets, and in many other thinkers and writers of the period, accompanies the development in mathematics of a new theory of space, namely, topology.30 Thus the Lévi-Straussian algebra of myth, corresponding to Leibniz’s *Ars combinatoria*, needs to be supplemented by Leibniz’s *Analysis situs*, “what we call topology, which is the sister science of [algebra].”31

**IV. SPACE AND THE SENSES: CRITIQUE OF PHENOMENOLOGY**

This suggestive outcome of Serres’s reflections on his Zola project reemphasized the philosopher’s interest in varieties of space and set an agenda for his reflections that has remained particularly active since the Zola book. The subtitle of the fifth *Hermès* volume, *Le Passage du Nord-Ouest*, is extremely emblematic from this perspective. Fascinated by the project that has preoccupied every navigator who has sailed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Serres reflects on the extremely complex geometry of any possible itinerary across the polar reaches of the North American continent: “It opens, closes, twists across the immense, fractal arctic archipelago, along an extravagantly complicated maze of gulfs, channels, basins, and sounds … Aleatory distribution and strongly ordered constraints, disorder and its laws.”32 The Northwest Passage is a perfect emblem

30. Serres has in mind the work of Georg Cantor (1845–1918), Henri Poincaré (1854–1912), and, later, Maurice Fréchet (1878–1973).
of a world in which order arises out of disorder and in which one has to find itineraries through the disordered distribution of territories, joining together the islands of order one might encounter. Serres reformulates his own intellectual project by means of this image, “I have navigated for thirty years in these waters.”

Faced with a disciplinary world in which two cultures oppose one another – science on the one hand, history and the arts on the other – questions such as the following one arise: “Can one imagine that literature is a reserve of science and not its exclusion?”

How, then, to find passages between and among cultural productions that seem disparate or even opposed?

Reflection on the notion of space is not simply a means used by Serres to describe his own philosophical itinerary: space ultimately becomes one of the principal objects of his thinking, a choice explicitly made to bring it back to the center of philosophy and thus to remedy its long neglect since the Greeks. One might well describe *Les Cinq sens* as an attempt to reposition the body in the multifaceted spaces of the senses. The complexity of the body’s surface, covered by an extremely intricate organ of touch – the skin – is poorly explained by a geometry of fixed points and straight lines. The information the skin brings to the organism is collected along a meandering surface, and that information is ordered only at an abstract level, at a distance from the particularities characteristic of the immediate structure of the organ of touch itself – countless asperities, whorls, crevasses, wrinkles, and so on. Taste, smell, and hearing are hardly less complicated.

If *Les Cinq sens* insists on plunging the body into the mixed varieties of spaces in which it lives, this gesture also confronts and rejects a philosophical tradition that accuses the senses of deceiving and classically defines the task of philosophy as an attempt to overcome and move beyond the immediacy of sensations. For Serres, the senses are, on the contrary, an indispensable interface between the “hard” domain of the material environment in which the body is located and the “soft” domain of signals, figures, languages that arise from the experience of the material world. The sensory system ultimately occupies a mediating position similar to that of music in aesthetics, because music has always been simultaneously the most sensual of the arts and the most mathematically abstract: “Sensation has the same standing as music.”

Music, like the senses, mediates between the immediate sensations and the abstraction of the patterns that eventually emerge through repetition and become a sort of

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“language” (in the sense that they can be captured in musical notation and establish quasi-mathematical relations). To write about the senses must be understood as one in a series of deliberate choices Serres has made against Jean-Paul Sartre and against phenomenology as an extremely technical philosophical thinking, yielding, he suggests, only meager results despite its complicated vocabulary and exceedingly abstract method: “Why such highly technical means for so little?” The sustained rebuttal to the legacy of Sartre results from what Serres judges to be Sartre’s incapacity to incorporate scientific thought into his philosophy, thus seriously compromising its validity and usefulness in the twentieth century, the very century during which the intellectual and social importance of science was confirmed. The absent philosopher in this polemic, however, is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whom Serres fails to mention by name and thus to whom he never explicitly refers. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception is not without close correlation with Serres’s positions, especially in his insistence on the relation between perception and language. Yet without Merleau-Ponty’s description of perception as an interface between sensation and abstraction, it is difficult to imagine how Serres would have come to the project set forth in *Les Cinq sens*.

The concentration on Sartre’s version of phenomenology, however, allows Serres also to criticize Sartre’s fascination with the German philosophy, which he championed and which became pervasive in French philosophical circles after the Second World War, dominating relentlessly through the end of the twentieth century. Lost in the aftermath of Sartre were thus the originality of French philosophy and its sustained dialogue – through several centuries – with scientific thinking. In response to this forgetting, Serres formed an editorial group, and with help from the French government, he undertook a project to publish editions of French philosophical texts that were out of print and difficult to find even in libraries, the *Corpus des œuvres de philosophie en langue française*. Serres’s 1995 essay, *Éloge de la philosophie en langue française*, served as an introduction to the collection and a statement of principle: “Authentic philosophy

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36. The background presence of the tutelary Hermes, inventor of the first musical instrument, is discernible here. Hermes constantly returns in Serres’s reflections as a source of inspiration when passages between differences must be bridged.  
38. Merleau-Ponty is discussed in detail in the essay by Mauro Carbone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.  
39. French philosophy’s more recent dialogue with scientific thinking is discussed in the essay by Patrice Maniglier in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.  
40. Published by the Librairie Arthème Fayard in Paris beginning in 1984, the collection now contains editions of nearly 120 works by French philosophers from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries.
is based on the encyclopedia, understood as the totality, without exception, of human knowledge and practice ... Failing that demanding obligation, [philosophy] slides toward ideology. Instead of building an inhabitable world, it dreams and chats.” Sartre is once again the obvious target of this remark, because his philosophy, by ignoring science, cannot adhere to the notion that philosophy must be encyclopedic and exclude nothing that is within the purview of human thinking.

V. FROM THE ENCYCLOPEDIA TO ECOLOGY

The encyclopedic bent of Serres's own work is strongly underscored by two other projects brought to fruition between 1989 and 1997, during the same period when he wrote Éloge and was directing the publication of the Corpus, namely, the edited volumes Éléments d’histoire des sciences and Le Trésor: Dictionnaire des sciences (coedited with Nayla Farouki). Serres has never been a philosopher-specialist confined to an austere academic world, unable to reach out to a wider interested public, but, rather, he has always made it a goal to instruct: Éléments and Dictionnaire des sciences attest to this, as does his essay on the notion of instruction, Le Tiers instruit. One might add to this encyclopedic bent – a pure product of the notion of the encyclopedia that was at the heart of the Enlightenment – Serres's fundamental belief that the only interesting philosophical questions are about basic human experience and phenomena, not rarified technical considerations that occupy much of the philosophical tradition.

If, as argued earlier, Serres has demonstrated a particular interest in exploring the idea of space, his 1990 essay Le Contrat naturel brings that reflection to a new crossroads. Contemplating photographs of the earth shot from satellites at night, he remarks that the lights of the large European population conglomerations bleed into one another, suggesting that the distance between them is almost nonexistent: “[Man] exists as a whole group, greater than the local and spreading out over immense plates.” Moreover, a global communication and information system bridges the gaps between the local and the global, bringing discrete localities into instantaneous communication with one another, as he contends in Atlas (1994), an essay in which he further develops the insights of Le Contrat naturel: “Here is the unexpected revolution: in the past, work and its products, with rare exception, touched only on the local, but Hermes changes the global; Angels, who are the operators and workers of the universe,

41. Michel Serres, Éloge de la philosophie en langue française (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 64.
are weaving together another world.”

Hermes and angels are figures for a global communication and information network that links the world so tightly and in such a dense and complex network that works and acts propagate instantly and everywhere – and thus no longer have a “place” in the classic sense of the term. The global planet, with its links and passages, finds a model for its organization in the kind of knowledge that can allow us to negotiate our presence in it, namely, science. The advent of scientific thinking put definitively to rest the notion of the individual subject confronting an object, ceding its place instead to “a tacit contract … [that] binds scientists together.”

Scientific knowledge is the product of collaborations – over distance and time – of researchers who share an agreement about what it means to produce knowledge: “By definition and its actual functioning, science is a continued relation between the contract that binds scientists together and the world of things.”

If in the history of Western society Rousseau’s conceptualization of the social contract has occupied center stage as a resolution of the Hobbesian dilemma of domination and total war, the unique success of the scientific approach is the result of the other contract, which is the acceptance by those who want to be researchers that they are part of a community with an agreement about what it means to produce knowledge in the scientific domain. This is what Serres calls the natural contract. The natural contract implies as well a collaboration with nature, rather than a mastery of it, and thus Serres pursues the idea of a post-Baconian science: a science not of mastery, but of cooperation. In a real sense, the disaster of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima represents for him the ultimate aberration of a will to scientific mastery over nature, the outcome of which is to turn science against humanity, thus thwarting the very collaboration among scientists that is the basis of scientific knowledge.

Striking as well in Le Contrat naturel is a return to the question of time. Serres points out that the French word le temps has two meanings: time but also weather. In other words, it refers to the long cycles of weather patterns just as

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43. Ibid., 128.
44. Ibid., 41.
45. Ibid., 43.
46. Although he never references their work, Serres’s proximity here to American pragmatism should be noted. For a discussion of pragmatism, see the essay by Douglas R. Anderson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.
47. One should point out that Serres knew and appreciated an important essay by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, La Nouvelle alliance: Métamorphose de la science. Prigogine and Stengers had argued that the mastery of nature, which was the fundamental ambition of Baconian science, created a relationship of mastery with nature that was untenable in the long run and that modern science needed to find less destructive, more collaborative ways of interrogating nature. [*] Prigogine and Stengers’s work is discussed in the essay by Dorothea Olkowski in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
much as it does to the fractional division of time down to nanoseconds. Since 
the peasant and the sailor no longer occupy central positions in our society, the 
two major figures who depended on and predicted weather patterns have disapp-
peared, and our perspective – from an artificial interior no longer exposed to the 
elements – has neglected the pattern of longer cycles that belong to the domain 
of weather. We thus have had no qualms about disturbing them. This reflection 
about long time cycles leads Serres to the present phase of this philosophical 
project, represented most explicitly by his 2001 essay *Hominescence*. The title is 
a coined expression that points to a new phase in the development of humans, 
which needs to be distinguished from hominization, the term used by anthro-
pologists to describe the development of the characteristics of the human. Serres 
argues that especially since the Second World War, we are in a new relation to 
our body, one no longer marked by the pain and suffering of earlier periods, but, 
rather, by the increased longevity of life and by technologies that alleviate the 
suffering that disease brought with it before our historical period. More funda-
mentally, we have speeded up the process of evolution through our technologies. 
The body itself may still be in the cycle of slow evolution theorized by Darwin, 
but we are extending its capacities through various machines (hard and soft), 
and thus man’s imprint on the world has speeded up its transformation in a way 
that could not have been imagined prior to our period. Serres calls the means we 
are able to use to exceed the Darwin’s rhythms of evolution our “exo-Darwinian” 
capacity: “I call this original movement of organs towards the objects that exter-
nalize the means of adaptation exo-Darwinian. And thus, taken out of evolu-
tion by our first tools, we entered into a new exo-Darwinian time.”48 Far from 
decrying the effects of man’s capacity to exceed the boundaries of Darwinian 
evolution, as a conservative ecologist might, Serres calls on us to use these tech-
nologies to mitigate the disparities between rich and poor.49

VI. CONCLUSION

Serres’s philosophical itinerary has been a long and sustained one: from early 
theses on structuralism and mathematics through his most recent essays that 
formulate a certain neo-ecological perspective. His decision to stand apart from 
the philosophical tradition of the French university has been both a personal, 
biographical one and the result of two important methodological choices. 
First, a refusal to accept the notion that knowledge is only to be found in the

*49. For a discussion of this aspect of Serres’s work, see the essay by Jonathan Maskit in *The History 
of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*..
philosophical-epistemological and the scientific domains. “Reason is statistically distributed everywhere: no one can claim exclusive rights to it.”50 Hence Serres’s propensity to range far and wide in the texts he studies and analyzes and to decline to be identified with a single domain of specialization. And second, a contested view of history, which eschews the linear and does not hesitate to put into proximity distant and disparate historical moments, disdaining all of the mediations that typical historians spend their careers developing. Here we circle back to the notion of mathematics, with which this presentation of Serres’s thought began. Raised intellectually in a context of mathematical demonstration, Serres has embraced it as a method for writing history: “Mathematics teaches a kind of rapid thinking … [There is] a speed characteristic of mathematical thinking, which plays on lightning quick shortcuts … The most elegant demonstration is the shortest one.”51 It is as if Michel Serres, fascinated by the striking nature of the juxtapositions he orchestrates, quickly loses patience, abandoning the difficult and elaborate construction of detailed mediations between historical moments to those who are less in a hurry to make new discoveries – and who turn out inevitably to be the “professionals” of university life, quick to condemn his unorthodox methods.

MAJOR WORKS


50. Serres, Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time, 50; Éclaircissements, 79.

51. Serres, Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time, 68–9, translation modified; Éclaircissements, 104–5.
Michel Serres


This essay seeks to give an overview of the development, central themes, and main claims of Jürgen Habermas’s thought. Given its extraordinarily wide thematic range, its pervasive influence in both public and academic fora across diverse fields and disciplines, and the fact that it has taken many different twists and turns (and reversals) over its course, any comprehensive consideration of that body of thought will need to be selective. This essay selects through three schematics. First, it periodizes Habermas’s academic work into six phases that provide the essay’s organization. The section headings provide a rough summary of the focus of the periods: (i) present-oriented philosophy of history; (ii) epistemology via philosophical anthropology; (iii) the theory of communicative action; (iv) the discourse theory of morality; (v) the discourse theory of law and politics; and (vi) systematic philosophical consolidation. Second, the essay pays particular attention to the contexts of debate that have shaped Habermas’s thought in these periods. Finally, the essay attempts to trace three leitmotifs throughout Habermas’s philosophical career and corpus: a focus on communication as the immanent locus of the transcendental, an insistence on the achievements of reason without ignoring the ravages of modernity’s one-sided

1. Jürgen Habermas (June 18, 1929–; born in Düsseldorf, Germany) was educated at the Universities of Göttingen, Zürich, and Bonn (1949–54); and received his Promotion (~PhD) from the University of Bonn in 1954, and habilitation from the University of Marburg in 1961. His influences include Adorno, Dilthey, Durkheim, Freud, Hegel, Horkheimer, Kant, Marx, Mead, Nietzsche, Peirce, Schelling, and Weber, and he has held appointments at the Institut für Sozialforschung, Frankfurt (1956–59), University of Heidelberg (1961–64), University of Frankfurt (1964–71), Max-Planck Institute, Starnberg (1971–81), University of Frankfurt (1975–94), and Northwestern University (1994–2004).
employment of reason, and a conception of philosophy as critical theory, that is, as reflective interdisciplinary theory oriented toward human autonomy. The aim of the essay, then, is not so much to provide a systematic presentation of Habermas’s philosophy simpliciter as to provide an overview of some of its main themes, problems, and claims by putting them in biographical and interactive contexts.

I. PRESENT-ORIENTED PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

As a twenty-four-year-old student of philosophy, Habermas had his first impact not with a distinctive philosophical thesis or argument, but with a public intervention as a critic in the sphere of letters. In 1953, he published a short newspaper piece criticizing Martin Heidegger’s republication of his 1935 lectures, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, which were not only soaked through with rhetoric celebrating “the inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism, but also attempted to align the question of Being itself with the ascendancy of German fascism. What shocked Habermas about these lectures was that they were republished with no expression of regret or explanation, no acknowledgment of the painful truth of the horrors of the Third Reich, no admitting of political mistake or moral remorse. He treated this silence not simply as a mark against Heidegger, but as indicative of a general, and quite troubling, amnesiac silence across postwar German culture, a constant evasion of “the problem of the prehistory of fascism.” The basic intellectual charge leveled in that short piece – that the underlying thought structure and content of Heidegger’s philosophy did not undergo a “turn” from the earlier to the later work motivated by internal philosophical reasons but rather only a rhetorical repackaging in response to contemporary politics – remained constant throughout Habermas’s published considerations of Heidegger’s legacy across the decades. This piece marks the

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4. Heidegger’s “turn” is discussed in the essay on Heidegger’s later work by Dennis J. Schmidt in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
end of Habermas’s time as a thoroughgoing follower of Heidegger’s thought,⁶ and signals his commitment to the Enlightenment ideals of “individualistic egalitarianism” and antinationalistic “cosmopolitanism.”⁷ By the time Habermas finished his 1954 dissertation on philosophical problems in Schelling’s account of the role of the absolute in history, a dissertation strongly influenced by Heidegger, he added a long “introduction setting late German Idealism in relation to Marx.”⁸

After the completion of his dissertation, Habermas worked for two years as a left-wing journalist writing on social issues before he became the personal assistant of Theodor Adorno at the Institut für Sozialforschung in Frankfurt. During the next few years, in addition to sociological work on such issues as postwar German university students and their political attitudes, Habermas was also occupied with philosophically comprehending and assimilating what he had encountered first from a narrowly political point of view: the Marxist project of a critical theory of society, especially as it had been transformed and updated in the Western tradition of Hegelian Marxism starting with Georg Lukács and continuing in the work of the so-called “Frankfurt School” of critical theory by, among others, Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse.⁹ What especially interested Habermas was the prospect opened up in the early Marx of continuing the critique of modernity set in motion by German idealism and Romanticism in the form of an account of a one-sided exploitation of the potentials of reason and rationalization. In quick succession appeared two books that would bring together the two already-expressed leitmotifs of a critical theory of society and an ambiguous attitude toward the promise and peril of modern reason, with the third motif of a focus on communicative interaction as the immanent locus of context-transcending ideals.

In the first, his Habilitationsschrift, completed in 1961 under Wolfgang Abendroth in Marburg, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Habermas pursued the sociohistorical study of a central organizing category

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⁶ Elaborations of Habermas’s account of Heidegger’s philosophy and its influence can be found throughout The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures, Frederick Lawrence (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

⁷ In “Martin Heidegger: On the Publication of the Lectures of 1935,” Habermas claims that Sein und Zeit was “the most significant philosophical event since Hegel’s Phänomenologie” (191) and closes with the admonition to “Think with Heidegger against Heidegger” (197). In interviews from the 1970s and 1980s collected in Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas, Peter Dews (ed.) (New York: Verso, 1992) he repeatedly refers to the centrality of Heidegger to his early philosophical development; see, e.g., 80, 147, 189, 192.


⁹ For discussions of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and other members of the “Frankfurt School,” see the essays by John Abromeit and Deborah Cook in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
of liberal capitalist societies: the “public sphere” of humane letters and opinion where an interested public of private citizens comes together to exchange reasons, ideas, and arguments coalescing into a determinate public opinion. It traced how the public sphere first arose in the eighteenth century, was anchored in new institutions such as widely distributed newspapers, coffee houses, salons, and civil associations, was then institutionally changed by the rise of commercial journalism in the early nineteenth century, and was finally permanently transformed by the development of mass welfare-state democracies into a realm dominated by the mass media as a platform for advertising to a culture-consuming public. In addition to being a historical investigation of the rise and degeneration of new forms of communicative interaction, the book is also a methodologically sophisticated interdisciplinary theory with emancipatory intent. By revealing both the normative ideals embedded in the historical practice of the political public sphere, and the ways in which those ideals became ever more ideological and false as the public sphere itself changed, Habermas showed that questions of political philosophy concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy must be systematically connected to questions concerning the specific sociohistoric institutions and social arrangements in which those ideals are embedded. *Structural Transformation* introduced most of the themes that would form the backbone of the next five decades of Habermas’s work. *Theorie und Praxis*, a collection of essays appearing a year later, continued in the same vein, but approached its subject by reworking the themes of classical political theory – especially those of social contractarianism, natural law liberalism, and constitutional republicanism – from within the framework of an updated, but still recognizably Marxist, present-oriented philosophy of history.

II. EPISTEMOLOGY VIA PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Habermas received his first professorship at Heidelberg in 1961, thanks in large part to the efforts of Karl Löwith and Hans-Georg Gadamer, two prominent

students of Heidegger. Even more important for his development, however, was the near simultaneous publication of two books that decisively influenced all his future work by re-orienting his considerations of everyday, ordinary human communication from being one among several interesting topics to being the absolute center of his philosophical thought – a position, even through many changes, that it has retained to this day. As he himself put it, Gadamer’s “Wahrheit und Methode, together with [Ludwig Wittgenstein’s] Philosophischen Untersuchungen which appeared at the same time, gave the stimulus to the thoughts which one could fully describe as the ‘linguistic turn of critical social theory.’” At the same time, his friend and frequent collaborator Karl-Otto Apel introduced him to American pragmatist thought, especially the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead. He has remarked that “from the outset I viewed American pragmatism as the third productive reply to Hegel, after Marx and Kierkegaard, as the radical-democratic branch of Young Hegelianism, so to speak.”

The ten years from his Heidelberg appointment, through his double professorship in Frankfurt in philosophy and sociology (taking the place of Horkheimer) in 1964, to his resignation from that post in 1971, were extraordinarily fruitful and saw the development of a fully articulated, comprehensive research program for critical theory. In retrospect what is remarkable is that most of the major topoi of Habermas’s philosophical career – the critique and diagnosis of modernization processes, the aim to grasp the place and import of science and technology in our lifeworld, the methodological clarification of critical theory, the endeavor to update its substantive claims under changed historical conditions, the differences between communicative modes of sociation and market and bureaucratic modes, the import of a pragmatic consideration of language in its everyday use, the diversity of forms of reason and its claims to universal validity – were already broached during this period. Yet most of the specific content of his substantive claims, arguments, and theories concerning those topoi would undergo significant if not radical transformation in the next period. Given constraints, the treatment here of this period is especially selective.

One critical encounter during this period is Habermas’s Auseinandersetzung with hermeneutics, especially as powerfully formulated by Gadamer.
Habermas was an early and important defender of hermeneutic methods in the social sciences, and he agrees with many of the foundational ideas of Gadamer’s account of hermeneutics. What then separates the two? On the one hand, there is a basic difference of temperament: the more conservative Gadamer comfortable with the truths of tradition versus the more radical Habermas suspicious of accepting anything on the mere authority that it has been long accepted, the theorist of judgment versus the theorist of reflection, the contextualist versus the universalist, the humanist versus the enlightener. But there is also the more important issue concerning the status and scope of philosophical hermeneutics’ claim to universality. While Gadamer insists that no form of experience, no form of science or knowledge can be excepted from the methodological constraints of hermeneutics since the community of language and tradition simply is the medium of the human form of life, Habermas holds out for the possibility of modes of analysis that reveal systematic forms of constraint or distortion operating, as it were, behind the backs of ordinary language users. Thus while Gadamer insists on absolutizing the form of understanding theoretically articulated by hermeneutics, Habermas insists that insight can be gained from other forms of inquiry such as ideology critique, psychoanalysis, sociological functionalism, and materialist philosophy of history. In each case, Habermas does not want to renounce the potential insights of empirical social sciences that attempt to theorize causal mechanisms and generalize their results across various traditions in the name of a hermeneutic idealism that would insist on seeing all social phenomena in culturalist terms all the way down.

During this period, the same ideas of pointing out one-sided absolutizations of important insights and of insisting on the plurality of the uses and methods of reason were foremost in Habermas’s critical encounters with Popper’s positivism and other forms of scientism, as well as with their polar opposite, the critique and wholesale rejection of technocratic society. Against the scientific insistence

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*15. For a discussion of Gadamer’s hermeneutics, see the essay by Wayne J. Froman in this volume, as well as the essay by Daniel L. Tate in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.

on hypothetical-deductive sciences’ exclusive claim to rationality, and against positivistic claims to the value neutrality of both science and the philosophy of science, he insisted that the domain of cognitive claims went beyond a narrowly delimited field of exact sciences and that scientific standards themselves cannot be justified independently of determinate human values. In fact, the false self-understanding of science as value-neutral also plays an ideological role in justifying antidemocratic forms of decisionism or of political control by experts. While these critical theses largely agree with the critiques of technocracy put forward by Heidegger and Marcuse that were then quite prevalent, Habermas insisted that the exact sciences and their technological offshoots were nevertheless unsurpassable achievements of modernity. They are not a mere historical accident, nor can they be disposed with, at least as long as humans seek increasing independence from material need. Thus while positivism has insights into the rationality of science and the critics of technocracy have insights into distorting dominance of means–ends rationality, both programs fail by insisting on the exclusive universality of their own preferred conceptions of reason.

Not content with the piecemeal critique of other theories, Habermas’s 1965 inaugural address at Frankfurt announced his intention to provide an epistemological foundation for an integrated, interdisciplinary theory with emancipatory intent, an intention that was brought to fruition in the masterful Erkenntnis und Interesse of 1968. Critically evaluating the epistemological programs of a diverse range of philosophers including Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Marx, Comte, Mach, Nietzsche, Peirce, Dilthey, and Freud, Habermas attempted to show how their insights and limitations could best be understood from a basic anthropological perspective. Rejecting the classical epistemological doctrine that pursuing practical interests is antithetical to achieving knowledge, he maintained that all forms of epistemic inquiry should be seen as motivated by one of three anthropologically basic, fundamental human interests: the technical interest in the prediction and control of the natural environment; the practical interest in the reproduction of the social form of life achieved through intersubjective communication; and the emancipatory interest in freeing our selves and our societies from all forms of falsely naturalized but changeable constraints. The audacious claims of the book were that these three interests operate as constitutive conditions of possibility in the organization of three different forms of inquiry – empirical-analytic sciences, historical-hermeneutic sciences, and critical sciences – where each form of inquiry is internally structured by its distinct underlying fundamental human interest and each interest in turn structures a central element of human social life: work, language, and power respectively. While modern science, technology, and social labor are all structured by the technical interest, the interpretive social sciences, the humanities, politics, morality, and language are all structured by the practical interest. Finally, according to Habermas, the
otherwise surprising structural similarities between psychoanalysis, ideology critique, and critically reflective philosophy are best understood by seeing that all three are forms of inquiry shaped by the interest in emancipation from falsely naturalized, but actually changeable, power relations not otherwise evident or obvious on the surface of psychological and social life.

Although *Knowledge and Human Interests* was greeted by an enthusiastic critical reception, by 1973 Habermas had significant reservations about the book and had attempted to resolve them – not by revising the project, but by developing a different research program that would attend to the earlier problems along the way.\(^\text{17}\) Among the most significant problems was a concern about the third form of epistemic inquiry: the status and aims of critical social theory itself. In the book’s attempts to revive the insights of the German idealist tradition of reflective self-critique, it suffered a systematic ambiguity in the use of the concept of reflection between the Kantian idea of reason’s reflection on its own necessary conditions of possibility and the young Hegelian\(^\text{18}\) idea of persons’ and societies’ reflection on otherwise inconspicuous forms of domination and power. While the first form of reflection aims at grasping the universal generative structures and rules of a particular use of reason, the second form aims at emancipation from systematically constraining, but unacknowledged forces and powers, whether intrapsychic, ideological, social, or material. But how can the same activity – critical social theory – both delimit the timeless necessary conditions of human inquiry and uncover the sociohistorically contingent features of modern life that impede the realization of freedom, at the same time and with the same tools? To advance beyond the epistemological prolegomena that was *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas needed to develop a much clearer picture of the various components of a critical social theory, how they related to one another, and the status of their respective validity claims.

### III. THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

In 1971, the physicist and peace activist Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker invited Habermas to be codirector of the Max Planck Institute for Research into the Living Conditions of the Scientific-Technical World in Sternberg, outside Munich, enabling Habermas, together with at least fifteen co-workers, the opportunity to reconstitute his research program on a new foundation, one

\(^{17}\) Jürgen Habermas, “A Postscript to *Knowledge and Human Interests*,” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3(2) (1973).

\(^{18}\) For a discussion of the young Hegelians, see the essay by Lawrence S. Stepelevich in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*, and the essay by William Clare Roberts in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*. 
thoroughly grounded in the latest research in diverse domains of the social sciences. Having become suspicious of the heavy argumentative burdens his earlier program assumed in incorporating strongly Hegelian and metaphysical conceptions of notions such as truth, totality, and philosophy, Habermas sought ways to make critical social theory as he understood it much more receptive to empirical research and methodologically open to empirical fallibility. Turning away from epistemology as the royal road for critical theory, he sought to develop a substantive theory of society to show how communicative action is itself the immanent, practical locus of context-transcending reason and the impetus toward emancipation.

Continuing to exercise his apparently limitless capacities for assimilating, comprehending, and systematizing entire research programs across all fields of social-scientific and humanistic investigation – witnessed earlier in his productive interactions and debates with the varieties of Western Marxism, modern political philosophy, analytic philosophy of science, German idealism, various forms of phenomenology, Gadamer’s hermeneutics, American pragmatism, the varieties of psychoanalytic theory – Habermas in the late 1960s and accelerating into the early 1970s was busy coming to terms with a multiplicity of cutting-edge research, including: ethnomethodology and social phenomenology; the theory of a universal, generative grammar; analytic speech act theory; classical sociology; contemporary structural functionalist sociology and social psychology; and cognitive and moral developmental psychology.

The next decade saw a remarkable proliferation of work – including the influential 1973 book *Legitimation Crisis*, articles on cognitive and psychoanalytic psychology, on moral development, on ego identity, on social psychology, on evolutionary theories of history, on the reconstruction of historical materialism, on communicative competence, on systematically distorted communication, on linguistic and interactive pragmatics, on truth, and many on individual philosophers and social theorists19 – culminating in 1981 with the appearance of Habermas’s magnum opus: the two-volume *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Rather than work through all of this material historically, I will give an overview of the themes and central claims of the mature critical social theory developed in this decade, organized around three themes: the linguistic turn in critical theory, the integration of systems theory and attendant diagnoses of the present, and the debate with poststructuralists and postmodernists over the meaning of modernity.

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The linguistic turn

The most important component of Habermas’s new version of critical theory – and the most recognizable one in its reception – is surely his focus on language, specifically on the basic structures evident in the use of language for purposes of intersubjective communication aimed at coordinating action. Taking off from John Austin’s and John Searle’s speech act theories, Habermas reconstructs the implicit yet highly developed know-how that competent linguistic communicators presuppose and rely on when they engage in communicative action. He aims, then, at developing a formal pragmatics of language use: a theory that articulates the pretheoretical knowledge, competences, and concepts employed by ordinary persons any time they endeavor to communicate with another person about something in order to coordinate their individual actions.

A starting-point for understanding the theory might be the distinction between two different ways in which one can employ language in order to achieve some intersubjective result. On the one hand, one might use language simply as a way to influence the behavior of others without at the same time seeking mutual understanding with them. In this case, Habermas claims, one is using language strategically, for example to express threat potential while bargaining or to intentionally coerce, manipulate, or deceive. On the other hand, one might use language to come to a mutual understanding with another person about something such as an objective state of affairs or a relevant social norm. Success in this communicative use of language hinges on the ability of a respondent to take up a “yes” or “no” position on another’s speech act offer, and we can speak of communicative action when the coordination of persons’ individual action plans is achieved through mutual agreement between them. Although Habermas has repeatedly revised and reworked his formal pragmatics since its initial development in the early 1970s, two crucial theses have remained constant: the communicative use of language is fundamental, whereas other uses of language – strategic, fictional, figurative – are parasitic on or derivative from the properties and structures of communicative action.

Communicative action is fundamentally intersubjective in the sense that each individual is assumed to be a competent actor who can assess the inherent validity claims made by others, and action coordination is achieved only when all involved come to a mutual agreement accepting the speech act offer.

Habermas distinguishes between four types of validity claims made in each and every speech act: (i) that the utterance is comprehensible (semantically and grammatically well formed); (ii) that the utterance is true; (iii) that the norms of social action invoked are right; and (iv) that the speaker is truthful or sincere in making the utterance. While the claim to comprehensibility is limited to the formation of the particular speech act, the other three types may be described as universal validity claims insofar as they involve an in-principle appeal to the notion that any competent agent would have to agree with the content of the claim, under suitable conditions for the evaluation and redemption of that kind of validity claim. Thus any time a speaker makes a communicative utterance, the speaker concomitantly makes four types of validity claims that are assumed to deserve intersubjective recognition – even if, as is usual, only implicitly – and the hearer of the speech act may challenge the speaker on any of the four registers. According to Habermas, it is precisely this intrinsic link between ordinary language use and the validity claims actors implicitly raise and accept that accounts for the illocutionary force of speech act offers, or what he often calls “the binding/bonding force” of language. Individuals who come to a mutual understanding on a speech act are rationally motivated to carry through on their action commitments because their own agreement to the content of the utterance is freely made on the basis of their own individual insight into the propositional truth, normative rightness, and subjective sincerity of its content.

Habermas’s claim that social order is produced and reproduced through the consensus formation witnessed in communicative action might seem highly improbable. After all, not only is such a consensus ever threatened by new problem situations, new experiences, differing perspectives of individuals, changing states of the world, and so on, but it is also fully contingent on the unforced agreement of social participants who can at any time refuse to say “yes” to a speech act offer. Here Habermas agrees with a host of twentieth-century theories – especially social phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnomethodology, and ordinary language philosophy – that insist on the need for a massive background consensus to stabilize reciprocal understanding. He adopts Husserl’s concept of the lifeworld\textsuperscript{21} to explain how this unthematized background knowledge contains the shared meanings, beliefs, norms, and personality structures that absorb, as it were, the contingency built into communicative action. The lifeworld operates as a font of epistemic and practical certainties for interlocutors who can largely presuppose that others live “in the same world” that they

\textsuperscript{21} For a discussion of Husserl’s concept of the lifeworld, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.
Of course, when communicative interaction breaks down, it is possible for interlocutors to bracket ordinary interactions, explicitly focus on one, specific contested part of the lifeworld background, and engage in a distinctive kind of reflective argumentation that Habermas labels “discourse.” Here interlocutors suspend their ordinary purposive orientations in a collective, more or less disinterested search for the truth of the matter – or for the normative rightness of the standards invoked, or for the degree of sincerity of the speaker – and they engage in more demanding processes of reason-giving under the supposition that consensus can be achieved only according to the “unforced force of the better argument.”

While one might investigate the specifics of different societal lifeworlds, Habermas is interested in the deep, formal, and invariant structures of all lifeworlds. For whereas philosophers traditionally sought to identify and justify the ideals of reason through speculative metaphysics, he seeks to locate these ideals immanently in the very practices of communicative intersubjectivity. Formal pragmatics articulates the various idealizing pragmatic presuppositions competent social actors inevitably make when they engage in linguistic interaction: for example, that individuals share a common objective world or that, in the cooperative search for the truth, no competent persons have been excluded from the conversation. To be sure, all of these presuppositions are counterfactual in the sense that they are never fully realized in any concrete interaction, but they are nevertheless factually effective in structuring actual interactions. They can, in fact, be used normatively to critique any actually achieved agreement as deficient from the point of view of the very standards of reasonability built into the practice itself. The pragmatic presuppositions of communication and discourse function thereby as immanent standards of self-correcting learning processes. Formal pragmatics represents a flowering of what was previously an undertheorized concept in Knowledge and Human Interests, namely, the quasi-transcendental. For while the analysis aims at the conditions of possibility of fundamental communicative practices – and is in this sense a continuation of Kantian transcendental philosophy aimed at unavoidable, universal features of language – its claims are distinctly rooted in an empirical analysis of actual language use by ordinary speakers – and is in this sense an a posteriori endeavor fallibilistically subject like all empirical knowledge to evidentiary

22. For instance, one might note here the similarity to Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of doxa. While Habermas specifically develops Alfred Schutz’s social interpretation of the lifeworld, Schutz’s notion is clearly indebted to Husserl and Heidegger, as is, of course, Bourdieu’s, indicating their parallel development of this idea (as well as a host of others) via a shared set of forbears. [*] Schutz is discussed by Diane Perpich in her essay in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
testing. If correct, formal pragmatics locates in linguistic intersubjectivity itself the immanent locus of context-transcending reason.

A substantive social theory can then be built out of elements of the theory of communicative action. The standard sociological distinction between culture, society, and personality can be clarified through formal pragmatics, since each is focused around one characteristic speech act type centrally thematizing one form of validity claim: constatives thematize truth claims, regulatives thematize normative rightness claims, and expressives thematize subjective sincerity claims. Furthermore, in modern complex societies, discourse itself has become reflective and taken on methodical institutional form in differentiated knowledge systems corresponding to the three universal validity claims: science and philosophy systematically investigate propositions according to the logic of truth claims, law and morality systematically investigate illocutionary content according to the logic of rightness claims, and art, literature, and criticism of taste investigate intentional and expressive content according to the logic of authenticity and sincerity claims.

From a historical perspective, Habermas claims that societal changes can be seen as developmentally progressive precisely to the extent to which rational accountability, rather than unthinking reliance on falsely naturalized authority or tradition, organizes ever more aspects of life. For instance, he puts forward a thoroughly intersubjectivist account of individual development in the Hegelian tradition: individuals become who they are only through socialization into linguistically structured social relations.23 As societies modernize, however, individuals are increasingly required to interact on the basis of defensible reasons rather than contingently presumed meanings, truths, conventions, and values, and so increasingly to become responsible for their own beliefs, actions, and individual forms of self-realization. Thus even though Habermas decisively rejects atomistic, empty, and individualistic accounts of the self characteristic of much Enlightenment rationalism, he is able to show how the ideals of individual rationality, autonomy, and authenticity are nevertheless not merely the ideological precipitates of contingent historical and social configurations, as many poststructuralists argue.

Modernization in cultural and social domains can also be seen as a process of rationalization, at least to the extent to which communicative action and formal discourse, rather than coercion or blind obedience, organize ever more
aspects of collective social life. Without getting into details, Habermas claims that we can retrospectively reconstruct historical changes in terms of a stage-sequential series of irreversible improvements in modes of consciousness that enable heightened problem-solving through openness to discursive testing and rational belief fixation.²⁴ The basic idea here is that structural changes in the lifeworld can be understood as learning processes – not only in increasing capacities for the scientific and technological control of the material world, but also in the universalization of open procedures for justification and decision in moral-practical domains. This ambitious set of sociohistorical claims is intended to show that the standards of rationality celebrated in contemporary Western societies are not merely contingent conceits of a particularistic worldview, but can lay claim to universal, context-transcending validity. The theory of communicative action and its resultant social theory can best comprehend the normative content of modernity: fallibilistic culture that is committed to critical testing of truth claims, social solidarity founded on collective will formation through universal discourse, and personal socialization aiming towards expanded individuation and self-realization. Beyond answering general skeptical doubts, this developmentalist defense of Enlightenment ideals answers a problem specific to the tradition of critical social theory: the inability of Horkheimer, Adorno, and others to give a coherent justification for the ideals of individual autonomy, substantive social equality, and an emancipated society that they employed in critiquing the pathologies of modernity.

Yet one should not confuse Habermas’s developmental claims with a Whiggish philosophy of history smugly justifying the present, or with a (right) Hegelian philosophical demonstration that the real is fully rational. The key here is to see that Habermas claims only to be reconstructing the logic of successive stages of lifeworld structures, while making no parallel claims about the dynamics of historical development. Societal change is dependent on contingencies concerning the material reproduction of society, and changes in these conditions are neither predictable nor developmentally progressive. In contrast then to the later Marx, there are no iron laws of history dictating a systematic progression through various modes of production. Yet it is possible to reconstruct, at a suitable level of abstraction, individual and sociocultural learning processes that are both irreversible and clear improvements over earlier stages.

²⁴. Besides the material in The Theory of Communicative Action, see also Communication and the Evolution of Society, chs 3–5, and The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, lectures XI and XII.
The integration of systems theory and diagnoses of the present

If the contingent dynamics of historical change are distinct from its progressive structural logic, then what explains the former? Here Habermas employs contemporary sociological functionalism to explain the reproduction of the material conditions of life. In essence, historical dynamics are to be understood in terms of responses to systemic steering problems encountered in the functionally integrated domains of the economy and state administration. To understand this, we need to look at a critical encounter that began in 1971 and was decisive for Habermas’s mature social theory: his extended debate concerning the social systems theory that Niklas Luhmann developed by streamlining and radicalizing the functionalist theory of his teacher Talcott Parsons. Although much of the debate turned on technical matters of sociological theory construction, at least two of Habermas’s critical concerns are worth noting here. First, Habermas argued that systems theory runs into internal problems by putting forward radically functionalist accounts of all social phenomena. No matter how powerful functionalism proves to be for illuminating economic and bureaucratic control processes, it could only distort phenomena such as meaning and truth that are irreducibly tied to the rich symbolic resources of ordinary language and the communicative perspectives adopted by language users. Habermas’s second main reservation was straightforwardly normative and political. Luhmann advocated withdrawing decisions in many social spheres from the explicit oversight of democratic politics and the public sphere, in order to take advantage of the supposed complexity-controlling achievements of publicly unaccountable technocrats schooled in systems theory. In short, to the extent that a fully radicalized systems theory promotes a “counter-Enlightenment” social technology, Habermas rejected the practical realization of functionalist insights in the name of the dialogical, public exercise of critical reason and democratic self-government.

Although critical of Luhmann’s systems theory for its one-sided absolutization of the functionalist paradigm, Habermas made significant use of it in his 1973 *Legitimation Crisis*, a sociotheoretic study of modern “steering crises” in economics and administration. The book advanced, in a programmatic and provisional way, a bold set of diagnostic theses concerning the interrelations, in contemporary capitalist democracies, between economic performance, administrative rationality, the extent of perceived legitimacy of the government, and the degree to which individuals are motivated to participate in business and politics. The basic thesis of the book is that crises in individual social subsystems

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25. Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie – Was leistet die Systemforschung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971). Several further follow-up volumes in the Suhrkamp series have been published containing papers from others on this topic.
are “solved” by another subsystem, but only at the cost of opening up that other subsystem to its own crisis potentials. It thus raised questions about the sustainability of modern societies if they endemically shuffle steering problems between the economic, administrative, legitimization, and motivational subsystems. While the entire framework of this book is deeply indebted to systems theory, it also pointed to its limits with respect to functionally inassimilable cultural meanings, social norms, and individual identities. Habermas was apparently persuaded by systems theory’s power to illuminate the tremendous growth and success of contemporary capitalist economies and bureaucratic administrations, but had not yet settled on a way of integrating its insights while avoiding its limitations.

The basic methodological idea in *The Theory of Communicative Action* is to adopt a dual-perspective approach – lifeworld and systems – to investigate the social coordination and integration of individual actions, and thereby synthesize action-theoretic and functionalist forms of sociology. While the lifeworld perspective attends to communicative interactions oriented toward achieving mutual understanding, the systems perspective attends to actions purposively oriented toward the achievement of individual ends. Through the binding-bonding force of ordinary language agreements, lifeworld coordination fulfills the functions of cultural reproduction, social integration, and individual socialization. Through anonymous functional imperatives built into economic and administrative systems – that is, the rigid valorization of increasing profit and power – systems coordination achieves the material reproduction of society behind the backs, as it were, of individuals. When turned toward history, this dual perspective approach shows the complexity of processes of modernization. First, changes in lifeworld structures can be reconstructed as learning processes releasing the rationality potential inherent in communicative action, as described above. Second, economic and administrative systems become increasingly independent of lifeworld strictures, for instance when individuals are freed from traditional precapitalist norms and allowed to pursue unlimited profit maximization in market spheres. This “decoupling” of systems from lifeworld thereby enables systems to become increasingly complex, ever more responsive only to their own internal functional logics, and thereby more efficient in achieving the material reproduction of society. Yet third, increases in the scope of functional systems lead to the “colonization” of the lifeworld by systems: systemic forms of integration take over functions of social reproduction that can be achieved only through the symbolic resources of the lifeworld. Modern societies thereby surrender essential decisions to functionally organized institutions steered by the value-free media of money and power. Colonization is taken to lead, fourth, to lifeworld “pathologies” caused by systems overextending their reach: cultural loss of meaning (the assimilation of rich and meaningful
ordinary language to the hollowed-out “semantics” of money and power), social anomie (the breakdown of integrating social norms and values), and individual psychopathologies (including withdrawal of motivation, disorienting senses of the loss of freedom, and mental illness).

On this account of Western history, then, modernization processes are critically evaluated as fundamentally ambiguous: both progressive and regressive. Insofar as the lifeworld becomes rationalized and systems become more complex, modernization can be seen as both releasing the rationality inherent in ordinary language and solving endemic problems of material reproduction. Yet insofar as heightened systems autonomy decreases the scope for free, conscious activity in the light of intersubjectively justified norms and in fact causes lifeworld pathologies through colonization effects, modernization appears as a process of ever-proliferating, but socially caused, maladies.

When this tendency towards the uncoupling of system and lifeworld is depicted … the irresistible irony of the world-historical process of enlightenment becomes evident: the rationalization of the lifeworld makes possible a heightening of systemic complexity, which becomes so hypertrophied that it unleashes system imperatives that burst the capacity of the lifeworld they instrumentalize.26

With this grand synthesis of hermeneutic and systems theoretic approaches to sociology, Habermas claims to be able to better account for the social deformations that interested the great original sociologists of modernity – Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Lukács, Horkheimer, and Adorno – without either the socio-theoretic determinism or the one-sided cultural pessimism that often infects their theories.

Postmodernism and poststructuralism

With this understanding of Habermas’s ambiguous assessment of modernization, we can now appreciate his interaction with the concerns of poststructuralist and postmodern thinkers of the 1970s and 1980s. In The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, treating the distinctive sense of time-consciousness expressed in philosophical theories of modernity, Habermas acknowledged the continental and worldwide importance of the radical critique of reason that had developed in contemporary French thought under the influence of a distinctive reception of Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s thought. His thesis is

that one should understand French poststructuralism as the culmination of a long-running critique of the philosophy of consciousness, stemming from a rejection of Hegel’s grand attempt to reconcile modernity with itself through absolute knowledge. Habermas dedicates chapters to many variants of this radical critique of reason: Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s complementary destructurations of subjectivist metaphysics, Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s negative dialectics of instrumental reason and domination, Derrida’s and his American acolytes’ deconstructionist transformation of philosophy into literature, Bataille’s surrealist celebration of the obscene, the impossible, and the taboo, and Foucault’s specific genealogies of the interconnections between modern power, the human sciences, and contemporary subjectivity. In each case, the relentless critique of abstract, utilitarian Enlightenment reason and its supposed incarnation in the sovereign, ratiocinating, decentered subject has been carried forward in the name of all of the impurities such conceptions of reason and the subject have left out: history, tradition, cultural specificity, power, desire, embodiment, rhetoric, metaphor, myth, narrative, ordinary practice, the unconscious, the irrational, the liminal, the non-identical, heterogeneity, contingency, idiosyncrasy, and so on. According to this radical critique, however, such impurities are not mere externalities, but are centrally and ineradicably constitutive of reason and subjectivity themselves.

Habermas’s response to French poststructuralism and its Nietzschean forebears is twofold. On the one hand, he agrees with their critique of the philosophy of the subject as a thoroughly exhausted philosophical paradigm that is doomed by both its internal contradictions and its idealizing disregard of the inevitably situated character of reason and subjectivity. Yet on the other hand he argues that the overly totalizing skeptical conclusions drawn from this critique are unwarranted. To begin, he argues that the radical critique of reason ends in its own aporias and paradoxes, particularly when it leads to relativistic conclusions. Whether making truth claims that it cannot redeem in the face of its relentless critique of the very idea of truth, or relying in a cryptic way on normative intuitions about autonomy and nondomination while arguing that normative standards themselves are nothing more than effects of contingent relations of power and domination, the radical critique of the philosophy of the subject runs up against self-referentiality paradoxes. According to Habermas, however, there is an alternative path out of subject-centered philosophy: namely, the thoroughly intersubjectivist theory of communicative reason that sees reason and subjectivity as fully situated and immanent in everyday practices, but also as intrinsically oriented toward context-transcendence by virtue of their connections to validity claims. This alternative path can reinterpret the foundational ideas of the Enlightenment – truth, individual autonomy, collective solidarity, and authentic self-realization – outside the monological
concepts that originally doomed their interpretation to the endless back and forth between subjectivism and objectivism. He also argues that many of the specific critiques of instrumentalist and functionalist employments of reason found in the earlier generation of critical theorists and in French poststructuralism (especially in Foucault) are better understood in the ambiguous theory of modernization developed in *The Theory of Communicative Action* than in the totalizing critique of postmodernity.

IV. THE DISCOURSE THEORY OF MORALITY

One of the most significant components of Habermas’s theory of communicative action concerns discourse theory: an account of the meaning of and justification procedures for the unconditional validity claims to truth, rightness, and sincerity that are made at least implicitly in any communicative use of language. This and the next section treat discourse theory as applied to issues of practical reason. The central organizing principle of Habermas’s normative theorizing – developed over the years in close connection with Apel – is summed up in a general criterion for practically establishing normative validity called the “principle of discourse”: “Just those action norms are valid to which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses.” The central idea here is that those affected by an action norm ought to be able to approve of it for themselves in order for it to gain their rational adherence. And the most plausible way of insuring this is to expose the proposed norm to public critical testing in the light of all relevant information, perspectives, and argument so that, in the end, an agreement concerning it can be expected to reflect only the weight of reason.

At this point, Habermas introduces the notion that there are different ways of employing practical reason, with claims of different scopes and types, and with distinct practical logics. Pragmatic questions concern the best means to

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27. The discourse analysis of truth claims will be treated in the final section of this essay. There is comparatively little that can be said philosophically about sincerity claims that, although they claim to hold unconditionally, can only be justified in the light of particular information about the consistency or lack thereof of the speaker’s specific past behavior with the purported truthfulness of their current claim.

28. Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, William Rehg (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 107. Although the principles of discourse and of universalization were introduced first in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (originally published in 1983), and then further elaborated in *Justification and Application* (originally published in 1991), he revised both their specific formulations and, more importantly, his account of their relationship in *Between Facts and Norms* (originally published in 1992) and other later work.
adopt to realize some contingently given preferences or goals; ethical questions arise when these preferences become problematic and one asks what is good for one to do in the light of who one is; moral questions arise when one's actions in pursuit of the good may conflict with the interests of others such that one must ask what universally applicable norms of action might govern anyone's actions in the same situation. He next explains how the discourse principle – which is an intersubjectivist interpretation of the general idea of impartial justification – gets operationalized in rules of argumentation for the different employments of practical reason. According to Habermas, applying the discourse principle to the justification of moral norms generates the principle of universalization: “(U) For a [moral] norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects that its general observance can be expected to have for the satisfaction of the particular interests of each person affected must be such that all affected can accept them freely.” While the discourse principle can be operationalized in an appropriateness principle for moral application discourses and in a democratic principle for discourses justifying legal norms (discussed below), it can also be operationalized in technical/strategic calculations concerning pragmatic questions, and even in the nonprincipled employment of reflective judgment operative in the hermeneutic and appropriative discourses concerning ethical-existential and ethical-political questions about the good, character, and identity.

Habermas’s (U) offers a procedure for testing the moral rightness or validity of proposed norms that meets four demands: it explicates the binding character of moral “ought” claims, remains at the level of formal procedures, depends on the cognitivist practice of giving reasons, and provides a universalist moral theory that transcends concrete forms of life. Unlike Kant’s deontology or Rawls’s theory of justice, however, discourse theory insists that, since the interests of those actually affected are morally relevant, moral validity depends on the real consensus of participants in actual discourses. It is this latter element of intersubjectivity at the heart of Habermas’s theory that clearly sets it apart from other impartialist moral theories. The impartiality of the moral point of view can be secured only through actual reasoned dialogue, concerning consequences for individuals’ concrete interests, among all those affected. Thus (U) abstracts neither from the real world of consequences nor from the self-interpretation of the needs and interests of concretely situated persons. Hence moral practices constitutively involve the need for mutual recognition, reciprocal perspective-taking, listening to others’ claims, a willingness to learn from others, and a responsiveness and responsibility to others’ ultimate authority to agree or disagree with intersubjectively raised validity claims.

Whence comes the warrant for these ambitious claims concerning morality? Habermas combines a phenomenological account of the sense of normative obligation, a semantic account of the meaning of action norms, an anthropological account of our vulnerability to intersubjective misrecognition and harm, and a pragmatic analysis of the unavoidable presuppositions of engaging in practical justification (universal access to discourse, equal participation, noncoercion, decision on the weight of argument, and so on) in order to buttress his idealizing account of moral argumentation procedures. Moral philosophy, then, is another type of reconstructive science that attempts to elucidate the always-already presupposed, quasi-transcendental conditions that structure the actual moral discussions we already engage in. Philosophy itself can only elucidate the formal nature of the procedures of moral argumentation, however; it has no special access to or claim over which putative norms are actually morally justified. For in the end, this is a matter for actual agreement among the universe of persons, and a philosopher is just another participant in the universal conversation. Notably, morality in this “postmetaphysical” view is not grounded in a transcendent reality nor a particular ontological feature of the world, but rather is a thoroughly human, constructivist affair. There are no “facts of the matter” that operate as moral truth-makers; ideal warranted assertability before all affected simply constitutes moral validity.

Of course universalist deontological approaches to morality (and closely allied liberal approaches to justice) have come in for serious criticism during the same decades as Habermas developed his discourse theory; only the briefest indications of Habermas’s extensive work in addressing such criticisms can be given here. First, in response to cultural or historicist relativists, it should be evident that Habermas’s entire program is oriented toward rebutting relativism, mainly through combining quasi-transcendental formal pragmatics with a restriction of philosophy’s claims to the procedural features of moral discourses rather than the substantive first-order norms that different societies accept. Next, in response to the radical moral skeptic who doubts that there is any cognitive content to moral claims, Habermas appropriates an argument developed by Apel to the effect that the skeptic must either engage in argumentation concerning morality – and thereby performatively presuppose the very standards s/he denies theoretically (a “performative self-contradiction”) – or, on pain of psychopathology, withdraw from the sociocultural form of life itself. Habermas is also quite concerned to respond to neo-Hegelian, neo-Aristotelian, and communitarian objections to overly formalist and abstract accounts of persons’ concrete identities and the thick ethical space they are embedded in. Here he repeatedly makes the Hegelian point that morality in the narrow sense requires an accommodating form of ethical life that anchors, fosters, and sustains morality in cultural understandings, social interaction patterns, and individual motivational structures.
While agreeing that, in everyday life, ethical and pragmatic issues are often more pressing, salient, and difficult to resolve than moral issues, he insists on the priority of the right over the good, that is, on the way in which a small set of universally binding moral norms puts constraints on our individual and collective pursuit of context specific ethical goals and values. Finally, in response to feminist care theorists and other moral particularists who critique abstract, rule-based moralities for their insensitivity to our commitments to concrete others in nonsymmetrical relations of love, care, and concern, Habermas argues that such relationships can be morally comprehended in discourses of application that apply presumptively justified, abstract moral norms to concrete situations.

V. THE DISCOURSE THEORY OF LAW AND POLITICS

Nineteen ninety-two saw the publication of what might be considered Habermas’s third magnum opus – *Faktizität und Geltung* – a book dedicated to a simple but extraordinarily ambitious thesis: “the rule of law cannot be had or maintained without radical democracy.”30 It brings all of the tools developed over the years to the domain that is arguably most central to Habermas’s thought – politics – even though politics is investigated through its institutional infrastructure in modern nation-states: law. The reason for focusing on law is already announced in the title – literally *Factivity and Validity* – for modern, putatively legitimate law systematically presents a Janus face to the conflicting phenomena it simultaneously partakes in: claiming to be ideally justified and factually efficacious, addressing individuals as autonomous subjects and as objects of coercion, employing the communicative power of the people and yet simultaneously an administrative power over the people, and so on. Adopting the multidisciplinary, pluralist approach Habermas is famous for, the study combines three main analyses: a sociological and historical account of modern law, a political philosophy justifying constitutional democracy, and a normative-cum-empirical political theory explicating deliberative democratic politics.31

From the historical-sociological point of view, the rise of modern positive law can be seen as a response both to the disintegration of medieval worldviews with their totalistic and encompassing religiously cemented certainties and to the decoupling of economic structures from direct political (and clerical) control in the form of modern capitalism; for modern positive law makes direct, secular

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30. Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, xlii. [*] For a discussion of radical democracy, see the essay by Lasse Thomassen in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.
31. For space reasons, I omit here a fourth analysis of the book: Habermas’s development of a dialogical jurisprudence aimed at comprehending the specific rationality of judicial adjudication.
claims of authority over the actions of individuals through the threat of coercive sanction for nonperformance, while at the same time unburdening individuals from some of the normative constraints of communicative sociation. Law thereby allows individuals, in delimited spheres such as the economy, to act rather as pure, strategic actors calculating the individual costs and benefits of various courses of action. Yet modern law cannot be legitimated through its monopoly on the coercive use of force alone, for it also makes claims to being a rational, normatively correct structuring of social interaction, claims captured in liberal and republican social contract theories and manifestly informing the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeois revolutions. To put it in the terms of The Theory of Communicative Action, modern positive law partakes simultaneously in communicative and systemic forms of social integration: law “talks” in terms of both ordinary communicative language and the specialized codes of media-steered subsystems.32 From the point of view of Habermas’s critical social theory, this is a remarkable development, for law now occupies pride of place as a potentially effective emancipatory mechanism. Through law, communicative action can counter-steer functional subsystems that have run amok without, however, losing the apparently irreplaceable efficiencies of capitalism and rationalized bureaucracy for material reproduction. In the central metaphor of the book, law is the “transmission belt” that transforms social solidarity and mutual recognition into binding controls over anonymous, functionally integrated economic and administrative systems.

Showing how law can be legitimate falls to a political-philosophical reconstruction of the social contract tradition, in particular of the normative core of constitutional democracy: the system of interlocked individual, political, and social rights, and the basic scheme for the separation of powers. These elements are interpreted in discourse-theoretic terms, such that the system of rights is grasped as exactly those rights individuals would need to legally grant one another if they wish to legitimately regulate their interactions through the medium of law, and the separation of powers is interpreted in terms of different ideal-typical employments of practical reason: legislation justifying legal norms, adjudication applying them, and administration making them pragmatically effective. When the discourse principle is operationalized in the domain of politics, it yields a principle of legitimacy for constitutional democracy: “only those statutes may claim legitimacy that can meet with the assent [Zustimmung] of all citizens in a discursive process of legislation that in turn has been legally

32. It should be noted that throughout the 1980s Habermas did not view law in these bridging terms, seeing modern positive law rather as itself a functionally integrated subsystem, with its own distinctive pathological form of the colonization of the lifeworld called “juridification.”
constituted.”33 This “principle of democracy” specifies a purely proceduralist understanding of legitimacy requiring democratic participation and deliberation structured according to legitimate legal norms ensuring publicity, openness, and accessibility. Notably, Habermas’s deliberative democratic account of constitutional democracy sides with the radical democratic element of classical republicanism stressed by Rousseau: citizens must be able to understand themselves simultaneously as the authors of the very laws they are subject to. But in order for such collective authorship to be legitimate, individuals, in accordance with the liberal tradition, would need to have strong individually guaranteed rights not only to political participation, but also to individual freedom and the social conditions necessary for the equal employment of their various rights. According to Habermas, this means that private and public autonomy are “equiprimordial”: individuals must have equal individual liberties but they themselves must deliberate and decide collectively about what is to be treated equally and what not. In a similar vein, democracy and constitutionalism are not antithetical ideals, but in fact mutually presuppose one another: democracy requires the rule of law to enforce procedurally required constraints, and the rule of law requires democracy to vindicate its inherent claim to normative legitimacy.

The third major analysis of law in the book concerns the institutional means by which communicative power is politically transformed into administrative power. Notable here is the extension and modification of the model of the public sphere developed in his Habilitationsschrift into a two-track model of politics. He now distinguishes between the informal public spheres of noninstitutionalized, heterogeneous, and relatively anarchic arenas of debate and discussion found throughout civil society, and the formal public sphere of state institutions justifying and applying legal rules, including parliamentary, administrative, and judicial bodies. Ideally, communicative power is formed in informal public spheres in response to felt problems; this communicative power is fed as public opinion into formal public spheres that, through the “sluice gates” of legislative processes, is transformed into law that can steer administrative power. When robust deliberation in the various public spheres can underwrite the expectation of rational outcomes from this circuit of power, the state’s use of coercive force can be seen as legitimate. Of course, as Habermas recognizes, this circuit is only an ideal, honored more in the breach. Normally, power flows from economic and administrative social powers into the legislative process, ensuing in laws responsive to special interests rather than public opinion. Accepting realistic limits to his radical democratic ideals, Habermas argues that, as long as an ideal circuit of power can be put to use by a mobilized citizenry in times of

33. Ibid., 110.
heightened concern, the normal counter-circulation of power does not delegitimize the actual practices of contemporary constitutional democracies.

Since the 1990s, Habermas applied the sociopolitical theory of *Between Facts and Norms* to any number of topics in both academic and broader public discussions: multiculturalism, collective identities, and social struggles for recognition; the future of nationalism and the possibility of a nontribalist constitutional patriotism; tolerance in the liberal state between religious believers and nonbelievers; the status and character of political philosophy; citizenship rules and immigration policies; the justification of and prospects for the international extension of human rights; terrorism and the criminal law; increasing global inequalities and the ideologies and mechanisms of economic neoliberalism; and the changing face of international relations from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the unipolar moment of hegemony of the US. For instance, in a 2003 piece notably cosigned by Jacques Derrida, he argues for a common European foreign and defense policy aligned with international law as a counter-hegemon to the lawless, unilateralist US war machine. This last topic of European unity has been central to Habermas’s latest political writings, as he argues for the adoption of a European constitution and the development of a European federalism that could realize the normative ideals of deliberative democratic constitutionalism on a transnational level.

Habermas has also devoted much attention to reconstructing and justifying the general outlines of Kant’s cosmopolitan project for a supranational or global order. His argument here is that the ideals of constitutional democracy are not best realized in a single global government but rather in the medium of law itself. Specifically, he argues for a constitutionalization of extant international law with an invigorated United Nations dedicated to securing human rights and promoting peace at the global level, while at the regional level, transnational blocs would adopt various modes of federation, with democratic legitimation fed through the already existing participatory mechanisms of nation-states. In essence, this proposal radicalizes an idea already in *Between Facts and Norms*, namely, a desubstantialized, proceduralist understanding of democratic sovereignty as no longer invested in a delimited set of citizens making up a bounded *demos*, but rather as resting in the very communicative structures and

democratic procedures that allow for decisions to be made only in the light of sustained public criticism and testing.

VI. SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHICAL CONSOLIDATION

Since 1990, in addition to work on the broad themes treated throughout his critical social theory, Habermas began to publish various pieces that might be considered more in the domains of traditional philosophy, specifically concerning ultimate questions of human meaning and concerning epistemology and metaphysics. Hence these years might be characterized as a kind of systematic philosophical consolidation, tying up various loose ends and addressing topics previously held slightly out of reach. In the domain of questions of ultimate human meaning, two topics deserve mention. First, Habermas has written increasingly on topics concerning religion: appreciative essays on prominent theologians, interviews and articles treating the Christian and Jewish origins of ideas and thought complexes close to his work, and a reassessment of Enlightenment modernism. Notable here was an exchange in 2004 with then-Cardinal Ratzinger (soon to become Pope Benedict XVI), which contained an apparent shift in tone, if not wholly in substance, from his sociological theory of modernity developed two decades earlier. For while The Theory of Communicative Action couched modernization as a learning process involving the progressive rationalization of lifeworld structures, it also couched these very same processes in classical sociological terms: as the disenchantment of religious-metaphysical worldviews and the loss of the authority of the sacred canopy. In the Ratzinger exchange and elsewhere, however, Habermas is more sensitive to what has been lost with the changes in consciousness that he interprets as the linguistification of the sacred and as unambiguously leaving us in a postmetaphysical condition. Thus he now stresses that secular reason – which he still staunchly defends – must apply the canons of reflexivity to its own thinking, and open itself to potential learning in which the irreplaceable symbolic and expressive potentials of religious experience are not wholly excluded, especially its sensitivity for diagnosing individual and societal losses, disfigurements, and pathologies. This idea is also evident in his intervention into debates, spurred by Rawls, concerning the public, political use of religious reasons where, in contrast to Rawls's endorsement of a restricted code of religiously cleansed

“public reason,” Habermas argues that religious reasons must be allowed in the informal political public spheres both for functional reasons and so that the special sensitivities of religious language for ethical deformations may be drawn on, as long as these reasons can be translated into secular reasons in the formal political sphere.

The other important work on ultimate questions of human meaning concerns Habermas’s intervention into bioethical debates, specifically concerning the ethics of liberal eugenics, that is, genetic interventions by potential parents aiming to improve or optimize their offspring in some way or another.37 Supporting the conclusion that we should not engage in liberal eugenics, he argues that various forms of genetic technology would, if employed, fundamentally alter our species-wide self-understanding of ourselves as individual beings who are authors of our own lives and responsible for that authorship. But this massive change in our species-wide ethical-existential understanding of ourselves would then undermine our moral self-understandings as responsible authors of our own lives. At the very least, in suggesting an altered understanding of the relation between ethical values and moral principles, whereby context-transcendent moral principles are taken to be embedded in a context-specific ethical worldview – admittedly a worldview that is allegedly species-wide – this argument will force a reconsideration of central meta-ethical issues in Habermas’s work.

In the 1999 Truth and Justification, Habermas has clarified and restated his epistemological and metaphysical views. His first serious go at a theory of truth was in the 1973 paper “Wahrheitstheorien,” where he laid claim to a “consensus” theory of truth: statements are true when they have been agreed to by all dialogue participants under ideally extended conditions of justification.38 He thereby rejected both correspondence theories of truth – for naively supposing linguistically and conceptually unmediated access to brute facts – and coherence theories of truth – for overinflating the significance of linguistic mediation to the degree that they ignore the responsiveness of truth claims to states of affairs. However, at least since 1999, Habermas has abandoned a purely epistemic theory of truth in terms of ideal assertability conditions in favor of a version he calls pragmatic realism. Here he is careful to differentiate truth and ideal warranted assertability in order to emphasize that, unlike in the case of justified moral and legal norms, truth is not constituted or exhausted by agreement under ideal conditions. There

is always the possibility that the empirical propositions we agree to, even under ideal conditions, could be false. We should thus acknowledge the different ways in which claims to truth function in everyday life and in reflexive discourses. In our everyday dealings with the world we are firm realists, convinced of the unconditionality and context-transcending validity of truth claims: “we do not walk onto any bridge whose stability we doubt.”39 Yet when we engage in reflective discourse about particular truth claims, for instance in scientific investigation, we realize that truth claims are epistemically tied to unavoidably linguistic practices of justification, are inherently fallible, and ultimately are only under ideal conditions redeemable to an unlimited communication community.

This change in the understanding of truth has led to the recognition of a need for a theory of reference, and here Habermas has largely endorsed Hilary Putnam’s theory of direct reference, thereby confirming what was always implicit: his epistemological realism. From the pragmatic point of view, our knowledge-gathering practices stem from problem-solving interventions in the world, interventions that make intersubjective learning processes possible through error correction and responsiveness to objections. Antirealist linguistic idealism cannot account for surprising experiences that outstrip our current linguistic frameworks, while hyperobjectivist faith in direct access to brute reality ignores ineliminably intersubjectivist practices of justification. In addition, he has sought to incorporate Robert Brandom’s inferentialist semantics as a natural complement to universal pragmatics even as he is wary of Brandom’s exclusive focus on representational uses of language to the exclusion of communicative uses.40 Finally, Habermas endorses what he calls a “weak naturalism” that treats both the natural and the sociocultural worlds as objective domains open to empirical investigation, yet rejects a reductivist “strong” naturalism. The normative self-understanding of competently speaking and acting subjects simply cannot be done justice to in a reformulated causal language of objectively observable events and states of affairs; the hermeneutic perspective is irreplaceable for comprehending the lifeworld, even as we need not thereby endorse hermeneutic idealism.

In the end, Habermas continues to defend communicative practices as the immanent locus of the transcendent, since the pragmatic presuppositions of linguistic interaction are themselves the point at which regulative ideals of reason become actually effective. Yet whether reconstructing the achievements of theoretic reason in terms of a Kantian pragmatism or acknowledging the


*40. For a discussion of Brandom and naturalism, see the essay by John Fennell in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
losses and social deformations attendant to secularization, he continues to insist that we must attend not only to the ideals of reason but also to their potential illusions and misuse. The point, finally, of such an ambiguous assessment of reason and modernity is precisely to develop a robust critical theory, a systematic, interdisciplinary theory oriented toward human emancipation in all its forms.

**MAJOR WORKS**


Critical theory developed as an amalgam of various thinkers directly or indirectly associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany.\(^1\) In the 1930s, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse, among others, reworked Marxist philosophy in order to provide an alternative to the positivist and neo-Kantian approaches dominant in social theory at the time.\(^2\) They combined theoretical interests with empirical research, collaborating on social and political analyses on an array of topics. Their overall aim was the abolition of political and social domination in all of its guises.

The rise of National Socialism, however, imposed a geographic dispersion on this mostly Jewish group. Adorno, Horkheimer, Fromm, and Marcuse all left eventually for the United States, while Benjamin died in transit to Spain. Many of their most influential works were produced in this subsequent time of exile. The second generation of critical theory emerged after the institute reopened in Frankfurt in the early 1950s. Karl-Otto Apel (1922– ), Jürgen Habermas (1929– ), Alfred Schmidt (1931– ), Albrecht Wellmer (1933– ), Oskar Negt (1934– ), and Claus Offe (1940– ) all became associated with the revived institute.\(^3\) But it was Habermas, named as Adorno’s assistant in the mid-1950s,

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1. The institute was started in the 1920s. Among the earliest members were Friedrich Pollock (1894–1970), Felix Weil (1898–1975), and Carl Grünberg (1861–1940).

2. For a discussion of the first generation of the “Frankfurt School,” see the essays by John Abromeit and Deborah Cook in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.

3. Apel received his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Bonn, under Erich Rothacker. After teaching at the Universities of Kiel and Saarbrücken, in 1972 he took a position at the University of Frankfurt, where he taught until his retirement in 1990. Because Habermas’s
who bore the mantle of this second generation. Committed to the development of a critical theory of society consistent with the first generation’s work, Habermas adapted their prior theories to a host of new social, cultural, and political circumstances. He also began to explore new methodologies, such as the analytic study of language and speech pragmatics (Austin, Searle), discursive theories of truth (Peirce, Dummett), and systems theory (Parsons, Luhmann). He encapsulated aspects of all of these analyses in a wide-ranging theory of communicative action. These new viewpoints significantly expanded the scope of critical theory both geographically and intellectually.

This chapter will explore some of the major developments that these second generation figures, other than Habermas, contributed to the institute. Apel developed the theoretical framework for a discursive theory of truth and worked closely with Habermas in the assimilation of the insights of American pragmatism. Apel, a sociologist, analyzed contemporary administrative systems.

Schmidt studied philosophy and sociology with Adorno and Horkheimer at the University of Frankfurt, finishing in 1970. From 1972 until 1999, he taught at the University of Frankfurt. Wellmer did all of his graduate studies in philosophy at the University of Frankfurt. He was Habermas’s assistant for several years. His early work involved studies of Karl Popper and theories of explanation. In his early career, he taught in Toronto, New York, Starnberg (at the Max Planck Institute), and Konstanz, and then took a position at the Free University in Berlin. Negt received his doctorate in sociology in 1962, writing with Adorno on the sociology of August Comte. He was then Habermas’s assistant in Frankfurt for several years before securing a teaching position in sociology at the University of Hannover, where he stayed until his retirement in 2000.

Offe was a student of Habermas’s, receiving his doctorate in 1968. He then taught at the Universities of Bremen and Bielefeld. Currently he is professor of political science at Humboldt University in Berlin.

Others associated with the institute included Ralf Dahrendorf (1929–2009) and Ludwig von Friedeburg (1924–2010).

4. It is nearly universally conceded that Habermas is a member of the second generation. Peter Matussek, however, argues that Habermas’s discourse-theoretic orientation makes him a third generation figure. See his “Kritische Theorie,” in Orientierung Kulturwissenschaft, Helmut Böhme et al. (eds) (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowolt, 2000), 93. Nonetheless, Matussek sees a close continuity between second and third generation orientations. Others argue that Habermas, along with Schmidt, Dubiel, Wellmer, and Honneth, belongs to both second and third generations. See Klaus Scherpe, “Kritische Theorie,” in Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft, Harald Fricke et al. (eds) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 346.

5. Apel self-identifies as a member of the Frankfurt School. See his "Discourse Ethics' Before the Challenge of 'Liberation Philosophy," Philosophy and Social Criticism 22(2) (1996), 8. Moreover, in Habermas’s Time of Transitions (2001), when asked how the views of second generation critical theorists relate to the Cold War, the Enlightenment project, and the critique of the philosophy of consciousness, he replies, "I can't speak for the 'second generation,' only for myself – or perhaps also for Karl-Otto Apel – in what I am about to say" (Time
Wellmer was critical of much of Adorno's analysis of rationality, and prepared the groundwork for new models of rationality, aesthetics, and modernity. Negt wrote on social theory and collaborated with Alexander Kluge, a film producer, on extensive studies of the public sphere, media, and worker cooperatives. Schmidt did careful studies of the philosophy of history and philosophy of nature.

A few others who were more distantly associated with the second generation of the institute also bear mention. Ernst Tugendhat worked with Habermas and applied the tools of analytic philosophy to the general aims of critical theory. Herbert Schnädelbach developed a theory of rationality (inspired by Hegel’s philosophy of history) implicit in much of the theory of communicative action. Cornelius Castoriadis did extensive work on the interplay between psychoanalysis and social analysis. Michael Theunissen did historical analysis of Transitions, Ciaran Cronin and Max Pensky [eds and trans.] [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006], 161).


8. Tugendhat (1930– ) received his doctorate from the University of Freiburg in 1956. He then taught at the University of Heidelberg, before leaving and moving to Chile. On his return to Germany, he began teaching again at the Free University in Berlin. Combining critical theoretic insights with analytic philosophy, his best-known work is Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstbestimmung; published in English as Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination.

[*] Tugendhat's work is discussed in the essay by Dieter Thomä in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.

9. Schnädelbach (1936– ) studied with both Habermas and Adorno in the 1960s at the University of Frankfurt. He then taught in Frankfurt, before taking other positions at Hamburg and then Humboldt University in Berlin. He is best known for his work Reflexion und Diskurs: Fragen einer Logik der Philosophie, in which he examines the historical emergence of reason and normativity.

10. Castoriadis (1922–97) was raised in Greece and heavily influenced by Marxist thought. He later moved to France, where he wrote on a large number of psychoanalytic and economic issues. He placed particular emphasis on the inexplicability of social change, rendering analysis of change a function of imagination. A society can become autonomous if it realizes this. Much of this is described in his The Imaginary Institution of Society. He taught for many years at the Ecole des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

11. Theunissen’s (1932– ) early work, Der Andere: Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart, published in English as The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber, was a profoundly influential study of the development of theories of intersubjectivity in Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber. He taught at Heidelberg and then the Free University in Berlin. He also did a great deal of work on the philosophy of religion.
of the philosophical foundations of social theory. This listing is by no means exhaustive.\textsuperscript{12}

\section*{I. THE DEFINING MOMENTS OF THE SECOND GENERATION}

It is difficult to give a complete characterization of each of the generations of critical theory, but there are what could be called “defining moments” of at least the first two. For the first generation, three such moments could be defined as the rise of National Socialism and the Second World War, the subsequent diaspora of the members of the institute, and finally the return of some members to reconstitute the institute in Frankfurt in the early 1950s. On their return to Germany they found themselves in a realm of economic prosperity coupled with a profound amnesia about the Nazi past.

The second generation emerged in the Cold War environment in Germany in the later 1950s. For this generation, critical defining moments were: (i) the student revolutions of the mid- and later 1960s (coupled with the untimely death of Adorno); (ii) the expansion of the philosophical reach of the institute’s research in the 1970s beyond the confines of the German intellectual environment (and the correlative emergence of a influential group of critical theorists in North America); and then (iii) the impact of the new world order emerging after the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellites in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The student movement of the 1960s, in Germany as elsewhere, was constituted by a complex set of historical-cultural circumstances. According to Offe, the German students wanted not merely a radicalization of the public sphere, but also the destruction of political, economic, and cultural institutions.\textsuperscript{13} As early as May 1966, Marcuse, Negt, and Habermas were in attendance at an

\textsuperscript{12} Recently, a third generation of critical theorists has emerged. Their interests are even further wide-ranging than the second. Axel Honneth, who took Habermas’s Chair in Social Philosophy at Frankfurt in 1996, is arguably the central figure of this generation. The influence of Habermas still looms large for these thinkers, although they structure their analyses less exclusively on his thought than the second generation did. Third generation thinkers would include, among others, Ben Agger, Amy Allen, Seyla Benhabib, James Bohman, Micha Brumlik, Hauke Brunkhorst, Rüdiger Bubner, Susan Buck-Morss, Deborah Cook, Maev Cooke, Helmut Dubiel, Rainer Forst, Nancy Fraser, Josef Frücht, Klaus Günther, Joseph Heath, David Hoy, David Ingram, Hans Joas, Nikolas Kompridis, Cristina Lafont, Alfred Lorenzer, Thomas McCarthy, Christoph Menke, Johannes Metz, Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, David Rasmussen, William Rehg, Thomas Schmidt, Martin Seel, Günther Teubner, Georgina Warnke, Rolf Wiggershaus, Lutz Wingert, and Christopher Zurn. [*] For further discussion of this third generation, see the essay by Amy Allen in \textit{History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7}.

antiwar rally held by the West German student opposition at the University of Frankfurt. The next year, more collaboration between critical theorists and the students occurred. In June, students organized a conference in Hanover and invited Habermas, who tried to define what the students’ revolutionary role should be. He saw a conflict: the students wanted to be a practical force for emancipation while ignoring the theoretical reflection requisite for it. He argued that they should discard any “fascist” leftist models and take on a reflective stance able to overcome the polarizations of their situation in order to forge a singular direction that could form strategic interventions to help the underprivileged and harmed of society. These overtures were generally gainsaid by the students, leading to a definitive break between them and the critical theorists.

In the midst of this confrontation, Adorno died in 1969. As Rolf Wiggershaus writes:

Adorno’s death was thus the end of a form of Critical Theory, no matter how disunified it had been, which had uniquely centered on the Institute of Social Research, as its outward form, and on an urge for discovery that had its roots in anti-bourgeois sentiment and in a sense of having a mission to criticize society. The fact that the younger members of the Institute all left Frankfurt within two or three years only underlined the significance of the break that Adorno’s death represented.

Ludwig von Friedeburgh, who had been the head of the institute, became the Federal Republic of Hesse’s minister of culture, Negt went to Hanover, and Habermas transferred to the Max Planck Institute for Research on Living Conditions in the Scientific and Technological World in Starnberg. Only Schmidt remained in Frankfurt, eventually becoming the administrator of the Horkheimer estate.

Shortly after their dispersal from Frankfurt, critical theorists were collectively accused of fomenting support for terrorist actions, such as those carried out by the Red Brigade in Italy in the 1970s.

15. Ibid., 654.
16. Similarly, Antonio Negri (1933– ) is an Italian Marxist philosopher whose political activism led him to be falsely accused of participating in terrorist acts of the Red Brigade in Italy in the 1970s.
by the Baader-Meinhof Gang17 and their sympathizers. In 1972, Willy Brandt, together with the prime ministers of the Federal States, passed a ban on “radical teachers” that was meant to target critical theorists among others. Five years later, two heads of Republics, Hans Filbinger of Baden-Württemberg, and Alfred Dregger of Hesse, declared the Frankfurt School to be one of the causes of terrorism.18 Wellmer strongly refuted such accusations. He argued that the causes of terrorism stem from the terrorists’ own delusions. These revolutionaries suffered from an “internal loss of experience and community” and showed contempt for the very peoples who were supposed to be liberated by them.19 The terrorists’ strategies of refusal were only “a reflex of the ideological function these norms perform in society.”20 Eventually the public criticisms of the Frankfurt School eased.

In the 1970s, critical theorists expanded their range of research both topically and geographically. While in Starnberg, Habermas appropriated much Anglo-American thought. Apel studied many of the classical American pragmatists, particularly Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead, as well as other contemporary figures such as Emmanuel Levinas, Hilary Putnam, and Enrique Dussel. Other second generation figures followed suit. In 1998, Offe coauthored a work with Jon Elster, utilizing some of the latter’s rational choice paradigm. He also studied American political, social, and economic thinkers such as David Easton, Albert Hirschman, Seymour Lipset, and Peter Winch. Negt worked closely with Kluge. Wellmer did work on truth and politics that involved reference to a host of non-German thinkers: John Rawls, Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Richard Rorty, Donald Davidson, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and even Samuel Beckett. Schmidt read a number of non-German philosophers of praxis, such as Gaston Bachelard, Louis Althusser, and Antonio Gramsci.

Finally, with the breakup of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, critical theorists were forced to weigh in on the future of Marxist thinking and practice.

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17. The Baader-Meinhof Gang was a group of militant left-wing activists who were also known as the Red Army Faction. Their aim was to overthrow, by specific acts of resistance, the West German Republic. The group, which described itself as a band of “urban guerillas,” operated from the 1970s through the 1990s.
18. Dregger employed a social philosopher, Günther Rohrmoser, who claimed that “Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer were the terrorists’ intellectual foster parents, who were using cultural revolution to destroy the traditions of the Christian West” (Wiggershaus, The Frankfurt School, 657). He claimed they fomented a “terrorism of political convictions such as has never existed before, even under Nazi tyranny” (ibid.).
20. Ibid., 292.
In the face of the continuing inability of postwar Marxist regimes to develop a “transparent production and distribution economy,” second generation critical theorists were motivated to construct with even greater intensity the emancipatory potential of Marxism.21

Given this brief overview of the second generation, we can now examine some of the general topics with which they worked: (i) their idea of critical theory; (ii) the ethical, social, and political issues they examined; and (iii) their theories of truth and aesthetics.

II. THE IDEA OF CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory took its initial theoretical impetus primarily from Horkheimer’s work in the 1930s. It was to be a critical theory of society—assisted by insights from sociology, psychology, economics, history, and philosophy—able to furnish resources for human emancipation. It soon evolved into a thoroughgoing critique of instrumental reason and, after the war, moved into specific analyses of Marxism, aesthetics, religion, and politics.

Schmidt did extensive metatheoretic work on Marxist theory in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was strongly influenced by Johann Droysen’s materialist critique of structuralist views of history. Schmidt claimed that Lenin’s separation of theoretical and structural from historical questions prepared the way for the problematic separation between Marx’s twentieth-century structuralist interpreters, such as Althusser, Bachelard, and Nicos Poulantzas, and his historicist interpreters, such as Gramsci and Georg Lukács.22 Neither side could do justice to both aspects present in Marx’s work. By demonstrating Marx’s unique interweaving of both aspects, Schmidt hoped to retain him as a viable critique of political economy.

Schmidt endorses Adorno’s project of working off the past.23 But he wants to include a working through toward the future as well, and he looked for such resources in Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche. Schmidt thinks that Marx preceded Adorno in defending the nonidentity of knowledge between object and thought. Marx had accepted Hegel’s critique of empiricism as inadequate to the understanding of concrete universals emerging from historical events, but criticized Hegel for determining that the knowing self is an unfolding of

22. Schmidt does indicate, though, that Althusser denied being a structuralist. See Schmidt, History and Structure, 82.
23. Schmidt, History and Structure, 2–3. As he argues, in an Adornoesque vein, it was Hegel who had given “voice to the object” (ibid., 11).
“itself out of itself.” For Hegel, the science of the concept originated from an empirical ground that afterwards can then be discarded. But he had come close to providing a framework that could illuminate Marx’s subsequent fusion of systematic presentation (Darstellungsweise), on the one hand, and historically guided inquiry (Forschungsweise), on the other. Marx showed how history is not merely narrated, as Hegel thought, but also materially constructed in relations of production.

Marx retained from Hegel the realization that a system is both constituted by conscious acts of individuals and yet can oppose them. Marx was a critical theorist in the sense that he held that the hitherto unconscious forces of system can be modified by the critical thought of the individuals involved. He was convinced, Schmidt argues, that:

just as the idealist system of philosophy, once rounded off and self-defined, left its historical premises behind, like a shed skin, so the bourgeois relations of production appearing in the money form of capital constituted a system “in process” whose functioning must be explained through rigorous conceptual labor.

This hermeneutic key opens up an explanation of much in Capital. It explains why Marx began the text with his analysis of a commodity. As Schmidt explains, “Like a Leibnizian monad, the commodity reflects in itself the whole world conditioned by its structure, a point to which Lenin drew particular attention.” Marx followed the analysis of the commodity with an analysis of the money form and then of capital, while his historical analysis, outlining the primitive accumulation needed for the development of capital, was left until chapter 24. Schmidt argues that Marx thus considered capitalism the high point in universal history, serving as a principle of explanation of past and future development. Structurally Marx prioritized the present as the fulcrum for his historical analysis, and historically he showed the development of individuation over time. Combining these analyses, he then understood concepts, such as labor and capital, not in an immediate but only in a mediated manner, as “slices of abstraction” in an “intensive totality.”

Offe’s analytic model of critical theory is modeled on Marx’s crisis theory. But he adopts Habermas’s claim that the diagnosis and repair of crises stems

24. Ibid., 40.
25. Ibid., 98.
26. Ibid., 47.
27. Ibid., 48.
29. Schmidt, History and Structure, 68.
not only from the distinction between labor and capital but from the distinction between social and system interaction. Capitalist economies integrate social and system interactions in problematic ways: their practice of private ownership separates system integration from private will formation, and their reliance on the causal mechanisms of the market (although markets require a framework of roles established by the state) problematizes the formation of societal and moral norms needed for social integration. Such critical analyses can inform social meliorization.

Wellmer is less optimistic than Offe about the value of Marx's analysis for critical theory. He claims that Marx’s conceptual analysis lost its luster because his theories of crisis and revolution “proved false.” Marx properly understood emancipation as the negation of the negation but he could not work out its dialectical details. Wellmer turned rather to the methodological arguments that Habermas had formulated in On the Logic of the Social Sciences. Like Habermas, Wellmer criticizes Popper’s inability to give an account of meaning on the part of the subjects of social analysis. Although he applauds Peter Winch’s (1926–97) linguistic turn in social analysis as able to account for cultural meanings, he criticizes it for its inability to provide an adequate theoretic level of analysis. Wellmer claims that Habermas makes up for this deficiency by developing a critical social theory that is both practical and historically oriented. Wellmer defines critical theory as that which analyzes the historical embeddedness of the notion of the good life. Critical theory acknowledges the value of each individual so as to oppose all forms of social domination. It works not on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1900–2002) model of hermeneutic dialogue, which emerged from the work of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), but on the basis of criticism of actual traditions. The proof of this emancipatory force is the experience of freedom it unleashes.

30. Habermas makes approving reference to this, noting that Offe “has returned to the conceptual duality of ‘social versus system integration’ in order to comprehend imprecise phenomena that do not readily conform to the frameworks of Marxist, Weberian, or functionalist theories of development” (Habermas [ed.], Observations on “The Spiritual Situation of the Age,” 22).
34. Winch was a British philosopher who wrote extensively on the issues of the foundations of the social sciences. He criticized positivist views that saw sociology as a natural science, and instead endorsed a Wittgensteinian view of society as a grouping of forms of life understood via language games. One of his most influential works was Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy.
Wellmer criticizes Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s analysis of Marx in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The text:

no longer tries to identify the “objective” historical and social tendencies and mechanisms which point toward the emergence of a liberated post-capitalist society. Thereby it avoids the bad “immanentism” (objectivism) of Marx’s theory. However, by stressing the radical discontinuity rather than the historical continuity between the history of class society and the liberated society, it obviously risks ending up with a new form of utopianism.35

This future orientation is related to the present by an abstract negation. But for Wellmer, critical theory should balance a positive dialectic of liberation with a negative dialectics of reification (Weber). It ought to promote an idea of reason as the “harmonious unity of the collective life process” that can overcome the oppositions between individual and collective will and between reason and sensuous nature.36 Marx was naive to measure bourgeois society:

by a norm of justice that is not its own, with the implication that his critique as a whole is perhaps subject to Hegel’s verdict on such material postulates of justice, namely that they are spawned by an ‘empty understanding’ and seek to usurp the formal postulates of equality of abstract right, which alone are meaningful.37

The second generation’s ambivalent view of the value of Marxian social analysis reflects some of the same ambivalence the first generation felt toward Marx. Each generation clearly realized, though, the importance of continued reflection on its own set of theoretical presuppositions.

III. ETHICAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL ISSUES

*Modernity and postmodernity*

Since the era of Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” and Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, critical theorists have been

36. Ibid., 46.
intensely interested in the philosophy of history. But while Horkheimer and Adorno voiced strong skepticism about the emancipatory potential of modernity, Habermas praised the project of the Enlightenment for giving grounds for the emancipatory resources of democracy and personal autonomy. He did so in contradistinction to critics of modernity such as Horkheimer and Adorno, on the one hand, and advocates of postmodernity, such as Foucault and Derrida, on the other.

Second generation critical theorists generally defend Habermas’s positive assessment of modernity. Offe envisions a modern state aimed toward freedom, reciprocity, and equality. But he discards the democratic/capitalist or welfare/socialist alternatives in favor of a model that focuses on “secondary rules of selection” that allow for the coexistence of “variegated horizons of options.”38 He also believes, with Habermas, in the pervasiveness of modernity. For example, when postmodernists side with emancipative movements – such as women’s rights or the ecological movement – they do not give up on modernity as such but are merely selective about which modern values they endorse.39

Unlike Offe and Habermas, Wellmer refuses to endorse either modernity or postmodernity. Rather, he relates them dialectically, and concludes that postmodernity is the radicalization of modernity. Since postmodernity is a perspective, it cannot but have a sense of its own position in the present. It develops from a Kantian dialectic of representation and conceptualization. It guides social change by negating the rules established by previous constructions. Modernity, on the other hand, tends to work within itself to check its own deviations. For example, the Romantic movement aimed to rectify the extreme rationality that early modernity had developed. Similarly, Wellmer maintains that Adorno’s idea of reconciliation was developed as a counter to modernity’s “reification, alienation, and identitary reason.”40 Adorno endorsed art as a way to open up and dissolve boundaries imposed on the subject. Wellmer concludes that postmodern worries about ultimate justification are legitimate, but they provide an impetus not to dismiss reason but to work towards its “self-transcendence.”41

The public sphere

It is within this general endorsement of modernity that Habermas, in the 1960s, developed his well-known and influential thesis regarding the public sphere.

41. Ibid., 93.
He stipulated that the public sphere emerged with the development of bourgeois culture in the eighteenth century and its emblematic free press. But in the current welfare state environment, it has expanded beyond the bourgeois sphere.\(^{42}\) What was earlier exclusive to the bourgeois sphere has remixed with the sphere of the state. This has caused a “refeudalization” of the public sphere.\(^{43}\) Its critical function is weakened: it stands in need of revitalization.

Negt and Kluge modified significantly Habermas’s notion of the public sphere, which they envisioned as a new analytic sociological category, alongside those of family, state, and marketplace. While Habermas had utilized the typical liberal strategy of analyzing the public sphere as a singular cluster of activities oriented ultimately toward democratic decision-making, they exhibited how it has become a distorting and expropriative organization of social experience. It has thus spawned its own oppositional sphere, the proletariat sphere, which is a “collective production process, the object of which is coherent human sensuality.”\(^{44}\) Thus they shifted the terrain of the public sphere from a historic-transcendental Enlightenment idealization to a plurality of discourses, experientially constituted.

Negt and Kluge underwrote their “material” theory of public spheres by means of Adorno’s micrological analysis of the nonidentical grounded in the history of the proletariat’s resistance to capitalism.\(^{45}\) Adorno had analyzed history not by means of its large social movements or political ideologies, but rather in terms of the ruptures and discontinuities evident in particular techniques (e.g. the media) and concrete events. Negt and Kluge understood experience dialectically, relative to the experience of time. In contrast to the uniform timelessness of commodity exchange, Adorno’s understanding of the primacy of the object had revealed the ways in which actual social conditions “necessitate quite specific rhythms of experience.”\(^{46}\) For example, in current capitalism the stratifications of temporality and memory are suppressed in the productive sphere, but are shifted into nonproductive activities, such as entertainment, education, and even child rearing, rendering these activities hyper-time conscious.


\(^{43}\) Ibid., 141.

\(^{44}\) Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 658. In *Geschichte und Eigensinn*, Negt and Kluge responded to Foucault’s microphysics of power by analyzing the opposite pole of capital power: the power of living labor power.


\(^{46}\) Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, Peter Labanyi et al. (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 18.
Proletariat experience, according to Negt and Kluge, changes with each situation, and thus lacks the generalizability of commodity relations. It emerges not from control over products but from the qualitative “experience of production itself.”47 But it is also shaped by those developments in technology, particularly in microelectronics, that replace one’s everyday lived experience of reality (Lebenszusammenhänge) with a kind of second reality. These experiences form a range of public spheres in contexts that are not usually recognized as such. These include activities such as labor strikes, football matches, and even the routines of family life. These public spheres exist and operate outside the usual parameters of institutional legitimation. They respond to the contingent needs of all of the groups whose self-expression is blocked from the usual arenas of public discourse.

Negt and Kluge take up the Freudian concept of fantasy as a new analytic category for analyzing twentieth-century capitalism. On the one hand, fantasy is that by which commodities can be concretely perceived by the individual. Advertising in contemporary capitalism links commodities to individual wishes, desires, and worldviews. This is the mediation by which commodities take on the character of a public sphere.48 On the other hand, fantasy is also the result of the productive activity that covers up the shock effects of alienation. But in its “unsublated” or inverted form it merely expresses a subject’s alienation as a kind of dream. Yet, even so, it keeps a space within the proletariat sphere that cannot be subsumed into capitalist valorization. Ironically, the “consciousness industry’s” domestication of fantasy (as in films and television) can also allow for its freer existence.49

The bourgeois public sphere, however, remains dominant. It modifies all real needs so that it can classify them within its abstract system. Norms and laws hamper whatever would disturb or nullify bourgeois production. Moreover, the proletariat public sphere utilizes bourgeois organization forms; for example, proletariat marriages are modeled on the bourgeois family – all of which maintains the status quo. But bourgeois society does not actually require the public sphere to operate: competition and law alone would suffice. Its declining need for the public sphere is evidenced in, for example, the “insipid character of public ceremonies.”50 So, why do the oppressed classes still participate in public spheres that exclude their vital interests?

Following Adorno, Negt and Kluge suggest that the media, by weakening given public spheres, actually serves to proliferate new but less critical spheres.
Since its production process is not visible on the screen, television exhibits “suggestive immediacy” and completeness instead of developing the viewer’s awareness of the production process.\textsuperscript{51} There is no medium for a proper critical perspective. This is due to a difference in “social tempo between lived existence, which is to a certain extent not yet industrialized, and the broadcasting output of a highly industrialized medium.”\textsuperscript{52}

In a later work, \textit{Geschichte und Eigensinn} (History and originality), Negt and Kluge construct a critical reading of history from the viewpoint of labor. Such a descriptive project is required to unleash emancipative possibilities. They are particularly interested in the development of the proletariat labor from its peasant origins in precapitalist times. Like Benjamin, they believe that collective narratives not only reveal a people’s experience but also serve to form their productive lives.\textsuperscript{53} Given this presupposition they claim, for example, that fairy tales, emergent from medieval cultures, were fundamental to the development not only of peasant laborers but of the capitalist nation-states, particularly the German, that emerged from them. They use such analyses to expose what they take to be the dominant social consciousness of their time: depoliticized mass consumerism.

\textit{The welfare state and the risk society}

Second generation critical theory thus analyzes a culture whose critical resources for emancipatory praxis are highly compromised. But there is also a structural issue that overshadows this situation: the continued transformation of modern society from a strict capitalist to a welfare state. The state now acts as an agent that attempts to counteract the unintended and undesired side-effects of exchange and profit.

Offe takes up an analysis of the contradictions involved in the very idea of a welfare state. It is in crisis, precisely, because it brings in its wake “ungovernability.” Conservatives argue that to combat the negative effects of the welfare state the culture needed to promote values such as self-restraint, discipline, and community spirit. But Offe argues that such reform would be possible only if the requisite basis of consensus were successfully consolidated. To do so, the mechanisms of social integration would have to be expanded.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51.} \textit{Ibid.}, 103.
\textsuperscript{52.} \textit{Ibid.}, 118.
\textsuperscript{54.} Offe, “Ungovernability,” 74. In his assessment of Offe’s arguments, Habermas thinks that the solution lies in the exposition of various normative orientations: a respect for modernity, a post-traditional understanding of law and morality, and an affirmation of the “fragile autonomy” of moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive rationality. Interestingly he mentions
In a later writing, Offe takes up Ulrich Beck’s structural analysis of the current “risk society” (Risikogesellschaft). He accepts Beck’s claim that we no longer can understand either social conflict simply as a class conflict between exploiters and the exploited or freedom simply as the result of causal interventions against the exploited by the exploiters. Like Habermas and Castoriadis, he claims that crises are primarily no longer economic, but legitimational, motivational, or administrative. What is operative in the risk society is neither a positive sum nor a zero sum game, but rather a negative sum game: in many cases, no party can gain advantage in a given exchange. So, the only path for a society is to minimize overall harm. The best way to manage this is through practices of self-restraint. But this restraint is motivated not by governmental prohibitions, but only by an array of piecemeal interactions. As Habermas argued, the lifeworld of actual structures and institutions needs to meet our moral insights only “halfway” (Entgegenkommen). It does so by “associative relations,” such as the division of labor and procedures of conflict resolution. Offe argues that discourse ethics is one such associative relation of procedural self-controls.

Wellmer also adopts a halfway strategy with regard to the reform of bourgeois culture. On the one hand, the bourgeois virtue of “delayed gratification” has lost its plausibility. Its endorsement of capitalist labor destroys the exist- ential meaning of family and profession. Women are generally more burdened than men with its many contradictory sets of roles. Many bourgeois constraining norms are in conflict with the values of participatory democracy. Nonetheless, Wellmer thinks that the challenge to today’s leftist thinkers is not to abandon but to find “the progressive and emancipatory content” of liberal democracy.

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57. Ibid., 68. Like Elster, Offe appeals to the figure of Odysseus as a confirmation of this rationality of self-restraint. Odysseus tried to forge a reasonable response to irrationality, yet found that a rational curbing of destructive instinct was all that was possible. Joseph Schumpeter astonishingly argued that these “braking” mechanisms, to be found in as diverse places as cartels and monopolies, were actually helpful to capitalism as static inefficiencies that actually promoted dynamic efficiencies. Offe dismisses this as contradictory, since one simply cannot rationally desire inefficiencies (ibid., 74).
59. Ibid., 305.
Discourse ethics

Starting in *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas developed a cognitive theory of ethics, later termed discourse ethics. Its metaethical foundations stem from a view of ethical universality premised on finding which individual human interests are in fact able to be verified as intersubjectively valid, and thus as able to guide will formation. Habermas considers his work on discourse ethics – and discourse theory as applied generally to law and politics – one of his crowning achievements. This was an area in which he received a great deal of collaboration from fellow second generation members, particularly Apel.\(^6^0\)

Apel’s methodology begins with a preliminary definition of ethics and its foundations, and then reconstructs the cultural evolution of discourse ethics hermeneutically. Apel rejects both rational choice and contractualist theories. Like Horkheimer, he argues that a rational choice theory, as instrumentalist, simply cannot posit ends. Contractualist theories, for their part, fail to determine what motivates anyone to maintain a contract. This deficit cannot be made up for by any theory of deontological justification. Owing to these failures, Popper was led to conclude that no ethical foundations are possible; one can rely only on decisionism. Rejecting Popper’s solution, Apel historically reconstructs the conditions and procedures of ethical legitimation in order to discover in the present the grounds for a “non-contingent” form of discourse able to guide a democratic praxis.\(^6^1\) He finds a double *a priori* that lies at the foundation of discourse ethics: a real *a priori* considers the connection of norms and values to a pregiven substantive morality; an ideal *a priori* sets forth a principle guiding consensus among all affected. This double foundation yields one overarching duty: to imagine a progressive course of history working towards universal goals. But this teleological claim prescribes not a unified form of a good life, but rather only equal rights and equal coresponsibility and the means towards attaining them.\(^6^2\)

To this point, Apel’s version of discourse ethics meshes almost seamlessly with Habermas’s. But there are differences. First, while Habermas is interested in a strict distinction between the discourses of justification and application, Apel

\(^6^0\) Offe is a possible exception. He defines morality as pertaining to “the reasons with which someone justifies and defends his or her action, not the action itself.” See Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition: The East European and East German Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 108–9. Since this view locates morality primarily in the individual, with no reference to exogenous conditions such as discursively achieved consensus, it could hardly be farther from Habermas’s view. Like Habermas, Offe uses the analysis of duty and consequence as intertwined in moral decisions; but he takes it as axiomatic that no abstract duty of justice could ever apply in all cases. There are “substantive” tests for this (*ibid.*, 109).


\(^6^2\) *Ibid.*, 75.
focuses on a prior issue: how one proceeds when there are no actual discourse partners for either type of discourse in a given situation. This leads him to posit a necessary supplement to discourse: an ideal reciprocity that reflectively functions when sufficient discourse partners are absent. Apel also supplements Habermas's thought by including a moral demand for self-surrender: “all participants in a practical discourse have to surrender their interests” in the process of translating them into validity claims.

Apel also differs from Habermas in his understanding of political discourse. Apel maintains that discourse ethics has a double function as an ethics of coresponsibility: it must both implement its own application to the lifeworld “through the system constraints of strategic self-maintenance,” and provide regulative principles for a critique of all political self-maintenance systems. On this ground, Apel endorses the market system because it can more efficiently supply a maintenance level of goods and services than socialism can. Yet, while it can give proper power to demands, it is admittedly less successful in providing for the needs of those who lack participation.

Third, Apel has been more willing than Habermas to use the insights of postmodern philosophies to elucidate discourse. For example, Apel considers the relationship of discourse ethics to liberation philosophies, particularly that of Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel. Dussel shows parallels between the ideal communication community in discourse ethics and a communal ideal of a philosophy of liberation permeated by everyday confrontations with the “interpellation of the Other.” Borrowing from Levinas, Apel finds in the cry of the oppressed an intersubjectively binding validity claim. But Apel worries about the normative grounding of this fundamental claim to justice. He rejects Dussel’s assertion of an a priori responsibility toward the Other prior to any discursive argumentation. Rather, he argues that the a priori of the difference between the real and the ideal communities inaugurates nonviolent counter strategies:

[T]he demand to solve all morally significant conflicts of interest by means of practical discourses about validity claims, in which violent strategic practices are neutralized, can be realized approximately only if a constitutional state is established that has a monopoly on

63. See, also, Wellmer, *Endgames*, 143.
67. For a discussion of Dussel, see the essay by Eduardo Mendieta in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.
violence and can thus effectively relieve its citizens from the burden of having to fight for the justified interests on their own.\textsuperscript{69}

Wellmer also agrees with the basic intuitions of discourse ethics. But he rejects both Apel’s project of finding absolute grounds for it and Habermas’s projection of an ideal future agreement. Instead, he develops a “fallibilistic” model that emerges from three criticisms of their discourse model. First, while they think that Kant’s ethics was strictly monological, Wellmer argues that Kant’s negative formulation of the categorical imperative – that I would be unable to will x as a universal law – actually entails that the collective We would also be unable to do so.\textsuperscript{70} Second, Wellmer criticizes Habermas’s (U) principle of universalization for effectively assimilating moral to legal problems. Habermas wants to give a deontological grounding to moral claims by using (U), but he ends up giving them only a legal grounding since discourse is effectively a kind of democratic procedure seeking consensus.\textsuperscript{71} Third, he claims that discourse ethics cannot resolve the problem of determining the consequences of the imposition of universal norms on specific individuals in specific situations. This leads him to criticize the very possibility of a real consensus. Habermas, however, later responds to Wellmer by arguing that application discourses give “operational” meaning to universal norms by both taking into account the time of their application and dealing only with interests that are foreseeable.\textsuperscript{72}

The post-1989 transition

The liberation movements with which the second generation was most closely associated involved those of the former Soviet Union and its satellites. These movements, though, certainly did not follow the script of Marx’s understanding of socialism and revolution. Although critical theorists had long since given up on any exclusive reliance on a Marxist model of social change, their sustained critiques of capitalism had included some positive assessments of socialism. Soon after the Soviet collapse, in fact, Habermas worried that if the transition continued too rapidly, it could harm both the former bloc and the Western nations that surrounded it. Subsequent events have confirmed at least some of his pessimistic prediction.


\textsuperscript{70} Wellmer, \textit{The Persistence of Modernity}, 153. Moreover, every moral reflection is, after all, monological in nature (\textit{ibid.}, 156).

\textsuperscript{71} For an explanation of (U), see the essay on Habermas by Christopher F. Zurn in this volume.

\textsuperscript{72} Habermas, \textit{Justification and Application}, 36.
Shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, Offe brought to bear moral, historical, sociological, and legal models that could frame a rationally guided model of transition for the former socialist states. While one might presuppose that his critical sensitivities would render him sympathetic to the goals of the former planned economies, the opposite is the case. Similarly to Apel, he praises both the consensus formative powers and innovations of market economies. Capitalist societies are pluralistic, and show a dynamic of openness to change; socialist economies, on the other hand, try to anticipate change but fail. The macro planning of state-controlled economies renders anarchy at the micro level of the individual laborers, diminishing productivity. Yet Offe also notes the irony of the fact that queues in capitalist economies are found in the front of unemployment offices, while those in socialist countries are found in front of butcher shops. But capitalism’s advantage is that it desists from making moral claims. In fact, the crucial defect of the East German republic was not an economic but a moral flaw: it restricted the rights, prosperity, and the mobility of its working population.

Offe points out that the recent transitions to capitalism were imposed by emergency measures. Thus a revolution took place with neither historical precedent nor guiding ideology. Moreover, it was carried out before the economic processes were in place to make it function properly. In this respect, he disagrees with Habermas, who thought the transitions were just a matter of premodern Eastern bloc systems “catching up” (nachholen) to modern societies. Offe argues that similar impositions occurred in both Japan and Germany after the Second World War. Rights and market mechanisms, when first introduced, are ordinarily not recognized by the will of the people. Paradoxically, although a market system requires the development of a democracy (although not vice versa), only in a developed free market society with a high level of wealth can a democracy work. So Offe concludes that the impositions were a form of “primitive accumulation”: an external intervention that causes the mutually presupposing prior conditions to actualize at once.

IV. THEORIES OF TRUTH AND AESTHETICS

Truth theories

In contrast with the first generation of critical theory, Habermas has long been concerned with the philosophical analysis of the problem of truth. He

73. Offe, Varieties of Transition, 3.
74. Ibid., 19.
75. Ibid., 32.
famously has changed his theory from a strict verificationism, as evidenced in his “Wahrheitstheorien” (1973), to a deflationary semantic theory of truth combined with a postmetaphysical realism in Truth and Justification (2003). His verificationism had been forged in concert with Peirce’s claim that an ideal consensus guides communities of inquirers regarding theoretical, practical, and even aesthetic claims. But the later impact on him of Donald Davidson and Michael Dummett was decisive, urging him to see the truth predicate semantically in a nonreferential sense.

Apel and Habermas have long worked in tandem on the assimilation and assessment of pragmatist views of truth. Apel endorses a Kantian “transcendental reflection by the subject of knowledge on the subjective conditions of the constitution of objects.” This reflection grasps both the pragmatic context of causal inquiry and the language game to which it belongs. But he rejects both Kant’s and Husserl’s philosophy of the subject of consciousness in favor of a “transcendental semiotic” of the language pragmatics able to grasp “contextual conditions.” These conditions are the performative presuppositions of communication – such as the fact that one cannot communicate successfully without trying to convince another by reasons. He famously calls them first principles on the basis of which knowledge can be determined. Habermas affirms the holism of Apel’s theory – its claim to guide all forms of argumentation – but denies its reconstruction of first principles.

From this viewpoint of truth, Apel and Habermas posed a serious challenge to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. According to Gadamer, no truth claim can ever transcend the historical tradition – the prereflective conditions of understanding – within which it emerges. A fusion of horizons between the interpreter and the interpreted is possible, but the horizons of what is interpreted and of the interpreter nonetheless remain distinct. Apel acknowledges that Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is an improvement over both the subjectivism of the early Heidegger’s existential hermeneutics and the objectivism of the later Heidegger’s disclosure and withdrawal of Being. Both render impossible the function of social sciences, a problem that Gadamer worked to

77. Verificationism is generally the principle that the meaning of a sentence or claim is determined by its mode of verification. Many logical positivists held to this principle. For example, “red” means what one sees when one looks at a red object. Habermas in Wahrheitstheorien uses a form of verificationism in which a claim is true when it has passed a test by which it has been verified. For example, “this house is red” is true when observers (or experts) agree, under specific conditions of agreement, that it is indeed red. He later abandons the claim that agreement makes it true, but he still affirms the necessity of finding agreement on all matters of truth and rightness.


rectify. But Apel claims that Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics disallows the possibility for a sufficient distance from tradition required by any proper critical evaluation of it. Apel’s transcendental pragmatics is able to evaluate a claim not simply on the basis of its origins, but also on the basis of its very conditions of expression.

Wellmer also rejects much in Apel’s transcendental pragmatic view of truth. He starts instead with the common distinction between verificationism and objectivity, and concludes that this difference constitutes an “antinomy of truth.” Following Rorty, Wellmer rejects the way in which Apel utilizes idealizations and convergence as a way of mediating between these poles. Wellmer claims that it is licit to understand idealizations only in a “localizing” sense. These are the performative assumptions needed to make our language understandable. They make no assumptions about the future. He thinks that Habermas changed his earlier strong idealizational stance to a localizing weaker sense. Wellmer realizes that this inclusion of the context of experience, practice, and reflection opened the door to the possibility of ethnocentrism. But he defends Habermas’s dialectics of context-immanence and context-transcendence. It furnishes not a substantive but a procedural model of truth that fosters liberal ideals and institutions.

Wellmer gives his weak idealizational validity theory of truth an aesthetic variant. The validity claims that we raise are both context dependent and capable of transcending context. But the idealized understanding that is presupposed in communication must not be misunderstood as the prefiguration of an ultimate, transparent meaning: an ultimate reconciliation. Such a view would be like Kant’s intelligible realm, a realm beyond nature. Rather, for Wellmer the opposition must emerge within the intelligible subject itself: at once insignificant and sublime. In this way, art’s transformation of the terror of the unintelligible into aesthetic delight expands “the frontiers of communicatively shared meaning.”

In the final analysis, Wellmer clings to an objectivity about truth. He is not utterly a deflationist, but maintains that the truth predicate refers to a state of affairs that is not dependent on verification processes. Along with Cristina Lafont, Wellmer convinced Habermas that although there is an unavoidable epistemological connection between truth and justification at the level of discourse, this does not amount to a conceptual connection between truth and

81. Ibid., 140–41.
82. Ibid., 144. Wellmer, surprisingly, affirms Derrida’s claim that these localizing idealizations are, simply, impossible.
83. Ibid., 50. See also Jürgen Habermas, Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays, William Mark Hohengarten (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 134–9.
84. Wellmer, Endgames, 177.
rational assertibility under ideal conditions. If it did, “we could not take truth to be a property of propositions that they ‘cannot lose.’” Thus he convinced Habermas to retain a delicate balance between idealizational verificationism and a realism about truth.

**Aesthetics and communication**

Habermas argues that aesthetics not only renew our interpretations of the internal needs by which we perceive the world, but also influences our interpretations of what we perceive and the normative expectations we have of the world. In early works, he claimed that the aesthetic realm is rational inasmuch as its claims are subject to discursive evaluation. He proposed the possibility of aesthetic validity claims, able to be raised relative to specific artistic expressions. But in response to Wellmer’s criticisms of this, he eventually abandoned the possibility of such discourse about art and instead reconsidered the hermeneutical claim, associated with Heidegger’s aesthetics, that art is world disclosive and not subject *per se* to formal critical evaluation. Yet Habermas never developed a full blown, formalized theory of aesthetics.

Unique among second generation critical theorists, Wellmer did develop aesthetic theory comprehensively and in multiple directions. Influenced by Adorno, he argued for the centrality of aesthetics in our experience of the world and our actions. Art transforms “those traces of meaning that are scattered throughout our everyday experience, lending duration to the ephemeral and fleeting, giving voice to the ineffable, rendering visible that which has never been seen.” It accomplishes this through a negation of the traditional understanding of representation and meaning in art. For Wellmer, this negation actually results in an expansion of the boundaries of meaning and of the subject.

Wellmer critically appropriates several of Adorno’s claims about aesthetics. He begins with Adorno’s claim that aesthetics is the only realm left for rationality because it avoids the repressive logic of identifying thought and vouchsafes the

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85. For Lafont’s argument, see her *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutical Philosophy*, José Medina (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 287–99; for Wellmer’s, see his *Ethik und Dialog: Elemente des Moralischen Urteils bei Kant und in der Diskursethik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), 70ff.
86. Jürgen Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, Barbara Fultner (trans.) (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 37–8. See also Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity*, 245 n.52. Wellmer argues that if consensuses are infinitely repeatable, as Habermas argued, then *ipso facto* no specific consensus could ever be falsified: a conclusion Habermas nonetheless wanted to draw. The consensus is really now a way of “showing” the truth. See *ibid.*, 165.
particular. The work of art reveals the irrational and false character of existing reality while prefiguring an order of reconciliation. Lyotard had claimed that a picture “is not a pure picture in the sense of an aesthetic object. In so far as it is representative, art is still participating, so to speak, in a discourse which it is its purpose to overcome and leave behind.” Wellmer agrees with Lyotard that genuine art cannot sustain a model of dialogue that recognizes each participant simultaneously as an individual and an equal. But he is intrigued by Adorno’s claim that the artist speaks as a “we.” Yet Wellmer thinks that Adorno’s collective subject still speaks with only one voice, to itself. For Wellmer, Adorno’s form of aesthetic rationality can express only a transhumanism, not a “life form of speaking and interacting individuals.”

For Adorno, art fails to understand the semblance to which it succumbs. It does not understand how it points to a nonbeing. Thus philosophy must come to its assistance: “only philosophy can decipher the mirror-writing of the absolute in the semblance of artistic beauty and thereby articulate the truth, contained in the work of art, as that which is incommensurable to the immediacy of the aesthetic experience qua experience.” Philosophy and sublime art can work together to glimpse “the weak traces of a nonillusory absolute.” For Wellmer, only in this aporia between art and philosophy can these weak traces be detected and the aporia inherent in artistic production be grasped.

Wellmer is particularly interested in Adorno’s thesis regarding the explosion of metaphysical meaning in modernity. A crisis of subjectivity ensues when metaphysics cuts the subject off from reconciliation. But Wellmer argues that we operate not under the dialectics of subjectification and reification, as characterized by Adorno, but rather the subject’s loss of objectively assured systems of meaning. Yet he thinks that Adorno sets up the possibility for a link between the negativity of aesthetics and the positivity of communicatively shared meaning. Adorno did not develop a sufficient conception of the intersubjectivity of language to link disenchantment to a gain in communicative rationality as Habermas did. Yet Adorno’s “spiritualization,” the revolt against limits, did correspond to an “opening up of ordinary discourses” in the communicative rationalization of the lifeworld. For Wellmer, the nonidentical becomes communicable by virtue of becoming intersubjective and thus “alienated from its own private nature.” This in turn fosters an increasing “individuation” that

90. Ibid., 48.
92. Wellmer, Endgames, 156.
93. Ibid., 157.
94. See Wellmer, The Persistence of Modernity, 35.
95. Wellmer, Endgames, 156.
96. Wellmer, The Persistence of Modernity, 75.
can counteract the disenchantment we face. He agreed with Hannah Arendt’s (1906–75) descriptions of the way in which technology increasingly infused itself into aspects of everyday life, including politics. He urged an “enlightened democratic praxis” in the political realm whereby the dream of uniting art and industry can be imagined.\(^97\)

Wellmer still finds that Adorno’s sublime withstands the negativity of the world. The point of entry for the sublime in modern art was the disappearance of the absolute. “Between the being and the nonbeing of the absolute there remains an infinitely narrow crack through which a glimmer of light falls upon the world, the light of an absolute which is yet to come into being.”\(^98\) Adorno’s hope-based redemption of metaphysics still operates within the modern philosophy of the subject’s attempt to establish a metaphysical bulwark against skepticism and domination. For Wellmer, Adorno’s aesthetics was “a hesitation on the threshold of postmodernism” – but once this threshold is passed, then humanity can hope for liberation from the terror of “all encompassing meaning.”\(^99\)

V. CONCLUSIONS

Without a doubt, the second generation of critical theorists has operated in the shadows of Habermas’s dominant influence. Yet Offe’s assessment of contemporary political structures, Apel’s description of processes of liberation, Negt’s brilliant analysis of the impact of the media on public life, and Wellmer’s wide-ranging reconstruction of Adorno’s aesthetics are all unique and original analyses in their own right.

The sheer existence of a second generation of critical theory indicated two things. First, it revealed the staying power of critical theory. In the work of these thinkers, critical theory was shown to be adaptable to radically new circumstances across generations and cultures. Second, their work revealed that critical theory was indeed a “school”: a loosely affiliated group of thinkers who demonstrated the ability to learn from each other, criticize each other, and work together on a common projection of an emancipative future for humankind.

It remains to be seen what the legacy of this generation of thinkers will be. While Habermas’s impact on the future is virtually without question, the other figures of this era of the Frankfurt School will have to vie for attention based on the quality of their more modest contributions. But their willingness to lay bare the social and psychological evils of their times in the hopes of bettering

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\(^{97}\) Ibid., 112.


\(^{99}\) Ibid., 180–81.
humankind cannot but give courage to future generations of social theorists to follow in their collective path.\footnote{100}

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Karl-Otto Apel**


**Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge**


**Claus Offe**


**Alfred Schmidt**


\footnote{100. I would like to thank Joseph Tighe for his assistance with some of the research for this manuscript.}
Albrecht Wellmer


Other texts


In the 1960s, hermeneutics became a leading field of philosophical interest. This was due in large part to the major contributions made by Hans-Georg Gadamer in Germany and by Paul Ricoeur in France. Gadamer, who was a student of Martin Heidegger, had characterized his own earlier study of Plato’s work as a “phenomenological reading,” and Ricoeur had characterized his own initial project as phenomenology of volition, rather than phenomenology of perception such as can be found both in Edmund Husserl’s or in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s work. This study of the contributions to the field of hermeneutics made by Gadamer and by Ricoeur will pay particular attention to the legacy of phenomenology that figures in those contributions. Both Gadamer and Ricoeur faced challenges from other contemporary philosophical currents. In regard to Gadamer, the challenge came from critical theory, as represented, in particular, by Jürgen Habermas. In regard to Ricoeur, the challenge came from poststructuralist philosophical work, as represented, in particular, by Jacques Derrida’s “deconstruction.” The responses by Gadamer and by Ricoeur to these challenges respectively help to elucidate crucial features of their hermeneutical thought. This study will include analyses of those responses.

I. HERMENEUTICS IN TRUTH AND METHOD

Hans-Georg Gadamer’s first published book was Plato’s Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus, which appeared in 1931.

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer (February 11, 1900–March 13, 2002; born in Marburg, Germany; died in Heidelberg) was educated at the University of Marburg (1919–28), receiving a Promoviert
Plato’s thought remained of lifelong interest to Gadamer. The book for which he became most widely known, however, is his second book, *Truth and Method*, first published in German in 1960. The book became widely regarded as the most significant German philosophical work since Heidegger’s 1927 *Being and Time*. This work would remain Gadamer’s primary philosophical contribution, indispensable for fully understanding Gadamer’s readings of the philosophical tradition, particularly Greek and German philosophy, as well as his readings of poetic texts. It is a major work in the history of hermeneutics, crucial for understanding the development of philosophical hermeneutics over the past hundred years.

In *Truth and Method*, the field of art serves as a point of departure for Gadamer. The target here is “aesthetic consciousness,” understood as that activity or mode of consciousness, where the subject matter is artworks, and artworks alone. Gadamer specifies that philosophically, the distancing, if not divorce, of art from theoretical knowledge is found in Kant’s analysis, in his *Critique of Judgment*, of judgments of taste with regard to beauty. Such judgments, which concern nature and art, derive from the interplay of our subjective faculties. The harmonious interplay of those faculties is a basis for an affirmative judgment with regard to beauty. According to Kant, there is a universality that pertains to these judgments, but it is a “subjective universality” that concerns our common faculties and not an “object of knowledge” in the sense in which this figures in matters of theoretical knowledge according to Kant’s analysis in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The “subjectivizing” of art displaces art from the full field of our experience. In the extreme, the setting apart of art from questions that concern truth will mean that the museum alone is the place for the proper display of art, where it becomes the occasion for an “aesthetic consciousness,” directed exclusively to works of art, and where art takes on the function of providing temporary pleasurable respite from the difficulties of everyday life.

Heidegger,\(^2\) in his 1948 lecture “The Age of the World-Picture,” identified the relegation of art to the domain of the aesthetic as a defining feature of the modern age. Another defining feature is the prevalence of the notion of

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\(^2\) Heidegger’s work is discussed elsewhere in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Being and Time* is discussed in the essay on Heidegger by Miguel de Beistegui in Volume 3; Heidegger’s late work is discussed by Dennis J. Schmidt, and Heidegger’s aesthetics is discussed by Galen A. Johnson in their essays in Volume 4.
culture, to which all nonscientific activities are assigned. While almost totally absent from Heidegger’s 1927 *Being and Time*, art becomes a crucial concern in Heidegger’s later work. When Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*, based on a lecture dating from 1935, is published in 1959, Gadamer writes the introduction. Gadamer is struck by the fact that whereas in *Being and Time* Heidegger sought to reopen the question concerning Being by inquiring into our own ontological structure insofar as we are intrinsically concerned with this question, in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger addresses the question concerning Being via an inquiry into the ontological import of art. This constitutes, in effect, a step in Heidegger’s de-struction of the tradition of metaphysics, and here the specific target is aesthetics insofar as it is bound up with the sense of subjectivity as ground, a modern version of the metaphysical identification of being and presence that Heidegger’s thought calls radically into question. The ontological import of artworks means, as Heidegger accentuates in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, that truth is at issue in artworks. Gadamer’s negative assessment of “aesthetic consciousness,” in *Truth and Method*, is clearly consistent with and reinforces this finding.

Ultimately, what “aesthetic consciousness” misses altogether, where artworks are concerned, is that artworks have something to say. The way that artworks address us is what inaugurates a hermeneutical dynamic. We respond by way of our available presuppositions for understanding what we encounter. Certain of these presuppositions will facilitate a more integral understanding of the artwork, while the artwork will resist others. The resistance of the artwork brings forward other approaches on our part. This sets in motion a type of play over which we do not have control. Also, this play is such that the rules are not given in advance but rather take shape as play proceeds. This radical play is such that a type of buoyancy takes effect whereby the play is lifted from the initial context in which the artwork is encountered. Important in addition to the hermeneutical dynamic between spectator and artwork, there is also a hermeneutical dynamic of this character in motion between the artist who initially paints, or sculpts, or composes the work, on the one hand, and the work, on the other. Gadamer emphasizes strongly that the artist’s intent does not govern the artwork’s meaning. Furthermore, as an artwork travels through historical time, more of its meaning may be disclosed. Gadamer characterizes this as an “increase in being.”


Gadamer's description of the dynamic that operates in understanding artworks serves as a point of departure for crucial elements of philosophical hermeneutics as Gadamer understands this. First, methodology is definitely not the ultimate court of appeal when it comes to understanding what artworks mean. This is not to rule out a role for methodology in the study of artworks, but ultimately methodology pertains to what we bring to the artwork and, like any and all presuppositions, it is subject to modification by virtue of an artwork's resistance to our approach, by virtue of the play set in motion by our encounter with the work, and by virtue of the way we are addressed by the art. Further, understanding what artworks mean is not a matter of historically determining an objective context in which the artist first painted, sculpted, or composed the work, any more than it is a matter of determining the artist's initial intent. While what we may know of such context and such intent may be of help when it comes to understanding the work, this pertains, again, to what we bring to the work and is subordinate to what the artwork has to say. An integral understanding of a work of art takes place over and above what we do, and this marks the decisive limit of the pertinence of methodology.

While the field of art serves as a point of departure in *Truth and Method*, the background issue is the character and the status of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the human or social sciences, and Gadamer now brings his findings from the analysis of "aesthetic consciousness" to bear on this. These questions had largely preoccupied Wilhelm Dilthey, who had first brought hermeneutics forward as an appropriate approach to the subject matter of the human sciences, which had taken shape in the nineteenth century, and in particular history. Dilthey advanced the study of understanding *per se*, which had become a central concern in Friedrich Schleiermacher's contribution to theology, the field in which hermeneutics was transmitted from the ancient world to the early modern world, and Dilthey brought this study to bear on the human sciences, distinguishing them from the natural sciences by virtue of the primacy of understanding in these fields, in contrast to natural science's ultimate interest in explanation. Gadamer, in addressing the issue of the human or social sciences, appeals to the humanistic tradition and, in particular, to its sense of the formation or the education (*Bildung*) of individuals via the study of what is inherited by the age in which they live. Gadamer's point is that it is not possible to understand any age, including our own, without addressing this primary process of learning. The point pertains both to the subject matter of the human sciences, and to the practitioner in those fields. In effect, the human sciences remain a type of battleground between natural science, on the one hand, and the humanistic

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tradition on the other. Gadamer's point is not to undermine the natural sciences, but rather to establish their limitations where the subject matter of the human sciences is concerned. The pertinence of the natural sciences in their own domain is not Gadamer's concern here.

Where the human sciences are concerned, Gadamer's specific target is “historical consciousness,” in the sense that was developed in the nineteenth century. “Historical consciousness,” like “aesthetic consciousness” – the target of Gadamer's discussion of the dynamic of art interpretation and understanding – involves a debilitating abstraction. In the case of “historical consciousness,” the abstraction concerns the presupposition or presumption that historical contexts can in fact be specified objectively. What “historical consciousness” of this character misses is the working of history, its effective quality. What is at issue is what happens beyond what we do. Gadamer writes: “Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated.” History effects this mediation. Over and above methodologies employed in the study of history, our understanding comes by way of this effective character of history. We do not overreach the mediation if we try, for example, to grasp the Greek age in an objective way. Gadamer proposes “effective-historical consciousness” (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein), in contrast to “historical consciousness,” as a characterization of consciousness involved in the interpretive dynamic that proceeds by way of the effective character of history.

Importantly, our own historical context cannot be specified objectively and consequently we do not leap over this in our understanding of earlier ages. This is to say, we do not first reach an objective understanding of our own historical context, alongside the objective understanding of earlier historical contexts, which we would then bring to bear in addressing specific issues that mark our age. It is instead by way of effective-historical consciousness that we reach an understanding of our own age. This marks the sense in which application is not a subsequent step but rather is intrinsic to the dynamic of “effective-historical consciousness,” for only if one were first to understand an earlier age objectively would one then need a subsequent step of applying what one understands to one's own age. This also marks the way in which Gadamer recovers a motivation for the initial practice of hermeneutics in the ancient world, both in

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7. A key term in _Truth and Method_, _wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein_, most frequently translated as “effective-historical consciousness,” could also be translated “historically effected consciousness,” “consciousness effected by history,” or “consciousness of the effects of history.”
the Greek context as well as in the Judaic and Christian contexts, where interpreters’ contexts were understood in terms of primary texts, Homeric or biblical, that preceded them, sometimes by centuries. Gadamer appeals to the development of hermeneutics in the field of legal interpretation to illustrate how contemporary issues may be addressed in terms of laws framed at an earlier time when the issues in question did not figure in the historical context. Neither the perspective of an earlier age nor our own perspective governs the interpretive dynamic. Gadamer designates what happens by way of this dynamic as a “fusion of horizons” (*Horizontverschmelzung*), whereby the truth that supports us in our understanding of our own age gets transmitted from the past. Our age does not exhaust such truth. By virtue of the dynamic of effective-historical consciousness, our understanding has an event-character that exceeds any methodology that we might bring to bear in the study of our own age as well as in the study of previous ages. While Gadamer does not preclude a role for methodology in the study of the subject matter of history, he does not address comparative methodologies and he clearly subordinates methodology to the interpretive dynamic that defines that effective-historical consciousness by way of which truth is transmitted.

Gadamer’s description of the interpretive dynamic draws on Heidegger’s analysis, in *Being and Time*, of an interpretive dynamic that is intrinsic to understanding. Heidegger specifies there that understanding comprises: a “fore-having” (*Vorhabe*), which pertains, in effect, to the way that what we encounter in the world, we do so against a background; a fore-sight (*Vorsicht*), which pertains, in effect, to the way that we encounter what we encounter from a particular direction; and a fore-conception (*Vorgriff*), whereby, in effect, these features intrinsic to our understanding set conceptualization in motion. Crucially, Heidegger specifies that understanding, with its intrinsic interpretive dynamic, is a feature of our ontological structure, which is to say a feature of that mode of being specific to us, namely, being-in-the-world, or to-be-in-the-world (*in-der-Weltsein*). Accordingly, Gadamer sets his sense of hermeneutics apart from the sense of hermeneutics developed by Dilthey, which Heidegger assessed as ultimately psychological in character. Hermeneutics is not a methodology based on the

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8. In addition to his debate with Jürgen Habermas, discussed below, Gadamer engaged in an important dialogue with Italian jurist and legal historian Emilio Betti (1890–1968), who criticized Gadamer’s reassessment of method for threatening the objective status of interpretation. For some of their important texts in the debate between Gadamer and Betti, see Gayle L.Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (eds), *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990).

structure of subjectivity that is then put at the disposal of the human sciences. The interpretive dynamic is an ontological feature of who we are.

While Heidegger’s description specifies that understanding does not commence subsequent to an encounter with what we find in the world at a point-zero, so to speak, Gadamer stresses the role that “pre-judgment” or “prejudice” (Vorurteil) plays in our understanding of history’s subject matter. This opposes Gadamer to the Enlightenment’s unqualifiedly negative assessment of prejudgment, from which stems our condemnation of any and all “prejudices.” Gadamer’s point is that the presuppositions or presumptions by means of which our understanding operates are not ipso facto obstacles between ourselves and truth but rather may, in fact, play an enabling role. This is not to say that these prejudgments will remain as is, or in place, as the interpretive dynamic proceeds. But understanding does not come about via an elimination of prejudgment. Between such prejudice, on the one hand, and the working of history, on the other, a circle takes shape. Heidegger specified this circularity of understanding in *Being and Time*, noting that eliminating this circle is not an option when it comes to understanding, but what is crucial is how we enter the circle, and this point in regard to the “hermeneutical circle” figures in Gadamer’s description of effective-historical consciousness. Heidegger was particularly wary of an overspatializing account of this dynamic of understanding. On Gadamer’s account, there is a definite sense in which the role of the circle accords with the role of play that Gadamer brought forward in his description of understanding art, particularly in regard to the fact that what happens by virtue of this circularity of understanding is not under our control.

The attribution of a potentially positive role for prejudice, the way in which it is, indeed, constitutive of understanding, reinforces the supportive or sustaining sense of tradition as understood by Gadamer, which in turn makes authority appear in a positive light, and all of this sets Gadamer apart from one of the prevailing features of modernity. To the extent that modernity establishes itself in opposition to all that precedes it, it can be understood only against that background. The “quarrel between the ancients and the moderns” must presuppose a commonality and it is that commonality of understanding that is primary for the dynamic of hermeneutics as Gadamer understands this. It is not the case that misunderstanding is the point of departure, as Gadamer finds in earlier studies in the field of hermeneutics such as Schleiermacher’s.

While the analysis of understanding in *Being and Time* is, on Gadamer’s account, a crucial turning point in hermeneutics, the thread that Gadamer follows from Heidegger’s earlier to his later work is the deepening inquiry concerning language. In *Being and Time*, discourse (Rede) is identified as a feature of our ontological structure, our being-in-the-world or to-be-in-the-world (in-der-Welt-sein). In his later inquiry concerning language, Heidegger stresses that it
is not the case, in any sense, that we possess language. It is language that has apriority where our speaking is concerned. There is always an “unsaid” that pertains to what is said. In his studies of preeminent thinkers of the tradition going back to the Presocratics, Heidegger sought the “unsaid” of the tradition. For hermeneutics, having a last word is not the issue. There is always something more to be said. In this regard, Gadamer recovers the contribution made by Augustine in a theological context, specifically that of biblical hermeneutics, concerning the relation between logos prophorikos, the spoken word, and logos endiathetos, the internal word. For human beings, the two always differ and it is precisely by virtue of this difference between the spoken word and the internal word that something always remains to be said. The hermeneutical dynamic is a “bringing into language.” But what is brought into language does not first have a character other than that of language. This is the sense in which the work of art or whatever is the subject matter for historical study first has something to say to us. Language is always the medium for understanding. Being that can be understood, Gadamer concludes, is language.10

Gadamer brings forward the exemplary status of the interpretation of texts for hermeneutics. He understands the dynamic here as basically dialogic, in the Platonic sense, and he further specifies that this can be understood along the lines of an “I–Thou” relation, in which a conversation is not driven by either participant but rather is guided by “die Sache,” which is to say, that which is at issue, the core, or the kernel point. Every such conversation is prompted by a question and this makes for the hermeneutic primacy of the question, as the ongoing alternation of question and response is the basic hermeneutical dynamic that allows for understanding. The interpretation of Plato’s dialogues, as understood by Gadamer, allows for participation in the dialogue by way of the question that prompted Plato’s composition of the text. The way in which truth is transmitted here via tradition, in a manner that is not driven by either participant, and that allows, at the same time, for further elaboration, suggests a dialectic that is Hegelian in character. But Gadamer, explicitly in order to accentuate human finitude, specifies language rather than Spirit as the medium.

The theme of finitude is taken up in two concluding points to Truth and Method. First, Gadamer identifies a speculative character of language. Language shows more than its propositional content. That it says what it does is dependent on both what it makes explicit and what it does not. In other words, language’s capacity to show more than its propositional content, on the one hand, and

10. Gadamer, Truth and Method, 474. In early modern science there was definitely a sense in which the issue was interpreting nature, understanding it. Historically understood, even science attests to the universality of hermeneutics, notwithstanding the effort at mathematizing science thoroughly, whereby what would be eliminated is, precisely, language.
human finitude, on the other, are indissociable. Finally, and directly pertinent to Gadamer’s ongoing reading of Plato, beauty, as discussed by Plato, marks an appearing of the Form of the Good, and this illumination, Gadamer points out, is closely related to the evident quality of what understanding understands. “Evident” here pertains both to the appearing and to a strong sense of truth. This evident quality is not at our disposal, and this is again a mark of our finitude. The sense of beauty provides means for addressing the issue of human finitude that exceed the modern epistemological context, and at the same time, guides Gadamer’s understanding of Plato’s dialogues. Given that being that can be understood is language, the question of the illumination of what understanding understands, its evident quality, leads to Gadamer’s final discussion in *Truth and Method* where he specifies that language is “the horizon for a hermeneutical ontology.” In other words, these suggestive discussions at the close of *Truth and Method* point in the direction of future hermeneutical work. At the same time, they underscore the philosophical import of Gadamer’s text beyond the context of issues pertaining to the subject matter and the mode of thought appropriate to the human sciences.

II. HERMENEUTICS, CRITICAL THEORY, AND THE LEGACY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Appearing in 1960, *Truth and Method* prompted a debate, carried out over a period of exchanges in print, between a leading representative of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, Jürgen Habermas, and Gadamer. It began with a discussion of Gadamer’s work by Habermas in the latter’s 1967 *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*. Habermas would react favorably to the way in which hermeneutics can expose our presuppositions and presumptions, but Gadamer’s assessment of a positive role of prejudice that is crucial to the dynamic of the hermeneutical circle and the transmission of truth would not measure up to the standard that is ultimately demanded by critical reason. Habermas opposed the primary emancipatory interest of critical theory to Gadamer’s rehabilitation of prejudice, as well as both tradition and authority. Moreover, Habermas contested what he regarded as Gadamer’s overemphasis on how language figures in our historical context to the neglect of other factors, for example, labor, and

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he argued that language can, in fact, dissemble problems that pertain to the way in which labor figures in our historical context.

Gadamer’s response, which culminated in the essay “On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection,” pointed up, first of all, how the Enlightenment sense of critical reason itself pertains to the dynamics of tradition. The Enlightenment prejudgment against prejudice may not hold when it comes to addressing problematic features of our own age. Effective-historical consciousness pertains to how we address such problems, and this marks the way in which application is intrinsic to hermeneutics. Moreover, any understanding of such problematic matters cannot proceed somehow outside of language.

Habermas’s work would, in fact, subsequently undergo a “linguistic turn,” culminating in the major two-volume work *The Theory of Communicative Action*, first published in 1981. The issue of linguistic competence now gets firmly established as central for analyses of our sociopolitical context. Habermas elevates the democratic formation of consensus for coordinating action according to the norms provided by critical reason to the status of end or goal of communication. In so doing, he relies on a possibility of transparent universal consensus. On Gadamer’s terms, this sense of language according to a use or an instrumental character can only neglect what is not at our disposal when it comes to understanding, which is to say, its event character, which lies beyond the reach of critical reason and ultimately is not at all a matter of consensus.

The ontological character of hermeneutics as understood by Gadamer pertains directly to the role of Heidegger’s thought in Gadamer’s work and it is primarily in terms of this relation that the legacy of phenomenology in Gadamer’s understanding of hermeneutics must be understood. Where Husserl is concerned, Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, specifies that phenomenology, as Husserl first developed it, by virtue of the manner in which it moves beyond a subject–object context, provided the means for working through Dilthey’s unresolved epistemological issue of legitimating “objective” knowledge in the human sciences. This allowed Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, to resume Dilthey’s endeavor directly as a question of fundamental ontology. Heidegger took exception to Gadamer’s

account of the significance of Husserl’s work for *Being and Time*, insofar as for Heidegger questions regarding knowledge are not questions that must be resolved first, but rather pertain altogether to a founded mode of comportment toward entities or beings that we encounter in the world. What comes first, then, is the analysis of our mode of being, which is to say, our “ex-istence,” or our being always already in-the-world, in a word, what Heidegger designated as our *Da-sein*, or our “being-there.” Relatedly, Heidegger took exception to addressing the issue of the historicity of our *Da-sein* in terms of consciousness, as Gadamer does in addressing “effective-historical consciousness.” Consciousness implies a point of departure that sustains, in effect, a subject–object context. On the other hand, Heidegger’s *Being and Time* had left open the question concerning the bearing of fundamental ontology on how the “ontic sciences” are to proceed, and the way that Gadamer addressed the human sciences is responsive to this. Gadamer’s work provides ongoing impetus and support for interpretive approaches in the human and social sciences, in contrast to a calculative approach associated with positivist social science. Gadamer characterized his description itself of the dynamic of effective history as phenomenological in character. Pertinently, it should be recalled that where Husserl was concerned, the methodological character of phenomenology was always subject to modification specifically in terms of the subject matter in question, and was, in fact, refined throughout the course of his work.

For Gadamer, departures from tradition, even one as radical as Heidegger’s reopening of the question concerning Being, were, nevertheless, to be understood in regard to tradition. In his later work, Heidegger did emphasize the importance of readings of preeminent texts from the tradition for preparing for the possibility of “another beginning in thought,” in contrast to the work of the *Being and Time* period where he sought to forge new paths directly from analysis of our existence. Still, Heidegger understood another “destining” of Being as a sudden occurrence. Gadamer maintained that all basic change occurs gradually via the dynamic of effective history. Relatedly, while Heidegger attentively sought another “word of Being,” one that could release us from the hold of the metaphysical identification of Being with presence, Gadamer maintained that what is crucial is how we take up the language of metaphysics again in our saying. It is interesting to note, in this regard, how Heidegger, in his later work, would rely more on standard terms in contrast to his earlier coinage of terms, and here the reappearance of the term “man,” notwithstanding its metaphysical background, where previously only *Da-sein* could possibly serve, is a significant case in point.\(^\text{13}\) Gadamer emphasized a supportive rather than restrictive sense

\(^{13}\) In *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis) (Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 65)*, the unfinished manuscript of major proportions from the mid-1930s, published after Heidegger’s death, in which
of tradition, and as a result, he opened the way for rereadings of major historical figures without casting them, first of all, in terms, primarily, of a forgottenness of Being. For Gadamer, it was ultimately Plato’s work that called for such rereading, as evidenced by his career-long reading of Plato’s texts.

III. HERMENEUTICS AND ANOTHER COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

While beginning his career as a Husserl scholar, translating Ideen I as part of his doctoral thesis,14 Paul Ricoeur15 makes clear that in adopting a phenomenological approach in philosophy, he opted for existential phenomenology. Ricoeur’s first published book was in fact a comparative study of the philosophical work of Gabriel Marcel and Karl Jaspers. Furthermore, in essays from 1949 through 1957, published together in translation in 1967 along with an additional essay devoted to Husserl’s fifth Cartesian Meditation that was written for the volume Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology, Ricoeur indicates his existential orientation via his critical reading of the transcendental character of Husserl’s work. In one of the essays in that volume, “Methods and Tasks of a Phenomenology of the Will,” first published in 1952, Ricoeur showed how existential phenomenology entails a study of volitional consciousness, in distinction from perceptual consciousness, which was analyzed extensively by Husserl, and then by Merleau-Ponty. The first volume of a projected three-volume work on the will, Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary, published in

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15. Paul Ricoeur (February 27, 1913–May 20, 2005; born in Valence, France; died in Chatenay Malabry) was educated at the University of Rennes (1933) and the Sorbonne (1934–35), and received a doctorat ès lettres from the Sorbonne in 1950. His influences included Augustine, Heidegger, Husserl, Kant, and Marcel, and he held appointments at the University of Strasbourg (1948–56), Sorbonne (1956–66), University of Nanterre (1966–80), University of Louvain (1970–73), and University of Chicago (1967–92).
1950, analyzes the dynamics in the polarity between freedom, on the one hand, and our bodily existence in a natural setting, on the other. This was followed by Fallible Man, the first of a projected three installments to comprise the second volume. In Fallible Man, drawing on both Greek and biblical accounts, Ricoeur specifies a certain fragility or vulnerability pertaining to human existence and marking what amounts to a fault, in the geological sense, which signals, in effect, an ontological sense of finitude.

In the second of the three projected installments, The Symbolism of Evil, Ricoeur analyzes traditional symbols and myths that express the sense of evil, and the focus here is on the biblical narrative in the book of Genesis. Ricoeur’s appeal, in The Symbolism of Evil, to the text of the Bible, was indicative of his constant and striking attentiveness to a Hebraic heritage along with a Greek heritage. The third and final installment of this second volume was where evil was to be addressed directly, and this was to be followed by a third volume addressing transcendance. But at this point, problems took shape that would precipitate a transition in Ricoeur’s work. By virtue of the limits of subjectivity already indicated by the critical analysis of the Husserlian transcendental ego, and because of the acknowledgment of the vulnerability pertaining to human existence, the self-understanding sought by way of an analysis of the will’s relation to evil could not proceed directly but would have to go by way of an analysis of those signs, symbols, and texts whereby we express a sense of evil. In fact, this is what Ricoeur had already done in The Symbolism of Evil and in Fallible Man. The shift was to issues concerning language and to hermeneutics. The question would be how phenomenology was to figure in the hermeneutical work that would follow. The final installment of the second volume of the Philosophy of the Will and the projected third and final volume would have to be postponed, and in fact, would never appear. The questions concerning evil and those concerning transcendance, which called, Ricoeur indicated, for “a poetics of the will,” would stay with Ricoeur throughout his work. A text that would address the issue in terms of a sense of human suff ering that is ineradicable – Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology – would be published much later.

The hermeneutical shift in Ricoeur’s work is very notably signaled by his observation at the conclusion of The Symbolism of Evil that “the symbol gives rise to thought.”16 The Symbolism of Evil would be followed by Freud and Philosophy. Ricoeur’s extensive analysis of Freud’s work brings forward the hermeneutic character of psychoanalysis. Philosophically, however, Ricoeur would characterize what Freud did as a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” a phrase with which Ricoeur would also characterize both Nietzsche’s and Marx’s work. In contrast

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to interpretation that seeks to unmask unconscious drives, interests of power, or economic class interests beneath all forms of human expression, Ricoeur proposed instead to saturate the symbols operative in our field of awareness with intelligibility, while anticipating, or while wagering, that this would lead to enhanced self-awareness, and this was precisely what was at stake in addressing the biblical symbols of evil in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

In 1969, Ricoeur published *The Conflict of Interpretations*. Here Ricoeur addressed a number of contending intellectual projects at the time. In addressing the phenomenological project, Ricoeur endorses Heidegger’s finding, in *Being and Time*, regarding the priority of our being-in-the-world, in contrast to subjectivity, and Ricoeur affirms that the rejection of subjectivity as a ground is reinforced when, in his later work, Heidegger emphasizes that we do not possess language in any sense, and that language has apriority with respect to our speaking. This endorsement of Heidegger’s challenge to subjectivity is consistent with Ricoeur’s earlier critical analysis of Husserl’s sense of the transcendental ego. But Ricoeur stops short of endorsing Heidegger’s direct turn to ontology at this point, and the issue that takes shape here for Ricoeur pertains to language. Ricoeur opts for what he characterizes as the longer route, one that proceeds first via a phenomenological study of language. Ricoeur regards the step that he takes at this point as one that takes up a line of inquiry opened by Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, specifically in the chapter “The Body as Expression, and Speech.”

Ricoeur finds that the intentional analysis of language along phenomenological lines reaches a point at which it must appeal to a scientific analysis provided by linguistics, and Ricoeur, like Merleau-Ponty, opts for the approach of structuralism, which had its beginnings in Ferdinand de Saussure’s contribution to linguistics.

In turning his attention to structuralism, the movement that had displaced existentialism as the most prominent intellectual movement in France, Ricoeur emphasized that structuralism provided a methodology specific to the human studies rather than derived, in one manner or another, from the natural sciences. This was of major importance in regard to Ricoeur’s understanding of hermeneutics. Dilthey, in broadening the field of hermeneutics from the earlier context of theology to the spectrum of the human studies, had been intent on establishing the integral character of those studies in their own right, in contrast to regarding them as dependent on the natural sciences. Accordingly, Dilthey drew a strong distinction between explanation and understanding, where the


*18. For a discussion of Saussure and structuralist linguistics, see the essay by Thomas F. Broden in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. 
former was appropriate to the natural sciences, and the latter was appropriate to the human or social sciences. Ricoeur regards this division, which he finds ongoing in both Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s contributions to hermeneutics, as debilitating for hermeneutics. This marks the point where Ricoeur’s own contribution shows up. While Gadamer stressed the event character of understanding, in order, in part, to offset the predominance of the subject-oriented methodological approach to the human sciences, Ricoeur explicitly brings forward a positive role for methodological explanatory work that pertains particularly to the development of structuralist methodology in the human sciences. Moreover, while Ricoeur found in both Gadamer’s and Heidegger’s readings of tradition an impulse toward reducing, if not eliminating, distanciation from the earlier points of origination by virtue of how we and those origins share in the same tradition, he characterizes distanciation as the other side of our appropriation of tradition, and thereby he accentuates a productive or a positive role that distanciation plays. As a result, the role of modern critical thought appears here in a strongly positive light. Ricoeur will retain the critical element of phenomenology as developed by Husserl even as his shift to hermeneutics takes place, as we see, for example, in the essay “Phenomenology and Hermeneutics,” where Ricoeur compares the role of distanciation in hermeneutics to that of the *epoché* in phenomenology. What is at issue in both instances is an indispensable critical moment.

Structuralism, Ricoeur found, contributes to our understanding by virtue of its methodological account of the “diacritical differences” at work among the elements of language, or the elements of myths, or the elements of social structures. It is in terms of such differences that these elements are related and, at the same time, distinct. An explanation in terms of “diacritical difference” gives full weight both to the dependency of elements in such systems on one another as well as to their distinctness. This dependency is not sublated, as is the case where the Hegelian dialectical methodology, in particular, is concerned, insofar as it proceeds by negating all negation, with the result that the distinctness of each of the elements is also compromised. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the

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*20. The *epoché* is discussed in more detail in Thomas Nenon’s essay on Husserl in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.


*22. For a discussion of Lévi-Strauss, see the essay by Brian C. J. Singer in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.
preeminent structuralist at the time, would resist Ricoeur's philosophical characterization of structuralism as Kantianism without a transcendental subject. But ultimately, for Ricoeur, structuralism reaches its limit when it comes to the questions concerning sense or meaning that are pertinent to human existence in a world, and in this regard Ricoeur would cite Lévi-Strauss himself where he characterizes structure as responding, in effect, to aporetic features of human existence, which means, for Ricoeur, that if structuralism sets itself up as a philosophy unto itself, it remains truncated, in effect, by virtue of not addressing the aporetic character of those factors themselves.

Another of the contending intellectual projects addressed by Ricoeur in *The Conflict of Interpretations* is psychoanalysis, and here Ricoeur would take up themes from his book on Freud. Importantly, psychoanalysis provides a sense of the tensive or impulsive character of human existence. Psychoanalysis reaches its limit in what amounts to a semantics of desire. As developed by Freud, however, psychoanalysis took on the character of a science of nature, and, along these lines, Freud basically understood semantic contexts such as myths to operate as denials of the underlying truth of nature. When psychoanalysis gets understood not as a science of nature but rather as a hermeneutical study, semantic contexts such as myths figure more as expressive of our capacities than as symptomatic of the denial of our reality as utterly natural.

In *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Ricoeur also addresses hermeneutics in a theological context, specifically in the context of a theology of hope. Here Ricoeur draws on the text *Theology of Hope* by a leading Protestant theologian, Jürgen Moltmann. Ricoeur finds the closest philosophical analogue of faith's sense of hope, even in the face of death, in the role of the transcendental imagination as understood by Kant, and its operation according to the matrix provided by the schematism of the categories. There is an indication here of a possibility for understanding the negative sense of finitude in terms of a correlative sense of excess. Imagination, particularly productive imagination, which Kant, in the *Critique of Judgment*, distinguishes from reproductive imagination, lies close to the heart of hermeneutics as understood by Ricoeur, which

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he characterizes as responsive to the need for another Copernican Revolution. While the critical element of knowledge acquisition plays an indispensable role here, the priority belongs, ultimately, to interpretation.

Ricoeur specifies an integral quality, within their respective spheres, to each of the projects that he addresses in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, so much so that there can be no governing trajectory leading to an absolute knowledge, and therefore the conflict noted in the title of the text does not cease. At the same time, however, Ricoeur makes a case for a “hermeneutic arc” that makes for an advance in self-understanding by way of the other interpretive projects. The way in which absolute knowledge is precluded ultimately leads, for Ricoeur, to a relinquishment of the Hegelian project, although Ricoeur casts this largely in terms of an issue for modernity rather than in terms of any damaging effects of Hegel’s sense of absolute knowledge and how we were to reach it.

Because hermeneutics is to proceed via the interpretation of the signs, symbols, and texts in which we express our sense of human existence, and particularly because distanciation plays a positive role with regard to appropriation for our self-understanding, texts have a status for Ricoeur that even exceeds their exemplary role in regard to the dynamic of effective-historical consciousness as understood by Gadamer. Ricoeur's next two major works, *The Rule of Metaphor* and the three-volume *Time and Narrative*, will address, respectively, metaphor considered as a “text in miniature” and narrative considered as the crucial element in longer texts that basically plays a role that makes it comparable to metaphor. Ricoeur’s point of departure in *The Rule of Metaphor* is Aristotle’s work, and he brings together Aristotle’s *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*. In doing so, Ricoeur draws a comparison between metaphor and mimesis, understood as representation, and makes a case thereby for moving away from a strictly lexical conception of metaphor in terms of word substitution. This analysis points out the two directions in which the following analyses will move. On the one hand, the analyses will move through larger and larger units in accounting for metaphor, which ultimately has to be understood within the context of discourse. Ricoeur found, accordingly, that his earlier analysis in terms of symbols was too restrictive. On the other hand, the analyses will make a case for a nonlinguistic element involved in metaphor. The fields of analysis in what follows include tropology, semiotics, semantics, rhetoric, and scientific modeling. Along the way, Ricoeur will draw on Anglo-American work in linguistic analysis and in philosophy of science, emphasizing how in analytic philosophy the basic unit is the sentence rather than the word, and how philosophy of science in the Anglo-American context moved away from an exclusively semantic account of the field of science. One of the issues that the text addresses pertains to structuralism. Ricoeur’s analysis of metaphor resists the current within structuralism that aims at smaller and smaller elementary linguistic units as a basis for the study of
language. At stake is the claim that a scientific study of language can be exhaustive and the implication that such study overtakes philosophy.

Metaphor allows us “to see as,” to see differently, to see all things “in act.” This “seeing as,” Ricoeur specifies, “is an experience and an act at one and the same time.”26 Along these lines, Ricoeur makes a case for “metaphorical truth.” He proceeds via the question of metaphor’s relation to philosophical discourse. A reading of Aristotle addresses the question concerning metaphor and the equivocity of being, and a reading of Thomas Aquinas addresses the question of metaphor and the analogia entis. Ricoeur’s hermeneutical findings indicate that a “relative pluralism” of forms and levels of discourse pertains to the relation between poetry and speculative philosophical discourse, and he contrasts this “relative pluralism” with a thoroughgoing sense of heterogeneous language games along Wittgensteinian lines. This sense of “relative pluralism” accords with the sense of relations among the various discourses that were addressed in The Conflict of Interpretations, where each retains an integral quality that is not compromised by a governing trajectory toward an “absolute knowledge,” while at the same time those discourses constitute a “hermeneutical arc” that marks an advance of self-understanding.

As he concludes his study of metaphor, Ricoeur takes exception to Heidegger’s assertion to the effect that metaphor operates only within the context of metaphysics.27 Given Heidegger’s understanding that the identification of Being and presence that serves as the basis of metaphysics is no longer tenable, the implication is that metaphor no longer serves as a vehicle for possible meaning, or in terms of the title of Ricoeur’s text, “living metaphor” is ruled out. In other words, metaphysical language has run its course and all metaphor has lapsed into a state of ordinary language. Ricoeur notes how Heidegger’s thought can, in fact, lead to silence. For Ricoeur, a recovery of a metaphor’s original context is not possible. Rather, at the point where our understanding of metaphor encounters metaphor’s descent into a state of ordinary language, new meaning comes about. Accordingly, Ricoeur takes exception to the all-encompassing character of Heidegger’s assessment of the tradition as metaphysics in the specific sense of a forgottenness of Being.

“Metaphorical truth,” Ricoeur finds, is to be understood in terms of a “split reference,” a phrase that Ricoeur adopts from the linguist Roman Jakobson.28

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28. One of the most important linguists of the twentieth century, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) was a leading figure in the Moscow Circle who eventually turned away from formalist and
Metaphor says both “is” and “is not”; it “preserves the ‘is not’ within the ‘is.’”29 The copula here is the challenge for an autonomous philosophical discourse. This brings us to the threshold of ontology, or as Ricoeur will put this at times, in biblical terms, to the point where, like Moses, we can see the promised land that we do not enter during our lifetimes.

Ricoeur’s three-volume work *Time and Narrative* furthers the analysis of texts, with the focus on fictional texts and written history. Ricoeur begins with the tension between two senses of time, a sense of cosmic time and a sense of human time, represented here by Aristotle, on the one hand, and Augustine, on the other. Narrative is responsive to this tension. Time, Ricoeur specifies, becomes human time to the extent that it is organized into a narrative. As does metaphor, narrative has a mimetic quality. Where narrative is concerned, it is a question of a mimesis of human action. This mimesis is threefold. First, there is a “prefiguration” in terms of the understanding of what makes for narrative that we bring to a text. Next, there is “configuration,” or the “emplotment” whereby events are related to one another in various ways. Finally, there is “refiguration,” which occurs via the act of reading and whereby new possibilities are opened up that enhance our self-understanding. The circle that operates here between narrative texts and life is hermeneutical.

Ricoeur concentrates next on configuration in literary works and this study includes readings of three novels: *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Wolf, *Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann, and *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust. In each novel, a character addresses the tension between cosmic time and human time in a different manner. Ricoeur then brings fiction and history writing together in order to sort out what is common and what differs. There is considerable commonality, even overlap, first and foremost in terms of the narrative character, which is why fiction appeals to us as believable, and why history writing involves unactualized possibilities. By virtue of this overlap, reading either fiction or history leads to new possibilities in life. The difference between the two lies in the sense of “historical truth” that pertains to history. Ricoeur will address this sense of “historical truth” at length in the later work *Memory, History, Forgetting*.

*Time and Narrative* was followed by the publication of *Oneself as Another*, based on Ricoeur’s Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1986. Here, Ricoeur develops the sense of a “narrative identity,” which follows from the studies in *Time and Narrative*. “The fragile offshoot issuing from the union toward structuralist linguistics. He played a major role in introducing the basic principles of Saussurean linguistics to Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan. [*] Jakobson is discussed in the essay by Thomas F. Broden in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. 29. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 24.
of history and fiction is the assignment to an individual or a community of a specific identity that we call their narrative identity.”

Here Ricoeur draws a distinction in terms of the two Latin words “idem” and “ipse,” where the former pertains to a “being the same,” and the latter pertains to a “self-sameness” that amounts to a certain constancy through a course of change. What is particularly important for Ricoeur is ipse identity: the narrative identity of a people in history or an individual in the course of a life. This narrative of an individual’s life concerns the actions of that individual and the narrative identity answers to the question of the “who,” which is to say, the agent of those actions. Narration, in this way, serves as an attestation of agency, and thereby, of responsibility. This sense of agency resonates in Ricoeur’s work all the way back to the initial project of the will and it marks the point at which the hermeneutics of texts leads to a philosophy of action. Instead of any unmediated self-awareness, there is a hermeneutical circle at work here between life and narrative, a circle that enhances self-awareness and, by virtue of the sense of responsibility, makes a demand on us regarding who we are to become. In this way, the hermeneutic circle involves a “call” to a higher ethical standard. In discussing this “call” by way of Heidegger’s sense of conscience in Being and Time, and Emmanuel Levinas’s sense of the demand on me that issues from my fellow human being, Ricoeur concludes that philosophy reaches a limit when it comes to determining whether such a “call” comes from oneself, or from “the other” (my fellow human being), or from God.

Ricoeur returns to the question of historical truth with his publication in 2000 of Memory, History, Forgetting. Here, after a phenomenological analysis of memory, Ricoeur carries out an extensive examination of the work of the historian, which consists primarily in assessing collective memory, supporting it, or refuting and correcting it. Historiography consists of three activities. First, there is the examination of traces of the past, among which, recorded testimonies are most significant. The historian addresses questions to these traces of the past and, in so doing, detects those facts with which the historian will work. The second activity is that of relating facts to one another in a way that makes the actions of the historical actors intelligible. The third activity is representing a part of the past in a text. The activities cross over into one another and the entire task is one of interpretation. Moreover, some factors are irretrievable. Only testimony and critical analysis of testimony lend the account credibility. The account cannot be certain. Rather, at best, it is likely. Still, when the work is done well, the account, while remaining subject to future change, does merit being regarded as truthful. When it comes to forgetting, Ricoeur’s analysis

points up that while forgetting is in opposition to memory, it plays, as well, a constitutive role in memory. This pertains to latencies that can be activated along the lines of “recognition,” a term of major importance in Plato’s thought. The critical element in history writing must not be taken to the extreme of eliminating such latencies.

The Course of Recognition, published in 2004, is the last book published during Ricoeur’s lifetime. The work culminates by returning to a point made in Oneself as Another in regard to how narrative shows that self-awareness always comes by way of involvement with others. At stake is the possibility for human beings, who are irreducibly different from one another, to recognize one another’s common humanity, which is characterized by capabilities and vulnerabilities (an issue that resonates all the way back to Fallible Man and the role of that text in the initial project of a Philosophy of the Will, now recast in terms of narrative and the possibility of enhanced self-awareness). Ricoeur’s study of the course of recognition, proceeding, as always, via reading of a vast historical literature pertinent to the topic, finds that when it comes to the issue of the mutuality of recognition, where Hegel’s work is particularly important, there is an asymmetry involved, similar to the asymmetry involved in a promise, and it accounts for the constancy of the struggle for recognition.

In essays that date from the 1990s and that were published by Ricoeur in two collections, Le Juste and Le Juste 2, as well as in Memory, History, Forgetting, Ricoeur took up questions in the field of political philosophy, with which he had first been concerned in the collection of essays History and Truth, published in 1955. The crucial issue is justice, and Ricoeur draws here on the work of John Rawls in his A Theory of Justice. The issue of justice brings with it an ethical concern. Justice entails abiding by the authority of a third party, the state, by virtue of which a judge, according to law, decides between parties. The state is the social organization that is to address the aspirations and the needs of the individuals who comprise it. Ricoeur underscores the right of state authority to grant pardon, out of humane considerations, to a party found guilty of violating law, and he makes a point of distinguishing pardon from amnesty, which, as the word literally indicates, amounts to forgetting in the form of a denial of memory or elimination from the historical record. The issues resonate in Ricoeur’s work all the way back not only to History and Truth, but to his early reflections on the question of evil as well, now recast in terms of his work on the hermeneutics of texts, narrative identity, and recognition. The hermeneutics of texts pertains to state constitutions as well, and the role of narration pertains to the identity of nations and recognition among them as well as to individuals. Ricoeur’s late work in the field of political philosophy appeared, importantly, in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union and the communist world, and it addressed matters at stake in efforts toward European unification.
While on a political level, Ricoeur advocates against amnesty, and for the possibility of pardon, which does not expunge a historical record, on an individual level, he affirms that forgiving is possible. By virtue of its unconditional character, however, forgiving cannot be a matter of reciprocity, and in this regard, Ricoeur finds an “asymmetry [that] accompanies us like an enigma that can never be fully plumbed.” Nevertheless, he does find that means for the manifestation of good will can come about in the midst of the asymmetrical struggle for recognition when this struggle gets interrupted by gestures of generosity, such as occur, in particular, in symbolic contexts that are ceremonial or celebratory, where they constitute, in effect, a mode of indirect recognition that is peaceful in character.

IV. HERMENEUTICS, DECONSTRUCTION, AND THE LEGACY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

When Ricoeur, at the conclusion of *The Rule of Metaphor*, asserted the possibility of living metaphor in opposition to Heidegger's assessment that metaphor operates only within the context of metaphysics, and that by virtue of the forgottenness of Being that characterized the tradition as a whole, the language of metaphysics had now run its course, Ricoeur also characterized the work of Derrida as a more extreme version of this. Ricoeur relied here on Derrida's essay “White Mythology.” Derrida would respond that he was actually in agreement with Ricoeur with regard to the pervasiveness of metaphor in philosophy. What this meant is that philosophy, insofar as it would exclude metaphor, contains what would undo it, and this, in fact, is what sustains it. What Derrida calls into question is a binary distinction between living metaphor, on the one hand, and dead metaphor, on the other hand. Metaphor is an undoing within philosophy that sustains it, and this is how, in fact, philosophy’s “deconstruction” proceeds. A full-scale comparison between Derrida's work and Ricoeur's would require extensive analysis of their readings of work of major importance in the

philosophical tradition and extensive analysis of their work on a wide range of issues that pertain, for example, to myth, to psychoanalysis, to literature, to religion, to democracy, and to justice. There is a specific sense, however, in which the legacy of phenomenology is at stake here.

When the shift to hermeneutics was taken by Ricoeur, he described this as a graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology. What makes them compatible is the hermeneutic importance of meaning and the role of interpretation in phenomenology, which Ricoeur associated specifically with the role of imagination in eidetic variation as described by Husserl. Phenomenology would have to undergo qualification with regard to a transcendental ego that sustains a sense of subjectivity’s immediate access to itself, and hermeneutics would have to meet the critical requirement that is intrinsic to phenomenology. It is in these terms that Ricoeur understood his hermeneutical work as philosophizing with both Heidegger and Gadamer, and after them, without forgetting Husserl.

At the point where the question of language takes shape by virtue of the graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology, Ricoeur found that a scientific study of language was needed, and for this purpose, he turned primarily to structuralism. Derrida also drew on structuralism, particularly the distinction between signifier and signified and the sense of diacritical difference that came from Saussure. Derrida found, however, while structuralism, in effect, undermined subjectivity, it did so by virtue of the scientific presumption of the possibility of exhaustive knowledge of a system of signifiers, which, in effect, reinstates the sense of subjectivity’s full self-presence that is sustained by the dynamics of voice. Ricoeur found that structuralism reached a limit when it came to questions pertaining to a sense or meaning of our existence in a world. The self-awareness that this entails must be mediated by texts, where an author’s initial intent is not what governs. Derrida, for his part, found that when it comes to texts, what is required is a sense of language that does not involve apriority of speaking. It is here that a writing turns up that is not writing as derived from speaking, and, in effect, this is where the critical requirement of phenomenology actually led Derrida when it is brought to bear on phenomenology itself, understood in terms of bringing the phenomena into language. Ricoeur, for his part, found unacceptable the degree of distinctness ascribed by Derrida to writing.

Ricoeur understood a text as autonomous by virtue of a “world of the text,” within which what occurs in the text is possible. Metaphor and narrative sustain the world of the text. By virtue of the world of the text, a reader

34. By virtue of how he sustains a critical element in his thought while carrying out his transition to hermeneutics, Ricoeur found resources for proposing means for mediation between Gadamer and Habermas. See Ricoeur, “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology,” in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, 63–100.

35. See, in particular, Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation.”
discerns previously unavailable possibilities in the everyday world in a manner that involves an enhanced self-awareness and makes for the appropriation of meaning by the reader. This renders the distanciation of the text from its initial context productive. The way in which the world of the text makes for the text’s autonomy marks the phenomenological character of hermeneutics as understood by Ricoeur. Ricoeur also found that by virtue of his sense of the autonomy of the text, he did not lose contact altogether with the idealist element of the philosophical tradition. Ricoeur considered the sense of the world of the text his most innovative contribution to hermeneutics. By means of his graft of hermeneutics onto phenomenology, philosophical texts that are metaphysical in character, such as the historical texts of Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas, could be reread productively, a line for communication and debate between continental European traditions and Anglo-American philosophy that relies on the “linguistic turn” could be made available, and philosophical contact with religion could be reopened in a way that offers means for addressing the reappearance of religion on the world stage.

MAJOR WORKS

**Hans-Georg Gadamer**


Paul Ricoeur


We can define the linguistic turn, in general, as the rejection of any approach to meaning, value, sense, or concepts that would lie beyond linguistic systems; premodern philosophical problems – the nature of God, freedom, or reality – could not be approached other than through the vocabularies we use to denote such terms. It would no longer be legitimate to establish the true meaning or essence of an identity, and then correct ordinary usage, for meaning and identity are established through linguistic usage. Even if we accept the linguistic limit as the proper turn philosophy ought to take, away from speculative and ungrounded theorizing, there are still different senses one can give to the linguistic turn, and in many ways these senses define different modes of philosophy: whether one deems the limits of language to be a useful way of preventing fruitless philosophical inquiry, or whether one regards linguistic limitation as borders for thinking, borders that ought to be challenged or reflected upon.

Turning to continental philosophy, there are three ways in which we might address the linguistic turn as it pertains to the continental tradition. The first is in relation to analytic philosophy and concerns the branching out into two traditions following the early-twentieth-century attempt to ground philosophy on the purely formal sign systems of mathematics and logic. The second way of understanding the linguistic turn is as a response to phenomenology: from phenomenology’s attention to the instituting and constitutive acts of consciousness, language-oriented philosophy regarded meaning and experience as possible only through, rather than before, language. Finally, it is only now with the declaration that we occupy a postlinguistic paradigm that we can begin to assess the extent and validity of the linguistic turn.
I. CONTINENTAL AND ANALYTIC APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE

The distinction between continental and analytic philosophy – the bifurcation of two self-conscious traditions – occurs early in the twentieth century with different approaches to the problems of sense and language.¹ In response to late-nineteenth-century speculative philosophies, or philosophies that sought to look beyond individual experience and give some account of a prelinguistic absolute, European and Anglo-American philosophies sought to provide a more certain foundation that would be closer to the model of the sciences. Indeed, philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and Edmund Husserl thought that it was possible for philosophy, as logic, to provide a foundation for sciences such as mathematics.² It was the failure of this project – the impossibility of tracing formal sign systems back to some ultimate logical foundation – that led to the elevation of language as philosophy’s true object of investigation. Husserl’s Philosophy of Arithmetic (1891) argued for a form of psychologism: mathematical signs – for example, “2 + 2 = 4” – refer to a consciousness that intuits and then manipulates abstract quantities. By extension, all meaning and all signs referred back to embodied minds and their creation of sense.

It was Frege’s criticism of this notion of signs and meaning that prompted Husserl to revise his position.³ Frege argued that the meaning of such propositions could not be reduced to the acts of conscious subjects: “2 + 2 = 4” would be true and make sense regardless of what any subjects actually thought, and the sense of such formal sign systems was something discovered, not created, by consciousness. Again, this would have implications for languages beyond those of the formal sciences. If we want to understand the meaning of a sentence such as “Scott is the author of Waverley,” then we need to give it a logical form: first the positing of existence – there exists an object that answers to the term “Scott” – and then the predication of at least one feature of that object – it authored Waverley. The messiness of everyday language could be broken up into the positing of existing objects, and then the attribution of what is true or false regarding those objects. For analytic philosophy after Frege, there was first the

¹ See, for example, Michael A. E. Dummett, Origins of Analytical Philosophy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
² See, for example, Edmund Husserl, Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft (Frankfurt: Klossertermann, 1965); published in English as Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: Philosophy as a Rigorous Science, and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man, Quentin Lauer (trans.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
desire to trace everyday language back to some clear and distinct logical sense. Sentences that could not be broken down into such positing of truth and falsity did not have a proper sense. This led, eventually, away from the notion of tracing everything back to some ultimate logical foundation – the objects in the world and their predicates – and to, in its place, a linguistic foundation: what can and cannot be said in a language, and what linguistic formulations produce insoluble nonsensical or unverifiable problems?

Looking back on the linguistic turn, Richard Rorty noted that the turn to language allowed philosophers to argue that all philosophical disputes were really disagreements about language. We could, for example, see the problem of “substance” in Descartes and Spinoza, not as a metaphysical question about the ultimate nature of reality – Are mind and matter different substances or one substance with different attributes? – but as a linguistic question: How do we use the word “substance”? One philosopher might argue that it is better – that is, that philosophical language functions more effectively – without certain distinctions (say, between “mental” and “material” substance), or without certain terms. Perhaps concepts such as “mind” produce false problems by introducing a spurious entity behind language and action.

The turn to language, then, is often seen as a way of overcoming metaphysics. If we look at how language works, rather than at the supposedly prelinguistic world or truths that it labels, then we can clear away many of the false problems in philosophy. One of the most important philosophical maneuvers in relation to the linguistic turn, and to the relation between continental and analytic philosophy, occurs with Ludwig Wittgenstein’s own transition from a logical to a linguistic approach to truth. Initially, in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein harbored the positivist ambition of grounding language on ultimate, prelinguistic, and clearly intuitable truths. This was referred to as the “picture theory” of meaning, and was later discarded by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Here, Wittgenstein made two key claims regarding language. First, the meaning of a term does not refer to some pre- or extra-linguistic experience, but instead is established through use. If we want to understand what a term means, then we need to see how it functions in a specific language: the meaning of the word “mate” functions one way in Australian

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5. The attempt to overcome metaphysics via the turn to language is a central feature of the disagreement between Carnap and Heidegger, discussed by Friedman and Ryckman in their essay in *History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*, and as well as by David R. Hiley in his discussion of Rorty in this volume.

6. For a discussion of Wittgenstein, see the essay by John Fennell and Bob Plant in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*. 

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English (referring to a casual friend), another way in British or American English (referring to a more intimate, possibly sexual, relation). A linguist determines such distinctions by looking at the ways in which the word is exchanged, placed in sentences, linked with other terms, and so on. One way in which Wittgenstein used this notion of “meaning as use” within philosophy was to rule out certain types of questions: for example, instead of asking what is the real meaning of “substance” or “democracy,” we should look at the function such words perform, and also whether they perform a useful function. Many of philosophy’s terms, such as “mind,” “substance,” “essence,” or “reality,” might – it could be argued – create questions that cannot be usefully answered precisely because there is no recognized usage for such terms in ordinary language. Wittgenstein’s notion of language as a game had both ethical and (post)metaphysical implications. Ethically, if we see language not as a true or false labeling of the world, but as something like a game where we either know the correct ways to use terms or we do not, then we can treat ethics as an inquiry not into ultimate realities but into how communities or contexts establish linguistic conventions. While this might at first appear quite conservative, for we could say that there is no meaning to the term “justice” or “right” outside convention, Wittgenstein’s “language game” has been taken up by Jean-François Lyotard to argue that there can be competing and incommensurable games, such that one group uses a term that has no place or force in another language game. The differend, Lyotard argues, is this clash or incommensurability of phrases and forces us to confront the limits of our language.7

The second great contribution of Wittgenstein’s philosophy to the linguistic turn was the notion of the “family resemblance.” Tied to the primacy of use, this was another way of moving beyond metaphysics (or the idea that philosophy could grasp ultimate truths beyond conventions and contexts). Here, Wittgenstein insisted that one could not grasp a single self-present meaning for a term, but that words often functioned with overlapping senses. The word “party,” for example, shares the sense of a collection or gathering together in the terms “political party,” or “dinner party,” but shares the sense of festivity and celebration in the terms “party music” or “party frock.” It is in the nature of language not to have a single isolable sense, but to have multiple uses, determined by context, and functioning less like a substance or single essence, and more like a resemblance between members of a family. The attention to language as an ongoing conversation, with a sense that is achieved through usage, context, communication, and convention was at one and the same time a way of “cleaning up”

7. See Jean-François Lyotard, The Differend: Phrases in Dispute, Georges Van Den Abbeele (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.) [*] For a discussion of the differend, see the essay on Lyotard by James Williams in this volume.
philosophy by ridding the discipline of unanswerable metaphysical questions (such as the ultimate meaning of terms or the ultimate nature of reality) and also a way of achieving postmetaphysical rigor. Thus, Jürgen Habermas has insisted that rationality is “communicative” and postmetaphysical.\(^8\) We do not engage in discussion and reflection in order to establish presocial or prelinguistic truths; instead, by virtue of the fact that all speech and action is with others (or intersubjective), we are always placed in a context of communication. Such contexts presuppose an ideal of agreement, for it would make no sense (or be a performative contradiction) to speak or act with others \textit{without} the aiming for consensus and agreement.

This sense of grounding philosophy on proper, legitimate, functional, or verifiable language use followed from an initial attempt to give philosophy a foundation in basic truths, such as logical atoms or the positive properties of the world, but ultimately led to a form of antifoundationalism, perhaps best articulated by Rorty in the wake of Wittgenstein and pragmatism. If we want to do philosophy, we should not try to get outside language, but should instead have disputes about what counts as a good move in a language game. Although Rorty began by discussing the linguistic turn in the analytic tradition, he was later to include continental philosophers, such as Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger, in this understanding of the linguistic turn.\(^9\) For Rorty, the value of Derrida’s philosophy was that it abandoned all sense of metaphysical foundations and instead considered philosophy as a kind of writing, and the value of Heidegger lay in the insistence that we are not subjects who perceive the world and who \textit{then} represent that world “in” language. Instead, the very existence of a world, along with a sense of self or mind, is given through language.

It needs to be noted here that Rorty’s recruitment of both Heidegger and Derrida as philosophers who rejected a philosophy \textit{of} language – an ultimate theory of meaning – needs to be contrasted with an entirely different way of reading Heidegger. Rorty’s Heidegger (and his use of post-Heidegger philosophers) is a Heidegger of pragmatism: in the beginning is the speaking, acting, and socially embedded human whose only mode of questioning must take place within a context, and who cannot transcend a context. Related to this tradition of pragmatism, or the idea that truth and language are grounded on their capacity to enable action and interaction, is the tradition of hermeneutics. The emphases of the hermeneutic tradition, though, are directed more to Heidegger’s notion of language as world-disclosive. While we may not be able to step outside


language, and while language is not something we humans possess but is the way in which both world and human existence are unfolded in relation to each other, Heidegger also insisted (as Rorty did not) that we could bear a more authentic relation to language. In poetry, for example, we no longer see language as an already-formed and manageable tool (a technical or instrumental idea of language); instead we see language in its capacity to illuminate and bring forth a world.

The hermeneutic tradition of philosophy that followed Heidegger, most notably in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, was less inclined to see language as a game or as a context that could be reconfigured only from within. Instead they thought it made sense to question the specific horizon or “life-world” that certain languages enabled, and thought it was possible to understand or interpret different cultures and historical periods through processes of understanding, which would be attuned to each language’s specificity. On the one hand, then, Heidegger’s criticism of the Cartesian idea of consciousness as some prelinguistic intuition that would then deploy language opened the way for a tradition of hermeneutics that would look at how different communities, life-worlds, or horizons were produced through language. Such approaches were pursued both in the continental tradition – for example, by Gadamer, who always stressed language as a form of conversation and world-disclosing “horizon” and who maintained that one could alter language through engagement with other traditions and styles of conversation – and in the analytic tradition, with Rorty insisting that the philosophy of Heidegger (and even Derrida) could be aligned with the pragmatist tradition of suspending any reference to truth outside ongoing adjustments of language. On the other hand, Heidegger could also be mobilized to argue against the idea of language as a construction, horizon, or mediation of the world. Instead, language would be the “dwelling” of Being, the manifestation of an event or disclosure that could not be reduced to some system through which the world was given. Language was not so much a construction, nor even the manifestation of a comportment or conversation, but closer to an event in its own right. This aspect of Heidegger’s work, which stressed “poetic” language (from poiesis as a production of a distinct object), marked a strand of philosophy that challenged philosophy’s own limits and its attention to reason and understanding. While Habermas saw this as a lamentable implication of Heidegger’s Nietzschean thought, leading to a form of irrationalism, others, such as Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, wanted to extend the force of language beyond Heidegger’s recognition of poetic language’s potential to operate beyond human intentionality. This led to Derrida’s theorization of “écriture” or “writing in general” as a capacity for difference and variation that could occur beyond conversations, intentions, and consciousness, and led Nancy and
Lacoue-Labarthe to consider language's irreducibility to human history and traditions.\textsuperscript{10}

Although Rorty was a significant figure in bridging the gap between analytic and continental philosophy, and did so by looking at the ways in which Heidegger, Wittgenstein, William James, and Charles Sanders Peirce could all be read as pragmatists for whom it made no sense to ask about what lay beyond the limits of one's own language, his reading of Heidegger and Wittgenstein as compatible with American pragmatism was forced to ignore some of the most important aspects of their work. Heidegger, for example, not only insisted on language as the dwelling house of Being, so that there could be no sense of a being before or outside language, but also placed an emphasis on truth as \textit{alêtheia}, or unveiling. Language does not construct or constitute the world, but allows the world to disclose itself or unfold. This attention to the unfolding of language, which enabled those philosophers in the hermeneutic tradition to look at the ways in which interpretive communities were formed through modes of writing and reading, also led to a specifically continental (or more narrowly, French) way of reading Heidegger and phenomenology. The problem of genesis, or the emergence of language, which for pragmatists such as Rorty was an unanswerable question going beyond the limits of language, was one of the key concerns for French postwar thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, and Julia Kristeva. I would suggest, then, that the distinction between the linguistic turn for American philosophers such as Rorty and continental philosophy lies in the former’s refusal to consider any truth or reality beyond the limits of language, while the latter tradition pays attention to the limits or outside of language. That is, while analytic philosophy saw the linguistic turn as a way of overcoming false metaphysical problems concerning the outside of language (and was reacting against logical positivism’s attempt to \textit{ground} language), continental philosophy recognized that language could not have a simple outside but was nevertheless still interested in thinking about the ways in which the differences of a language were constituted.

Looked at this way, this question maintained the phenomenological problematic as outlined by Husserl: while all experience is meaningful, and while consciousness cannot be grasped as a simple “thing” within the world, it is still necessary to direct attention to the emergence of the relation between thinking

and being. The question of the relation between genesis and structure, between the conditions of emergence and the systems through which we understand emergence, or between the self who thinks and the languages within which the self thinks, opened on to the question of difference. In Heidegger the question of difference, relations, or the Zwiefalt – the opening up of a distinction between thinking and being – was not seen as a simple linkage of two distinct terms. Rather, difference, differentiation, or the production of relations to produce distinct terms led to a profound inquiry into the origin of sense and language and precluded the more straightforward pragmatist approaches that had decided to remain within the limits of language.

Whereas the post-Fregean analytic tradition saw language as a way of tidying up metaphysical pseudo-problems, the post-Husserlian tradition occupied itself with the genesis of language. Husserl responded to Frege's criticism by charting a path between psychologism – that the meaning of a sign is some mental act – and linguistics, or the idea that there is no truth or sense outside language. Husserl argued for a form of transcendental phenomenology, in which we should not simply accept systems of signs (be they mathematics, logic, geometry, or natural language) without intuiting the founding or instituting sense. For Husserl, understanding the meaning of, say, a mathematical proposition ultimately requires a grasp of the originating act or judgment. Thus to understand “2 + 2 = 4” does not mean we have to go back to the first actual person or worldly individual who thought or inscribed this judgment, but it does entail understanding that such signs formalize or give an ongoing stable sense to an act of consciousness that would be true for any subject whatever. Phenomenology,
as Husserl understood it, thus concerns itself with the genesis of signs and languages.\textsuperscript{15}

Although the distinction between analytic and continental philosophy is today being seen as less significant and possibly no longer relevant, it is still worth bearing in mind that there are different and opposed ways of considering the importance of language. Even though there is no longer, in analytic philosophy, a commitment to ordinary language and a refusal of nonconceptual contents of consciousness, there is nevertheless a marked distinction between those who see the extra-linguistic as grounded in human action and intentionality and those, in the continental tradition, who emphasize structures and processes beyond the human altogether. In the more analytic strands of philosophy, where there can now be an investigation of desires, emotions, nonconceptual content, and even judgment structures independent of specific languages,\textsuperscript{16} there has also been a widespread desire to “naturalize” phenomenology, which has resulted in reading both Heidegger and Husserl as philosophers concerned with the status and limits of language rather than ideal structures or being.

However, in continental philosophy, there is still a need to account for structures and processes (including language) that have a historical, material, ideal, social, political, or archival existence beyond human understanding. For Husserl, it made sense to mark a distinction between consciousness – with its acts of judgment, its “syntheses” of the flow of experience into manifolds bearing a certain identifiable quality, and its scientific progress toward an ever more certain knowledge of the world – and the signs and formal systems that indicated or expressed consciousness. It was Heidegger who began to problematize this distinction between, on the one hand, experiencing consciousness, and the language that indicates or expresses that consciousness, on the other. In \textit{Being and Time} (1927), Heidegger wrote disparagingly of idle chatter or \textit{Gerede}, arguing that for the most part we use language in an unthinking manner, without a sense of the ways in which language emerges from a being-in-the-world. Language emerges \textit{not} as the creation of some distinct or presocial “mind,” “subjectivity,” or “consciousness.” Instead, we are “thrown” into a world that is already meaningful, already experienced as bearing a definite and determinate sense. The notion of mind or subjectivity as a being that is distinct from a lived and meaningful world only emerges when we forget that the world is first given to us through our engagement with it – or what Heidegger referred to as “care” (\textit{Sorge}).


\textsuperscript{16} On nonconceptual content, see Gareth Evans, \textit{The Varieties of Reference} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
In his later work, Heidegger focused ever more intently on language, insisting that the world is first given in “saying” and that the logical point of view – the notion of some truth or presence outside all language – is possible only if we forget the original disclosure of the world through language.¹⁷ For Heidegger this also meant that the experience of poetry, where we once again see the ways in which language allows the world to be presented as a world, helps us to overcome a notion that there would be some pure experience of presence that philosophy might grasp beyond the ways in which the world is lived. Heidegger’s later turn toward poetic language focused on the relationship between saying and thinking; far from expressing a pragmatist commitment to language as the way in which we create and activate truths, with truth being decided by convention and efficacy, Heidegger saw the poetic word as possessing being distinct from our present ways of thinking. Through a meditation on language we could once again understand the emergence or unfolding of the world. Heidegger drew here on etymology – for example, the connection between the German words dichten (to create poetically, to poetize), denken (to think), and danken (to thank) – to emphasize that language, and especially poetic language, is not a tool “we” use, but a gift through which thinking is made possible and for which we should be grateful. Indeed, Heidegger begins to question whether there is any “we” or “self” who would be the owner of language, instead suggesting that it is language that “speaks” and in doing so opens up a “clearing” in which being is revealed. For phenomenology, language was not only the way in which the world was lived or constituted as a world; it was also possible through attention to literary and poetic language to understand distinct modes of the world as it is lived.

II. THE LINGUISTIC TURN AFTER PHENOMENOLOGY

It was this attention to the lived, even if the lived was no longer Husserl’s “consciousness” but Heidegger’s “being-in-the-world,” that became an object of critique for the next generation of philosophers who were to take language far more seriously. As we have seen, for Heidegger, language was a mode of “dwelling”: we should view language not as a logical system that we formulate to express thoughts, but as that which allows a world to appear. There are not subjects who experience a world and then use language; rather, there is a “saying” that allows the world to appear, and we only have a sense of ourselves and a world that appears as other than ourselves, through the event of language. This gives language a founding and original role, as we see in Heidegger’s

¹⁷. See, for example, the essays collected in Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, Albert Hofstadter (trans.) (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
reading of the history of philosophy, when he would often begin with a reflection on the origin of significant philosophical terms, and look at their mutation through time. For example, he would examine terms such as “technology” or “logic” (now understood as abstract systems) and look at how they originally referred to distinctly engaged and creative ways of being in the world. Thus, technology derives from technē, which is any practice that takes on a regular stability through time; before there is a system of technology, there are forms of human action that make their way in the world and attend to the ways in which the world may be determined as the same through time. Before there is the system of logic that we manipulate and master through symbols, there is a logos or act of speech that allows the world to be revealed in some specific and identifiable manner. We could refer to this aspect of Heideggerian phenomenology as “etymologism,” or the idea that abstractions may always be referred back to some originally active and intending consciousness. To assume, with phenomenology and hermeneutics, that structures are capable of interpretation is to assume that we are not merely located within sign systems, for – according to the Husserlian commitment to genesis – we can always retrieve and intuit a system’s original sense. While postphenomenological philosophers such as Derrida, Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Luce Irigaray were to maintain an attention to the genesis of language – and could therefore be distinguished from Anglo-American “philosophy of language” that saw the bounds of language as the bounds of sense – they complicated the project of genesis or emergence by recognizing another problem: the problem of structure.

Although structuralism was a distinct movement in linguistics (Saussure) and anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), its presence in continental philosophy was never straightforward. This can be seen most clearly in Derrida’s essay on Husserl “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology,” and in his early criticisms of structuralism. Considered positively, and as a critical foil that would preclude a phenomenological grounding of language on consciousness, the key contribution of the notion of structure lay in its problematization of presence: could a sign or proposition be traced back to consciousness or lived experience as something present? Structuralists argued that a sign could only function as a

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18. For Derrida’s critique of etymologism, see “Ousia and Grammê: Note on a Note from Being and Time,” Alan Bass (trans.), in Margins of Philosophy (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

*19. For a discussion of structuralist linguistics, see the essay by Thomas F. Broden in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.

20. First delivered at a conference in 1959, the essay was published in French in 1965 as part of the conference proceedings Entretiens sur les notions de genèse et structure, Maurice de Gandillac et al. (eds) (Paris: Mouton, 1965), and then translated in Writing and Difference, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 154–68.
sign not by referring back to some self-present sense or object, but in relation to other signs. At the level of language, this argument is relatively straightforward. If I use a word in a language that you do not understand and offer you an osten- sive definition – I utter the word “red” and point to an apple – then you cannot know the meaning of the word – does it name the object “apple” or the color of that object or the object’s shape, and so on? – or how it is properly used without further repetition. I could then point to, say, a red wheelbarrow and say “red” and you would begin to get a sense, through repetition, of what was being differentiated. One understands each term through its difference from others, and this can never occur in one self-present and autonomous act. Repetition estab- lishes each language’s relations of difference. Language is thus differential in two senses; it works by producing distinctions among sounds (such as the phonemes of a language) and differences among concepts (or the way in which language divides and organizes the flux of experience). This is apparent when we learn a new language, where we sometimes struggle with hearing and pronouncing new sounds, and we also have to understand differences of meaning that do not map isomorphically onto English – for example German has two words for experi- ence (Erfahrung and Erlebnis) whereas English only has one.

The structuralist argument that language takes the form of a system of differences without positive terms21 had a number of consequences, which ranged from the very simple notion that the meaning of any event or experience depends on an entire system, to more radical implications regarding the very nature of consciousness and being. The work of Roland Barthes in Mythologies, for example, analyzes a number of cultural forms – ranging from cooking to wrestling – but does so with the presupposition that any reading of cultural forms should not begin from what something is in isolation, or in its “natural” state.22 For Barthes, the presentation of something as natural or precultural is itself achieved through cultural signs. This, indeed, is his sense of “mythology,” which follows directly from an emphasis on the linguistic (or, more accurately, semiotic) limits beyond which we cannot think. Barthes was committed in his early work to a structuralist axiom concerning the “arbitrary” character of

21. Saussure makes this claim explicitly in his Course in General Linguistics, Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye with the collaboration of Albert Riedlinger (eds), Wade Baskin (trans.) (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 120.

22. In the key essay of Mythologies, “Myth Today,” Barthes argued that myth was a form of “frozen” speech that would take historically complex events and present them as timeless and natural. One example is a picture on the cover of the Paris magazine Match, where a colonized black soldier salutes the flag. This seemingly innocent picture actually presents a series of assumptions, such as the joyous willingness of the colonized to respect authority, the flag as worthy of recognition, and the inclusion of colonized others in a world “we” all assume to be incontestable.
the signer, so that, for example, “whiteness” signifies “purity” not because of some essential or natural relation between a color and its meaning, but because of the ways in which any particular culture or fashion system creates differences. The meaning of any phenomenon can be decided only in relation to an entire system of meanings and differences. In linguistic terms this leads to more holistic notions of translation: if I want to translate the French “aimer” into English, I need to decide whether to use the English word “love” or “like,” but this would be possible only through understanding how the word works in its French context; there is never any one-to-one relation between sign and sense.

In Barthes’s own work, this eventually led him away from the analysis of how sign systems produced myths or seemingly inevitable relations among signs, toward the creation of texts that deliberately intensified the complexities, ambiguities, and multiple connections among signs. Barthes then characterized two ways of approaching texts: the “readerly” approach assumes that texts have a single sense that can be intuited or interpreted and that the desire for understanding leads to the fulfillment of a final meaning. In contrast, the “writerly” approach does not find a sense behind language but takes enjoyment in the play of language, no longer seeking consummation in some definitive meaning. Barthes’s The Pleasure of the Text argued for a radical commitment to the primacy of language that is intensely antihermeneutic: one approaches a text not to reduce the signs of language to some hidden and underlying meaning, but enjoys language as such and does so by happily abandoning any notion of a justification or fulfillment beyond the text. Not only did Barthes’s emphasis on the pleasure of the text lead to an approach to literary and visual texts that was directed against interpretation, but it also had consequences for the ways in which French philosophy was received in the English-speaking world. For example, Derrida’s concepts of “play,” “writing,” and “text” – which referred to structural conditions beyond language in the narrow sense – were often read as ways of reducing politics and reality to language.

More complex philosophical arguments followed the structuralist argument for the differential and arbitrary nature of signs. The most significant critique occurred in the deconstruction of the phenomenological commitment to transcendent subjectivity or the lived. In his early work on Husserl, Derrida argued that the condition for the possibility of what Husserl defined as the primordiality of lived experience was différence. This term followed from Derrida’s equal commitment to structuralist and phenomenological premises regarding

24. See, for example, David Lehman, Signs of the Times (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991).
language and meaning. If it is the case, as Husserl had insisted, that we can have an ongoing and lived world only because consciousness synthesizes experience into experiences of this or that identifiable manifold, then this also means that consciousness is never self-present. Consciousness is intentional, or directed toward a transcendent object that is always experienced as a determined and meaningful object (and this is so even if the intentional object is imagined, doubted, wished for, or later revised as having been an illusion). But intentionality, or the idea that consciousness is always consciousness of something other than itself, required (for both Husserl and Derrida) the retention of past experiences into the present, and the anticipation of future experience from the present. And because consciousness is irreducibly intentional, according to Husserl, consciousness never experiences a pure “now” in isolation.

Whereas for Husserl this led to the positing of a transcendental subjectivity that would be the basis for the synthesis of time, for Derrida one could not posit either a subject or even a system (such as language) as the ground of synthesis. According to Derrida, the synthesis of time, or the experience of a present that retains and anticipates, already relies on something that is neither present nor absent, neither human nor inhuman, neither linguistic nor prelinguistic. Derrida referred to this “quasi-transcendental” as différence, the trace, writing in general, and a series of other terms. Such terms are quasi-transcendental because they do not posit an explanatory condition before experience – either language or the subject – and this is because Derrida deconstructs the opposition between the self-present subject, on the one hand, and the system of writing, on the other. There can only be a subject who experiences herself as present if her experiences of a sequence of “nows” can be synthesized and recognized as having some ongoing identity through time; but in order for time to be experienced as the experience of a world by a subject, some process must mark in each now that which could be lived again beyond the present.

So, for example, to experience any present event as, say, an experience of redness, I already have to mark out what in this present could be repeated, or what in this experience is lived as this or that quality. The present or the now is never pure but requires a trace, or a marking out of some aspect that could be carried over from the past to the future. In this respect, even before we have a language strictly speaking, even before there are the actual signs of a natural language or cultural convention, consciousness or experience is already differential. That is, for consciousness to be consciousness of what is not itself, it must experience that otherness (or transcendence) as having an identifiable, repeatable, or what Derrida will call “iterable” character: something in the experience that is anticipated as continuing beyond the self-present. This means that the phenomenological commitment to genesis, or tracing all signs back to a founding and self-present conscious act, is impossible. For that very
phenomenon of self-presence, or the consciousness that lives the world as meaningful, requires a marking out of time: a tracing or inscription in which the “lived” is never fully self-present.26

Derrida regards neither structure (the system of signs) nor genesis (the founding act of consciousness) as adequate to account for meaningful language. Language is only possible, as meaningful, if a sign is the sign of something other than itself, such as an object or intended sense. In this respect, Derrida maintains phenomenology’s commitment to intentionality, or the idea that experience is always experience of some thing, some transcendence, or something toward which experience aims. But that very character of experience, or its aiming toward what is not yet fully present, both means that experience is essentially unfulfilled, always directed beyond itself, and that experience is traversed by a language, system, or structure that is not its own and that it cannot fully command.

Derrida’s departure from Husserl and phenomenology focused on these two problems – of presence and of structure – to produce the counter-method of deconstruction. First, the problem of presence: Derrida was part of a broader response to Husserl that was critical of a certain intellectualism. Husserl began his investigation into consciousness and its relation to signs by focusing on mathematics and logic: signs that in their pure formality would produce a truth that would pertain for any experience whatever, and that could be rendered fully present. Not only does this establish an “architectonic” ideal at the heart of philosophy – the ideal that philosophy should presume that experience in its proper form is experience that grasps its object adequately and with full certainty, and that one can always return to this certainty to ground all later claims – but it also presupposed a certain ideal of humanity.27 The mathematical, logical, or geometric sign orients itself toward a world as it would be for any subject whatever, a world that could always in principle be available at any time and any place if one were to repeat again the intuitions of (in the case of geometry) “space in general” or (in mathematics) “number in general” – an experience of purely formal truth. But to produce this pure formality, Husserl has to make a distinction between actual, living, concrete, and empirical human beings

26. Derrida makes this point clearly in his “Introduction” to Husserl’s Origin of Geometry. According to Derrida, Husserl’s “first geometer” who would intuit, in his self-present here and now, valid truths that would pertain for any subject whatever, is only possible if the present intends some future beyond itself by marking in the present that which would be true beyond the immediate experience of this lived “now.” And this possibility of maintaining a lived experience through time, beyond the pure “now,” is possible only through the structure of language.

who are located in the world and speak a specific, natural, and finite language, and the pure potential of transcendental subjectivity that regards the world as it would be for any other, regardless of worldly locale.

For Derrida there are two problems with the privileging of this purely formal aiming at apodictic evidence. First, it begins from a certain notion of a proper experience, the experience of pure truth and absolute presentation. By beginning his investigation with formal truth as the model of experience, Husserl privileges the attainment of pure and apodictic presence; other modes of presentation, such as imagining, wishing, promising, or hallucinating are then derived from this supposedly exemplary mode of judgment. In so doing, Husserl also assumes a primacy of a certain type of language – formal language – and a proper relation to language, whereby signs are mere tokens that ultimately refer us to original intuitions. The second problem of Husserl’s account of language genesis is its Eurocentrism and phoneticism: by arguing that signs could ultimately be traced back to a speaking and self-present subject, Husserl assumed the phonetic languages of Western culture (in contrast with Chinese ideograms, for example) and assumed a single, truth-seeking, self-recognizing, and unified historical community with one tradition of inquiry.

Emmanuel Levinas offered a similar criticism of Husserl; by beginning from logic, mathematics, and the ideal of certainty, Husserl would never be able to understand that experience is not primarily an aiming for certainty, which then includes others as those who would experience the world as also given in such and such a way.28 For Levinas, the commitment to “ethics as first philosophy” led him to argue that before knowledge, certainty, and an aiming at full presence, we are exposed to the other person, who is there before questions of knowledge and absolute truth. If for Husserl knowledge was the first question of philosophy, because philosophy was meant to be founded on certainty, those who followed Husserl offered other modes of experience and language as starting-points for philosophical questioning.

Levinas’s argument that the striving for ontology and certainty both precluded and violated the experience of the other person could also take on a more sexually political significance. Irigaray, for example, argued that the tradition of Western metaphysics was an aiming at pure presence, where what is other than the self occurs only as a medium or occasion for thought to master its own processes of representation.29 What cannot be admitted, Irigaray insisted, is a thinking that would relate, not to material or substance available for representation, but

to another speaking and embodied being, who could never be presented as a complete object of knowledge. Irigaray therefore argued for distinct styles of writing, speaking, and conversing that would not be those of a self-present subject returning to her own represented truths, but of two embodied beings whose speech would be manifestly different or sexually marked. There would no longer be “a” language or formal system, whose single origin “we” might discover through processes of retrieval and interpretation. Instead, we would acknowledge the textual “scene” in which different voices and styles of speech and writing create distinct positions in relation to each other.

Kristeva, in her early work, also contrasted the “thetic” position of judgment, in which the world is presented as so much representable, conceptualizable, and linguistically mastered material (what she isolates as the “symbolic”), with a “semitic” position in which the world was not yet fully objectified and in which language was not yet a purely formal system but could be experienced as sound, rhythm, sonorous vibration, or nonsense. Kristeva’s early criticisms of Husserl were also, implicitly, critical of the deconstructive account of language.30 Derrida insisted that no pure experience or self-presence was possible, for any presence can be given only through a process of traces – something like “writing in general” – that would create the minimal distinctions required for language in a narrow sense. For Kristeva, however, these “traces” from which language systems emerged were founded on embodiment and relations.31 It may not be possible to have some pure position outside language, some pure grasp of a preedipal plenitude, but there is a stage between the absolute silence of infancy and the attainment of formal language structures. This “semitic” position is the stage when the infant makes articulated sounds, gasps, cries, and sonorous expressions that are not yet translatable or referential. This allows us to think of what Kristeva termed the “chora.” If there are systems of formal signs that allow us to think of ourselves as subjects in relation to the world, then such formal systems must also have a materiality. The chora is that spectrum of sound and matter from which distinct bodies and languages are generated.32 Kristeva argued that we could never, as rational subjects, simply step outside all difference and linguistic determination – this would be psychosis – but she did suggest that from within language we could experience moments of rupture or the intrusion of sound, rhythm, and musicality that intimated the far less formalized matters from which symbolic systems derive. This disruption of language by the sounds and rhythms of poetry and avant-garde literature would be both revolutionary,

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in its disturbance of systems, and incestuous in its flirtation with the maternal plenitude of nonmeaningful traces from which we have distinguished ourselves.

This notion of a point where subject and object, or human beings as speaking animals and the world as matter to be ordered, breaks down dominated critical responses to the phenomenological elevation of language as a system that gives meaning and order to the world. Perhaps one of the most important texts for the critique of both phenomenology’s and structuralism’s attention to language was Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1966), whose French title, *Les Mots et les choses*, pointed directly to the relations established between “Words and Things.” Here, Foucault argued that phenomenology’s attention to the founding acts of consciousness and structuralism’s insistence on the linguistic mediation of all life both assumed “man” as an “empirico-transcendental double.” That is, man was at once the effect of conditions within the world, for we become human and cultural through language and its historical developments, while at the same time, man was the being who could recognize himself as empirically conditioned. It was against this notion of man as the privileged point of convergence between worldly conditions and the intuition of those conditions that Foucault set another project of considering the “shining but crude being of language.” Rather than see language as the medium or condition through which consciousness is effected and retrieved, Foucault argued for a “positive” account of language, in which its “density” or “shining” would be considered. In other words, we should not see words either as simple labels that allow us to communicate conscious content nor as structurations or conditions of experience. On the contrary, what Foucault referred to as “discourse” has its own consistency and density. So, for example, while there is a discourse of sexuality that allows for the study of desires, pathologies, perversions, the libido and heterosexuality and homosexuality, discourse also facilitates the corporeal structuring of bodies in marriages, families, psychoanalytic sessions, brothels and schoolrooms. Neither formation is reducible to the other: experience is not structured by language and language is not a mirror or doubling of experience. Literary language in particular, Foucault argued, was not an expression or mediation of some unfolding human destiny, but demonstrated all the ways in which language operated with its own forces, resistances, and relations. Here, Foucault was both extending the Heideggerian notion of poetic language as being more than a mere supplement to consciousness, and taking part in a much broader turn to language less as a medium or paradigm and more as a disruptive force that consciousness could never master.

34. Ibid., 339.
Instead of the Husserlian notion that we order the world by experiencing it as meaningful and identifiable through time, and then have language as the embodiment or systematization of that lived sense, philosophers as diverse as Derrida, Irigaray, Kristeva, and Lyotard questioned the notion of a mind or consciousness that gives sense to the world through language. The world was not already present, awaiting the articulation of sense-bestowal through language. Instead, the opposition between self and other, mind and world, language and sense, or signifier and signified, harbored moments of undecidability. This was because underlying the difference between the system of signs and the world which that system presents and formalizes was a more general and ungraspable process of difference. A world can only be experienced as present, and the subject only understand itself as a subject, if some differentiation between mind and world, presence and absence, subject and object, or sign and sense has already been instituted. “Before” the presence of the world, then, there will have been a differentiation. The notion of an original presence, or an instituting structure or system of signs, must therefore be displaced by a more fundamental question of difference.

It is because experience is only possible through differences that there can be no prelinguistic presence to which consciousness might return. Therefore, a central feature of the linguistic turn as it pertains to continental philosophy is to regard the idea of language as a positive phenomenon that enables experience and that cannot (as Husserl would have it) be reduced to or founded on experience. This is why the experience of literature is so important, and why language cannot be seen – as structuralism would have it – as a system of signs that one might use or analyze without broader questions of sense or presence. What Derrida referred to as the “metaphysics of presence” – philosophy’s commitment to grounding language or any other system on an always presentable truth – is always open to deconstruction precisely because philosophy has had to rely on textual systems in order to posit its supposedly pretextual origin. Deconstruction or poststructuralism therefore posits a quite specific relation between philosophy and literature that differs from the less radical claims that one can attend to literary features in a philosophical text, or look at philosophy’s uses of language and metaphor. Having recognized that all our experience is linguistically mediated – that is, that there is no pure or prelinguistic reality – literature after the linguistic turn emerges as a practice that foregrounds the constitutive power of language. Literature and art would be modes of reflection, ways in which we remind ourselves that the world that appears before us as present is really a re-presented world, enabled by language and figures that literature can then intensify, refigure, or illuminate. But if it is the case that language is not a system or structure within which mind orients itself, but has a being or positivity of its own, then we would need to regard language not as flowing from
a speaking self, nor as some system that organizes the world, but as a force that disrupts or “silences” consciousness, sense, and presence.

This, indeed, is how many philosophers saw language. Maurice Blanchot (1907–2003), whose work on literature intersected with the work of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Bataille, and others, insisted on the silence and malevolence of language. Blanchot was at once a literary critic, a short story and fiction writer, and perhaps one of the most important figures for extending the notion of the limits of language beyond its structuralist and phenomenological themes of world-constitution. Blanchot’s understanding of the specificity of literary language was marked by three key themes: silence, space, and disaster.35 Whereas phenomenology and hermeneutics sought to read all language as the expression of an original intentionality or practical relation to the world, and often defined literature as the foregrounding of language as world-disclosive, Blanchot regarded literary language as distinct from speech, communication, representation, and meaning. In literature, language separates itself from a speaking subject; the author creates a literary work, but once created the work is poetic – a detached and distinct object. Literature therefore bears a silence at its heart, not only because there is no longer the presence of an author or speaker, but because words are placed into a space of their own, released from practical, instrumental, and communicative intent. The literary experience, for Blanchot, is in many respects beyond experience; for once we confront language as bearing its own being, which cannot be reduced to human usage or intent, then we are placed beyond knowledge, mastery, and meaning, and brought up against something that is at once radically alien to consciousness, and yet the only way in which consciousness can have any being. Blanchot did not, therefore, see literature as a way of bringing us back to the forming power of language; instead literature was a process of estrangement or alienation.

The ethical consequences of this separation or space of literature were spelled out in Blanchot’s notion of community. In contrast with hermeneutic or Habermasian ideas that we are necessarily oriented toward (ideal) agreement because we are linguistic beings subjected to communication, Blanchot regarded our situation within language as a form of common separation. Because we speak with one another we never have a world or “intersubjectivity” in common, and community is not some ground or context within which we speak and think. Instead, we are bound to each other through a language that is never our own, that has no underlying sense, and that can only signal a community-in-process,

or a “community without community,” a “coming community.” Language is not the effect of a speaking or intending subject but has its own material positivity or “shining” that cannot be seen as merely the expression or efflorescence of an intending conscious life. Involved with the surrealist movement, Blanchot’s work could be seen as a valorization and consecration of a specifically modernist notion of language. It is when language approaches the condition of sound or physicality (rather than semantic reference) that we see language in its own right, not as a medium through which we speak and intend, but as necessarily fragmented, or existing with a being of its own beyond our intent, reference or life. Rather than seeing literature as a way of referring back to language as a constitutive or constructive condition, Blanchot regards literary writing as in some respects sacrificial in its destruction of a stable, cognizing subject set over against the world. For this reason, literature – all literature and not just apocalyptic literature – is a premonition of disaster: not the destruction of this or that presupposition, but an annihilation of all the categories, systems, and frameworks that synthesize experience into a continuous order.

III. AFTER THE LINGUISTIC TURN

Recent theory has witnessed a return to life and living systems and has done so with the sense of having come to the end of the linguistic paradigm or linguistic turn. Manuel De Landa, in A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity, has insisted that we should examine bodies, both human and nonhuman, and their material milieux, and not privilege language or meaning-systems as the grounding forms of relation through which social life is constituted. Seeing himself as part of a broader movement that has overcome the linguistic paradigm, De Landa is indicative of a postlinguistic approach to philosophy and literature. Two broad trends that began in the late 1960s and 1970s might be considered in order to understand this recent shift: the theorization of the body – largely associated with feminist thought – and a new form of vitalism and turn to “life” (the “affective turn”37) – largely associated with the work of Deleuze.

In philosophy, Evan Thompson has used the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to argue for enactive, embodied, dynamic, and distributed modes of

37. There has been a much hailed “affective turn,” critical of the supposedly linguistic nature of Derridean poststructuralism and Derrida’s criticism of auto-affection. See, for example, the essays in Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (eds), The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
cognition in *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Cognitive scientists Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana had, decades ago, criticized the notion of mind as bearing a representational relation to the world, insisting that the organism’s world is always given meaningfully as a range of potential responses to quite specific perturbations.\footnote{See Francisco J. Varela and Humberto Maturana, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston, MA: New Science Library, 1987).} Cognitive science has also been critical of Cartesian “top-down” or informational notions of cognition, drawing on the work of Heidegger to insist on the primacy of engagement and being-in-the-world, with cognition being an abstraction from an initially coupled mind–body relation.\footnote{See, for example, Michael Wheeler, *Reconstructing the Cognitive World: The Next Step* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).} In turn, philosophers have re-read Heidegger, through cognitive science, to argue for new theories of mind and cognition as extended, distributed, enactive, and dynamic.\footnote{See Andy Clark, *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).} Philosophy of science now regards the development of nonlinear systems theory as enabling a new alliance between human organisms and nature that would be more attuned to nature's own duration, rather than imposing a single Cartesian system.\footnote{See Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man’s New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam, 1984). [\*] For a discussion of Prigogine and Stengers’s work, see the essay by Dorothea Olkowski in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.} This turn back to life, deemed to be a correction to the overly linguistic nature of philosophy, has been preceded by a decade or more of feminist theorizing that had long been critical of structuralist and poststructuralist inattention to the body.

“Corporeal feminism” has a long history in continental philosophy, going back to Irigaray’s criticism of the supposedly disembodied subject who represents the world as mere matter for his own self-understanding, and even further back to Simone de Beauvoir’s claim, in *The Second Sex*, that while men might experience themselves as subjects who have no essence other than their freedom or capacity to negate existing being, women are more mired in their factical being. It is in the 1980s, however, following the perceived domination of continental philosophy by language-based approaches, that embodiment becomes a much more intense and complex issue. Phenomenology had always paid attention to the body, most notably with Merleau-Ponty\footnote{For a detailed discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the embodied subject, see the essay by Mauro Carbone in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*. See also the essay by Sara Heinämaa in this volume for a discussion of the legacy of phenomenology within French feminist philosophy.} insisting that one only has a world because there is an initially embodied (and not yet fully conceptualized) comportment toward what is not oneself, with this otherness from oneself
alway being given in relation to corporeal capacities. Moving beyond the perspective of Merleau-Ponty, the new sense of the body that starts to operate critically in continental philosophy from the 1980s onward is inflected by, and responds to, the problem of language. It is neither the case that there is a bodily comportment on which language is founded, nor that there is a language that then constructs or enables a sense of one’s body. Indeed, the idea that there are physical bodies on the one hand, and a constructing language or culture on the other, merely repeats the mind–body split that poststructuralist approaches to language had set out to undermine.

In contrast, a new way of thinking about the body has emerged in which the body is understood not simply as matter that is imprinted by mind or language but is always experienced both through the ways in which we apprehend other bodies (in sight and touch) and through the image we have of our own corporeality (again both in sight and touch). This led to a theorization of the Imaginary, and the related problem of morphology. Feminist thinkers such as Irigaray took up the concept of the Imaginary as it was first articulated by Jacques Lacan, for whom our production within language as subjects was supplemented by the image of a unified body that grants an imaginary illusion of unity. For Irigaray, though, this Imaginary is sexualized: that is, it is not just “a” unity or body-image that gives us a sense of self in addition to our constitution as subjects within language or the Symbolic. Our sense of ourselves is also inflected by the morphology of our bodies. That is to say, our image of our own bodies is never the apprehension of a simple object but takes on a certain form inflected by our sexuality, our social, cultural, and historical sense of our physical being. This means that the body is never a brute thing, nor a simple medium through which we act, but bears a certain morphology: to refer to corporeal morphology is to see the body as shaped by, and shaping, our visual, tactile, and spatial relation to the world.

For Irigaray, then, there are at least two, sexually different, relations between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Lacan already had two formulae for sexual difference. The masculine subject is subjected to the symbolic order and therefore posits that there must be a prohibited object, which he is denied, that exists beyond the realm of represented desires, an unthinkable “woman” who would be

44. This point is discussed by, among other thinkers, Rosi Braidotti in *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, Elizabeth Guild (trans.) (New York: Routledge, 1991), and Elizabeth A. Grosz in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

*45. For a more detailed discussion of the Imaginary and Symbolic, see the essay on Lacan by Ed Pluth in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. 
different from the women to whom he has access. The feminine, by contrast, is imagined as one who is not subjected to the threat of castration, who is somehow outside the symbolic order, incapable of true speech. Thus Lacan argued that “woman does not exist,” and that the path to psychoanalytic authenticity was to “imagine there is no woman.” Now it is against this notion of either/or – either you are subjected to the law of the Symbolic or you remain mired in the shadowy identifications of the Imaginary – that Irigaray suggested an ethics of sexual difference. The Imaginary, or the way in which we figure our own body’s relation to the symbolic order and that is inflected by the body’s sexual morphology, may take the masculine form of imagining a feminine “beyond” that is always prohibited. Alternatively, if one speaks as a woman, one does not imagine what is other than the symbolic order as that which cannot be touched or addressed; sexual relations would be oriented to an other’s body, to a different mode of relations or morphology. The masculine subject regards himself as nothing other than a being who represents a world of passive and undifferentiated matter through language; he is a single and unified “I” for whom all otherness is a mere medium through which he understands, knows, and commands himself. The other sex that has never been represented explicitly in philosophy can be read in all the figures of the medium, matter, matrix, ground, or reflective surface through which “the” (always male) subject presents himself. The female morphology, for Irigaray, is thus not that of a unified, self-present, and self-constituting “I” but a relational, dispersed, and touching (rather than seeing or cognizing) body.

For both the phenomenological emphasis on the lived body as articulated by Merleau-Ponty and for the feminists of sexual difference, language is not the ultimate determinant, or even limit, of experience. Instead, certain bodies have a comportment or relation to the world, and even though this experience takes place in a world of language, cultural expectation, social convention, and history, corporeality has a positive and effective role. This is to say, as Moira Gatens argues in *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*, the body is not just a site of cultural inscription, nor something that we can only grasp after the event of, or as effected by, language. One of the simplest ways to consider the body positively, and as having a constitutive (rather than determined) relation to language, is through sexual difference. If philosophy has tended to figure all thought as taking place through a mind that is contingently housed in a body, and has also tended to regard that mind as a calculating, re-presenting and disengaged actor, this is perhaps because other types of bodies – those that give birth and are not fully detached from the claims of another’s body (to take just one possibility) – have not been considered by philosophers.

The Cartesian distinction between mind and body, which has been influential within feminist theory and its distinction between sex (biology) and gender (culture), can itself be seen to be gendered. To argue that there is a
brute biological sex that is then overlaid or mediated by cultural systems of gender maintains a dualism between disembodied/active mind and passive matter that has also been associated with a masculine reason on the one hand, and an embodied irrational femininity on the other. According to Genevieve Lloyd, there is nothing intrinsically feminine about embodiment nor masculine about reason, but the history of philosophy’s various definitions of reason have always aligned rationality with qualities associated with male identity; even when reason is expanded to include the passions or a moral sense, it is usually the male subject who is taken as the exemplar of this defining capacity. For both Lloyd and Gatens, then, we should not confine attention to language as the structuring symbolic capacity that then “constructs” the way we perceive bodies; for our bodily perceptions, actions, and affections and the way we understand the body’s relation to language vary historically and culturally. The idea of language, then, as “a” system that allows us to understand the world is once again criticized. This is not only because language is seen itself to have a body or materiality that cannot be reduced to the pure act of a mind that wishes to re-present itself, as Judith Butler argues in Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”, but is also because the border between self and sign, or body and speaking subject, is itself a bodily relation.

It is this embodied or intense experience of physical sound that becomes increasingly important as continental philosophy focuses more and more on language in relation to living systems and the dynamism of bodies. Key to this movement away from language as a formal system, or even language as bearing a power or force that can shine with its own light in literature, was the increased interest in the philosophy of Deleuze. Deleuze’s work has been hailed (and condemned) as a new vitalism: as an overcoming of a linguistic paradigm that has limited thinking, and as an almost mystical turn to vital forces that go beyond the actual world as it is known and lived. Like Derrida, Deleuze had

48. This was the case for Kristeva, who argued that before language operates as a pure system of signs, it is experienced by infants as a form of physical noise. This “semiotic,” rather than symbolic, experience of language is evident as well in literary texts. The great modernist writers, such as Joyce or Celine, destroy language as a form of communication and signification and allow it to appear as sonorous, intense, and haptic, as the feeling and vibration of sound.
also completed work on language and the phenomenology of Husserl. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze takes up the two Husserlian tasks of a dynamic genesis – whereby we trace the emergence of meaning from bodies and their relations – and static genesis, where we recognize that any emergence of meaning *through time* also relies on potentials that have a virtual existence that is fully real and does not exist within time but allows for the coming and going of time. Deleuze always maintained an interest in the genesis, not only of language and formal systems, but of systems in general. This would include the living system of the human body as an organism, and the systems of the social world and its disciplines. One of Deleuze and Guattari’s most significant maneuvers in relation to the linguistic paradigm was the rejection of the form–matter distinction in favor of the relation between form of content and form of expression. Unlike the usual notion of language (as form) that organizes the world (as matter), Deleuze and Guattari refused to grant any privilege to language, regarding language as one system among others, and one form of sign among others. We can begin to understand this maneuver by considering “form of expression” and “form of content” in relation to language narrowly construed. If it is possible, drawing on Foucault’s example from *Discipline and Punish*, to have the judicial language of the courts that refers to criminals, delinquents, sentences, and intentions, this is because of both a form of expression – all the meanings that make up the language of the legal system – and a form of content – for example, the human bodies and physical structures as they are arranged and arrange themselves in courtrooms and prisons. There is also a matter of expression – for legal language appears as vocal sounds and written tokens – and a matter of content – the physical bodies, machines, buildings, and technical apparatuses that enter into relation to constitute the form of the prison/legal system.

Instead of a formless and undifferentiated world that is then “divided up” by a structuring language, Deleuze refers to a process of “formed matters” that has at least two key features: language and world exist in reciprocal interaction (one does not cause the other); and language is not the only, or even most important system of relations. First, language is not a system that is detached from the world or imposed on the world, for the signs of a language – both the verbal sounds and marks of a language and the bodily inflections and expression – occur through processes of stratification. That is to say, matters or bodies have to enter into various forms of relation, thus creating a relatively stable order that can then be expressed by either a language or some other system. We could,

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52. This is discussed in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 75–110.
for example, see the affective signs of the body – blushing, grimacing, frowning, smiling – as expressions of the body’s visceral system. We could in turn see that visceral system as an expression or sign of the body’s genetic-biological tendencies. In any network of relations, one side of the stratification is expressive, not simply remaining within itself but presenting a gesture, sign, or surface that can enter into relation with another system. For example, a body’s metabolic relations can express themselves in feelings, which can then be (in turn) expressed as bodily movements. The other side of the strata faces the organized or formed matters, which can also enter into relations with other systems; for example, if my bodily affective system encounters a virus, or a neurological disorder, then the form of content (a body’s response system) might yield a new form of expression (a body that could no longer speak would require some new system of expression). Thus Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of stratification allows us to see language as one regime of signs among others, and as being the expression of other relations and systems.

Deleuze’s and Guattari’s attention to form of expression (the relations among gestures, linguistic signs, facial expressions, and symbols) and form of content (the way a body and its affects relate to other bodies) demotes language from the place it held following the linguistic turn, as language can no longer be seen as the sole medium that organizes the difference and sense of life. Despite this rejection of language as the limit and ground of meaning, Deleuze regards language as one of those points where the distinction between form of expression and form of content breaks down, and he sees this as potentially revolutionary. This is because, as he theorizes with Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, life is composed of various stratifications between form of expression and form of content. In the geological stratum, for example, the content of formed matters can be expressed in various shapes of crystal; in the organic stratum, the genetic code allows for expressions that move to different formed matters (as in cases of transduction when a virus can carry genetic expression across species); in the human stratum, it is language that allows for a higher degree of deterritorialization or *translation*, so that quite different forms of content – different languages, visual materials, music, gestures – can variously express the same content. For Deleuze this means both that language is one form of expression among others, and that what language expresses – a sense detached from any specific matter – is not reducible to language.

Earlier, in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze addressed this distinction in terms of language having one side turned toward the sense it expresses – where sense would be an incorporeal event between bodies and signs – and another side that is corporeal. Thus language is corporeal in the matter of sounds and signs

and in the states of affairs it refers to, for there are material differences among
the phonemes and marks of a language, and among the relations of bodies to
which it refers. But there is also an incorporeal dimension to both expression
and content, for the material sounds of language express a sense, as do the rela-
tions among bodies. There is no one-to-one correspondence between formed
matters (content) and the incorporeal plane of sense and expression, but the
two act in a relation of reciprocal determination. So, for example, a knife that
encounters flesh is a corporeal encounter between two bodies (blade and flesh),
but the sense of “cut” or “wound” is incorporeal and expresses an event, or what
has happened. Sense, for Deleuze, is not simply meaning – or what the words
and concepts of a language designate; sense is also tied to the event.

The corporeal world is a world of chronological time, so that bodies can
enter into relations and sounds and marks on a page can be formed, and pass
away. The incorporeal event is tied to time as *Aion*, so that the sense of “to cut”
expresses a potentiality that is actualized within time in this specific encounter
of flesh and blade, but could also occur in other times. The time of *Aion* is rad-
ically temporal: we can see clock time as a series of “nows,” as a series of move-
ments (hands on a clock, the discernible passage from day to night), but such
a time as a spatialized series is possible only because of time as *Aion*. Deleuze
ties this time to the infinitive: “to cut,” “to green,” “to think.” It is only possible
to have this world of subjects and predicates, or the chronological time where
changes and accidents occur to underlying stable subjects, because there is a
power to differ, or to become, which is captured by certain modes of language,
such as the infinitive where qualities are liberated from underlying stabilities.
To think of time as *Aion* is to consider becoming not as the alteration of some
being but all being as nothing other than becoming. This, in turn, leads Deleuze
to consider language not as the constitution or organization of an otherwise
undifferentiated matter, but as a production of sense: the infinitive allows us to
think not of objects located within time, but as potentialities that at any time
whatever (for all time, eternally) produce variation and creation. Language is
thus tied to the event not because language produces change but because the
thought of change is itself one of life’s always present (or eternal) powers of
becoming.

This understanding of the incorporeal nature of the event and the way in
which language as material can have an immaterial effect on bodies has politi-
cal implications. Paul Patton, for example, has made this point in relation to
the event of colonization. Long referred to as a “discovery,” the English inva-
sion of Australia deployed a form of speaking that precluded granting existence
to indigenous peoples. All this would change, of course, if we were to recog-
nize the entrance of the fleet as an invasion and were to consider other senses
– those given in Aboriginal languages – of the land now known as Australia.
When European bodies entered Australia and described the land as “terra nullius” (nobody’s land), there was a material relation of bodies. The incorporeal event of sense occurred when the indigenous peoples of Australia were now subordinated and not recognized as human or political agents because of a statement that expressed (and reciprocally acted on) relations of bodies.54

The word that enables the incorporeal event of sense to act on bodies also has a body of its own: the physical being of language that Deleuze frequently refers to as having the power of deterritorialization. When language “stutters” or when it is undecidably poised between being a sound that is heard as sonorous vibrating matter, or a sign that is the expression of a world of formed matters, we reach a point of “higher deterritorialization.”55 That is, it is not just the case that the sounds and movements of the body operate to express a system of meanings; with literary language we experience a language in its power of destroying the stratification between speaking body and expressed world. We are no longer placed before language as organized beings who re-present the world through signs. Instead, we experience the world or life in a relation of becoming: not the becoming of this or that form or matter, but the becoming of life into formed matters. Following Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari argue for what they refer to as a “passive” vitalism: this is not a life force that strives to maintain itself, for life is a power to create difference without any sense or intent that would direct that creativity.56 On the one hand, then, Deleuze’s philosophy, with its emphasis on one immanent life that expresses itself through various systems of formed matters, demotes language from its position of organizing structure. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari regard the idea of “the signifier” as despotic, precisely because it maintains a notion of “a” system of relations through which matter is organized.57 In opposition to this linguisticism, they regard life as a potentiality for forming relations, with matter being the points of relative stability effected through systems of relation and interaction. On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari also focus on deterritorializing moments of systems when the stabilization of relations or formed matters breaks down. Literature, with its tendency to treat language not as the sign of some external sense but as sonorous material, allows the matter or body of language itself to vibrate, thereby liberating us from the notion of a humanity who takes up language as some distinct tool.

57. See Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 117.
In many ways the idea that Deleuze and Guattari are theorists who take us beyond the “linguistic turn” and allow us to turn back to life without the mediation of language precludes us from understanding the full significance and complexity of the idea of language as it operated in twentieth-century continental philosophy. Many Deleuze scholars regard Derrida as a primarily critical philosopher concerned with the limits of language, while Deleuze allows us to think of the emergence of language.58 Derrida’s deconstruction of the speech/writing opposition was, however, not an argument that one can only have speech or expression if there is some system of differences or writing. Rather, all the features that are deemed to characterize writing, especially its technical, systemic, and nonliving materiality, already invade the supposedly living and self-present speaking subject. Deleuze and Guattari’s idea that the “signifier” is not the only system of differences, and that every organism is composed of living systems that are not subordinated to some central and conscious subject, is therefore not a movement beyond language and difference so much as an extension of the features of language to all life. Their “molecular revolution,” which would pay attention to differences, relations, and expressions that are not those of humanity and subjectivity, is therefore an extension and radicalization of the linguistic turn.

In this respect the current movements in philosophy, both analytic and continental, that see themselves as moving away from language-centered approaches back to the lived body of phenomenology could benefit from the critical approaches of poststructuralism that would not confine difference and relations to language systems. Theories of the “embodied mind,” the “extended mind,” or the “mind in life”59 have all argued that before language and cognition there are action-oriented and affectively attuned bodies, for whom language and cognition are subsequent and not constitutive features. Such approaches have turned to Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger to criticize logic-centered and language-centered notions of intelligence, but they have done so by paying less attention to the ways in which both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger and the poststructuralists who followed them located systems of difference that were not intentional or organic at the heart of the lived body. The linguistic turn cannot simply be seen as a turn to language as some ultimate explanatory condition or medium, but is more appropriately understood as a problematization of the


self-containment of language. Indeed, as more recent work within the continental tradition has sought to demonstrate, the turn from language back to the embodied mind can already discern in the brain and its differential systems all those features of language – such as distribution, deferral, and nonpresence – that were once deemed to characterize the system of signifiers.\(^6\)

The relationship between psychoanalysis and philosophy has been fraught with structural contradictions and historical tensions from its very inception. The emphasis placed by Freud on the unconscious as a fundamental aspect of human cognition and understanding, as well as his appraisal of sexuality and desire as vital forces in the constitution of both the subject and of human culture – or civilization – is unsettling for philosophers. The discipline of philosophy and the psychoanalytic theory and practice of the unconscious as a fundamental structure of the subject have historically developed as parallel but divergent discourses that never quite came to a common focus.

Part of the difficulty resides with the vicissitudes of modern history, notably the Second World War and the Cold War that followed. The history of psychoanalysis is deeply caught up in these events and, in particular, with phenomena such as fascism, Nazism, and the extermination of the European Jews. This historical fact needs to be stressed in view of the amnesia – and the revisionist simplification – that struck postindustrial societies after 1989. The genocide of so many Jewish Europeans also marked a moral and intellectual suicide for Europe, insofar as it resulted in the departure of some of the best and the brightest scholars, scientists, artists, filmmakers, and thinkers, including Freud himself and the founding members of the first Psychoanalytic Society, all of whom, except Carl Jung, were Jewish.

Postwar Europe, consequently, was deprived of those very schools of thought – notably psychoanalysis and Marxism – that had been the strength

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*1. For a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see Braidotti’s essay on European Citizenship in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
of critical theory in the earlier part of the century. It is in the context of such discontinuities in the transmission of the psychoanalytic legacy and a politically polarized world order that the roads of renewed European interest in critical theory in the 1960s and 1970s lead to France. That it should have been France that acted as the motor for the regeneration of the continental tradition of critical philosophy\(^2\) has a great deal to do not only with the difficulties of Germany and eastern Europe dealing with its anti-Semitic recent past, but also with the high moral stature of France at the end of the Second World War. The role of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in this regard is crucial, as is their connection to anticolonial philosophers such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon.

The philosophical movement of poststructuralism, however, is primarily responsible for the return of psychoanalysis into France and Europe.\(^3\) Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan in the late 1960s heralded a “return” to the materialist roots of continental philosophy, via Marxism\(^4\) and psychoanalysis. It was not a straightforward return, of course, but rather a more complex phenomenon of rediscovering the fundamental texts of Marx and Freud by reading them independently of the official interpretations imposed respectively by the Communist Parties and the International Psychoanalytic Association. This rebellion against the official guardians of the radical texts and their dogmatic attitude coincided also with a change of generations. Also important here is the historical context of the Algerian anticolonial war and the political and social turmoil that surrounded it, which marked the political coming of age of a generation that had grown up in the long shadow of post-Second World War European guilt and that was determined to break the conspiracy of silence.\(^5\)

Psychoanalytic theory is, in many respects, at the core of these developments and the new historical conditions could not fail to affect the ways in which psychoanalysis impacts on the intellectual debates. In some ways poststructuralism writes a new chapter in the long dialogue between Marxism and psychoanalysis and in so doing moves beyond the starting premises of both

\(^2\) Other schools contributed, although to a lesser degree: the postwar Frankfurt School; the Yugoslav schools of Marxism and especially the Dubrovnik school of critical theory; and the southern European traditions, especially the Italian and the Spanish Marxist schools.

\(^3\) It is significant, for instance, that most of the authors who Foucault singled out as heralding the philosophical era of critical modernity (Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Darwin) are the same authors who, with the exception of Nietzsche, the Nazis condemned.

\(^4\) For a discussion of Marx and Marxism, see the essay by Terrell Carver in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*.

movements. The question of desire and unconscious identifications and counter-identifications – which is one of the fundamental principles of psychoanalysis – becomes linked directly to the political and ethical concerns for the responsibility of European philosophy in the making of fascism as well as colonialism. This led to an extensive interrogation of the role of European “high” culture in its own and other peoples’ destruction. Whereas the existentialist generation had conceptually sided with rationalism, the poststructuralists take much more seriously the effects and dynamics of the unconscious. They consequently raise a twofold line of inquiry: first on the limitations of reason as a self-correcting instrument of human liberation; second on the extent to which desire actually shapes the social field, which places the social imaginary and the political unconscious at the center of the agenda.

Lacan famously reconceptualizes the unconscious processes in terms of linguistic mediation. He also connects these processes more firmly, however, to the political economy of power and of symbolic domination that is prevalent in a social order organized around the principle of the paternal metaphor, and thus of a phallocentric symbolic system. In so doing, Lacan triggered a series of polemical debates in the centuries-old discussions of traditional philosophical questions to do with the structure of the social contract, the symbolic structures of social cohesion, the sources of knowledge, the political function of metaphor, and the nature of thought and the mind in structuring both subjectivity and power.

The role of desire as a political factor that constructs the social field is highlighted in the contexts of the events of May 1968 and reaches a peak in Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the “micro-fascist” structure of the European subject of knowledge. They raise with equal importance the question of the role of philosophy, science, and intellectual production in paving the road for domination, rationalizing its necessity, and banalizing its consequences. If desire is intrinsically political, it follows that politics begins with our desires. This axiom positions psychoanalysis as a crucial link in philosophical debates about democracy, the state, and the possibility of political resistance.

This essay starts from these premises and explores some of their implications for philosophy. In what follows, we survey some of the most provocative and productive discursive intersections between philosophy and the psychoanalytic tradition in the 1960s through the 1980s in an effort to demonstrate the vitality but also the complexity of philosophical engagements with psychoanalysis in the continental tradition.

*6. For a detailed discussion of Lacan, see the essay by Ed Pluth in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*. 
I. THE FREUDIAN EPISTEMOLOGICAL BREAK

Freud stated as the fundamental premises of his psychoanalytic revolution the concept of the unconscious and the redefinition of sexuality as libido. He also introduces a powerful revision of social theory in the so-called metapsychological papers, and calls into question the accepted vision of the subject as coinciding with his/her conscious, rational self. This de jure and de facto equation between subjectivity and consciousness, also known as “conscientialism,” is opposed almost structurally to the psychoanalytic insight that declares the subject as an effect of his or her unconscious structures and desires. Freud, however, was particularly cautious in stating the theoretical impact and ambitions of the new “science” of psychoanalysis. He does draw an analogy between philosophy, or at least metaphysics, and religion, but only in order to stress the delusional aspects of rationality, which nurture an illusion of omnipotence and totalizing unity on the part of the subject. Freud is also careful to point out that, by contrast, psychoanalysis is less about producing a counter-theory of the subject than revealing the subject’s structural incapacity to be the master in his own house. Freud thus relegates consciousness to a place and a status that is vital, but not determinant or central; that central place is reserved for the unconscious drives. The aim of Freudian psychoanalysis is to drive home this unwelcome truth and to supplement the theories of the subject with the discovery of the unconscious. The metapsychology phase produces a powerful analysis of the sexual origins of the social contract, to which we will return below.

The relatively humble relationship Freud had established between his empirical findings and the theoretical claims of psychoanalysis gets redefined in a radical manner in France throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. Lacan’s central thesis that the Unconscious is “structured like a language” indexed the constitution of the subject to a structuralist principle of signification. The primacy of the master signifier – the Phallus – is reiterated as the fundamental law of representation of and by the subject of the desire that constructs this subject while escaping its control. Lacan’s ambition, explicitly stated as the desire to

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*7. For a discussion of Freud’s work and its subsequent influence on various philosophical movements, see the essay by Adrian Johnston in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3.
8. These include Totem and Taboo (1913), The Future of an Illusion (1927), Civilization and its Discontents (1930), and Moses and Monotheism (1939).
turn psychoanalysis into the new philosophy of the subject,\textsuperscript{11} alters the terms of the relationship between empirical practice and theoretical production, although not always for the better. In the context of the French poststructuralists’ rereadings of the status of the philosophical subject, about which more below, psychoanalysis contributes significantly toward debunking the pretensions of phallo-logocentrism that, according to Lacan, have sustained the subject since its Platonic beginnings. The “death of Man,” or “crisis of the subject,” indicates a serious decline of the self-evidence of the phallic metaphor and hence of paternal authority, for the philosophy of modernity. Psychoanalysis functions in this context as the discourse of the crisis of reason \textit{par excellence}. It targets philosophy as its favorite discourse because this master discipline has historically played the role of upholding a hierarchical systematization of human knowledge, norms, and values. Thus, Lacan, on the one hand, continues to pursue Freud’s insight that philosophy, as the emanation of this spirit of mastery, is delusional; but on the other, he also radicalizes the Freudian project by targeting philosophy as the discipline that most needs to undergo serious psychoanalytic criticism. In this respect, Lacan’s much-celebrated “return” to Freud is anything but a loyal continuation of the founding principles of psychoanalysis.

The central psychoanalytic notion is the corporeal roots of human subjectivity, plus the dynamic interaction that the unconscious guarantees between mind and body and the extent to which they alter the terms of philosophical discourse and practice. The revaluation of the feminine, which is central to Lacan’s project, is also an effect of the psychoanalytic exposure of the malaise that affects the masculine social and symbolic order, upheld by and as the Law of the Father or the Phallic symbolic. Lacanian psychoanalysis positions very centrally the idea of the necessity of replacing the unitary vision of the subject with a split or nonunitary vision. The fracture is introduced by the instance of the unconscious, which makes it imperative to move away from the transcendent or religious vision of consciousness by integrating the insights, the methods, and the ethics of psychoanalysis. Lacan thinks, however, that as the expression of the phallocentric symbolic system and discourse \textit{par excellence}, philosophy is incapable of including the dimension of the unconscious, except as its dialectical opposite within the same logocentric logic. This structural incapacity to become decentered is the tragedy of philosophy and the reason for its necessary downfall. As a radical misunderstanding of the subject, philosophy is locked in an either-or logic of exclusion of the very unconscious forces that

sustain it.12 Where the rationalist ego used to rule, the unconscious id is the subject to come.

II. THE HEGELIAN LEGACY

There is no mistaking the persistence of Hegel's influence in Lacan's thought.13 The Hegelian legacy within psychoanalysis rests on a number of interlocked concepts that constitute the core of the psychoanalytic theory of desire. We could sum them up by saying that it concentrates on desire as lack. This entails a negative notion of the mechanisms of desire, which is oppositional in the sense that it works by binary polarizations, be it masculine/feminine, young/old, active/passive, black/white, or whatever. This binary model of thinking moreover fuels an oppositional logic of confrontation that de facto establishes a hierarchical relationship between the terms involved in the dyad. Thus, we have simultaneously a theory about the mutual attraction of the sexual opposites and of their complementarity: we desire the sexual other because through that otherness fulfillment can be reached. Opposites therefore attract and fulfill each other, but also struggle to the bitter end for the upper hand in asserting the terms of their desire. This oppositional view supports the Hegelian dialectics of consciousness and inscribes it as the core of unconscious life. Hence Lacan's claim that “I is another,”14 which both indicates the relation of the ego to the unconscious and demonstrates his Hegelianism. The corollary of this conceptual move is that the point of desire is posited as the suppression of the longing for the object that had triggered it in the first place: the drive gets fulfilled by reaching its aim. This entropic theory of desire is central to Freud's theory of the death drive and it inscribes a logic of loss and self-extinction at the heart of the subject. Thinkers such as Georges Bataille15 and Maurice Blanchot will subsequently explore this paradox further, in a philosophy of excess and boundary-transgression that captures perfectly the entropy of desire and its bond to death.16

12. That Lacan has reason to come to this conclusion is evidenced by Sartre's rejection of the unconscious in his famous discussion of Bad Faith in chapter 2 of Being and Nothingness.
13. Lacan attended, and was influenced by, Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Haute Études, which ran from 1933 to 1939.
*15. For a discussion of Bataille, see the essay by Peter Tracy Connor in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
16. The degree to which an exploration of the logic of excess and transgression runs throughout their writings explains, in part, the affinity Foucault felt toward the work of both Bataille and Blanchot.
The second element of Hegel’s philosophy to enter this discussion, notably through Lacan’s complex relationship to the French Hegelians—and especially Alexandre Kojève—is the isomorphism between psychic and social life. This assumes that the structures of the individual psyche are structurally infused by the same forces as the social effects that constitute the social order and regulate its functions. These involve the deployment of desire as lack and hence they locate an oppositional logic at the core of the contractual system that constitutes the social order. There is consequently a Hegelian legacy in the emphasis that is placed on structural violence as one of the forces that fuels the constitution of the social system. Central to this structural violence is the sacrificial ontology that positions the bodies of women as the object of exchange among warring males and hence as the holders of the keys to social peace. The metapsychological phase of Freud’s work is central to this aspect of a social theory that stresses the productive nature of violence and hence also its inevitability. Psychoanalysis radicalizes the Hegelian dialectical scheme by gendering it: the violence accomplished by the primitive horde against the archaic father is masculine, whereas the pacifying eroticized bodies that seal the social contract are female. A sacrificial ontology is consequently discovered at the heart of the social contract, which founds political authority on ritualized violence, symbolic murder, and interiorized guilt. This political economy of violence also instills the need for mourning and melancholia as binding factors in a community fraught with internal psychic fractures. Both the emphasis on hostility and violence and the sexualization of the opposition are crucial elements in the political theory of intersubjectivity introduced by psychoanalysis.


19. The persistence of this Hegelian legacy in the political theory of psychoanalysis can be detected today in the thought of post-Lacanian thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek, who implements Lacanian views of the signifier in studies of cultural production and the power of transference as a factor in social formations. The ethical philosophy of less belligerent psychoanalytic philosophers such as Étienne Balibar contest the negativity of this legacy when he refers to the social repercussions of unconscious processes in terms of “the other scene” of the political; see Étienne Balibar, Politics and the Other Scene (London: Verso, 2002). The limitations and flawed nature of the logic of sacrifice in Freud’s thought is central to the social...
As Lacan’s thought and practice became more authoritarian with the passing of time – witness the expulsion of Irigaray in 1974 from the school Lacan founded and directed and later the careful selection and editing of his seminars by his heir and son-in-law Jacques Alain-Miller – the resistance to his methods grew even in France, where Lacan himself enjoyed star status.20 Michel Foucault’s early work on the history of sexuality can be read as an oblique but consistent critique of the Lacanian premises that desire in our culture has to be subjected to the Law of the Father or master signifier. Foucault’s attempt to think sexuality outside the dominion of the Phallus, and outside the domain of Hegel, results in a renewed emphasis on the importance of pleasure – rather than desire.21 It also produced the radical moment in Foucault’s thought – his call for making an end to the sovereignty of sexuality and for debunking the notion that there can be such a thing as sexual liberation by the minorities: women, gays, and other “deviants.” This anti-sex liberation moment of Foucault’s thought – which included a critique of the Frankfurt School’s emphasis on the theory of repression – was partially obscured in the transatlantic appropriation of Foucault’s work as the inspiration for queer theory.22 More recently, however, this aspect has resurfaced23 and is casting an interesting new light on what can only be described as a perverse relationship between the Foucaultian project and the Lacanian corpus.

The most consistent and explicit philosophical critique of Lacan, and his underlying Hegelianism, is found in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who challenged both Lacan’s understanding of desire as lack, which designated the function of desire “as manque-à-être, a ‘want-to-be,’” and his theory of Giorgio Agamben (see Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, Daniel Heller-Roazen [trans.] [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998]), and also to Jean-Luc Nancy’s critique of Bataille’s re-elaborations of Freud, to which he opposes the binding force of love and friendship in The Inoperative Community, Peter Connor (ed.), Peter Connor et al. (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).


21. See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction, Robert Hurley (trans.) (New York: Vintage, 1980). See also Gilles Deleuze, “Desire and Pleasure,” Lysa Hochroth (trans.), in Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995, David Lapoujade (ed.) (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006). This “text” was actually a series of notes that Deleuze wrote in response to the publication of Foucault’s first volume of The History of Sexuality, which Deleuze asked François Ewald to deliver to Foucault, and in which he outlines his reasons for preferring the conceptual domain of desire over pleasure.


definition of psychoanalysis itself as being “engaged in the central lack in which the subject experiences himself as desire.”24 They put in its place an account of desire as productive that drew not on Hegel but on Spinoza’s conatus and Nietzsche’s will to power. Deleuze’s highly effective reframing of desire as plenitude in his own philosophy critiques the emphasis on the Phallus as a specific historical formation and aims to move beyond it.25 We will return to this below.

III. DERRIDA: DECONSTRUCTING THE MASTER SIGNIFIER

Of all the poststructuralists, Jacques Derrida is the one who entertains the longest and most fruitful dialogue with Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, in what can only be described as an intense and lifelong relationship to psychoanalysis.26 Derrida shares with his generation a deep-seated anti-Cartesianism, which by extension allows him to engage productively with the psychoanalytic criticism of rationalist assumptions in the exercise of philosophical reason. As a consequence, Derrida stresses quite subtly the proximity between the discourses of philosophy and psychoanalysis, as evidenced by their respective emphasis on the same kinds of human experience: desire, emotions, sexuality, life, death, suffering, and ethical relations with the world, culture, and society.

Although Derrida’s thought builds on the split subject introduced by psychoanalysis, he also operates a number of disjunctions. First, Derrida approaches the corpus of psychoanalytic texts as an archive in its own right.27 This removes

24. Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), Alan Sheridan (trans.) (New York: Norton, 1978), 29, 265. It is interesting to note that, for all their differences, Lacan’s position here is very close to Sartre’s, who was also influenced by Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel, and who identifies freedom, consciousness, and being-for-itself with desire as lack: “The for-itself is defined ontologically as the lack of being, and possibility belongs to the for-itself as that which it lacks … The for-itself chooses because it is lack; freedom is really synonymous with lack. Freedom is the concrete mode of being of the lack of being. … Fundamentally man is the desire to be, and the existence of this desire is not to be established by an empirical induction; it is the result of an a priori description of the being of the for-itself, since desire is a lack and since the for-itself is the being which is to itself its own lack of being” (Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, Hazel E. Barnes [trans.] [New York: Philosophical Library, 1956], 565).
25. Foucault was similarly, and explicitly, critical of institutionalized psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Like Deleuze, Foucault was heavily influenced by Nietzsche (who influenced Freud as well), and while he adhered to a (post)structuralism that was familiar with the Lacanian extension of signification to the subject, he sought to complicate, rather than contradict, it.
any sense of orthodoxy from his readings of these texts. This is significant for its implied criticism of the semi-sacred aura acquired by Lacan and the religious zeal with which his texts were received at the time. Derrida questions the very structure of the psychoanalytic archives and deconstructs it accordingly.

Second, Derrida stresses that the differences between psychoanalysis and philosophy are just as significant as their similarities: they run parallel to each other, one laboring under the rule of consciousness while the other is devoted to the interpretations of the unconscious. The meeting point between the two concerns the epistemological structure of what we could call “rational scientific knowledge” – phallogocentrism – and its limitations. Phallogocentrism designates the dominant image of the subject that, according to Derrida, equates Being with, but also doubles it up into, thought as the self-representation of mastery.28 Experiencing the self as coinciding with reason, power, and presence is the phallic delusion Derrida will labor all his life to dispel. Derrida takes the linguistic structure of the unconscious (following Lacan’s interpretation of Saussure) to mean that the textual instance is isomorphic with psychic processes. This is not to be confused with the intentional fallacy; the author’s psyche is not the point, but the structure of the sign and its psychic traces are. Derrida’s point is that philosophy is better equipped conceptually to pursue the critical analysis of the isomorphic relationship between the psychic and the social than is psychoanalysis. In other words, philosophy has the means both to critique the power effects of the phallogocentric hold over our psychic and social landscapes and to undo that hold by revealing its limitations.

The primary point of contention between Derrida and Lacan is the primacy of the Phallus and its productive role as master signifier, which is to say, ultimately, the psychic groundings for power formations themselves and the accompanying links between desire and power. Contrary to Lacan, Derrida is skeptical about the logical or moral necessity – let alone the credibility – of a master signifier or privileged term of reference. He sees in this a repetition of the transcendental arrogance of philosophy, that is, the existence of a transcendental point of origin that would somehow organize and govern the process of signification. According to Derrida this idea contradicts the basic Saussurean insight that all signifiers acquire a meaning in their differential relation to other signifiers. This “flat,” or nonhierarchical ontology clashes with the phallogocentric transcendence at work in Lacan’s thought.

A major point of convergence between Derrida’s deconstructive method and the psychoanalytic debunking of rationalistic presumptions is the structural role played by otherness in the constitution of the self. In this regard, Derrida engages

28. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1982), and *The Post Card*. 

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with some of the key concepts of psychoanalysis, for instance the primacy of transference, countertransference, and resistance in the psychoanalytic relationship. Derrida differs from Hegel, however, less on the emphasis he places on the importance of the other/otherness in the constitution of the subject, than on the apology of violence that is implicit in Hegel and explicitly rejected in Derrida’s work.\textsuperscript{29} Rejecting binary oppositions – starting from the false opposition between consciousness and the unconscious – means for Derrida recognizing the radical alterity of the self as an open and process-oriented entity and hence also the subject’s debt to the structural presence of others. This dependence on a structurally necessary other leads Derrida to assert also the elusive and incommensurable, but also positive structure of this other.\textsuperscript{30} This theme becomes central in Derrida’s later work and will be developed in his cosmopolitan ethics, in a constructive dialogue with both Freud and Levinas. Thus the point of convergence between Derrida and psychoanalysis – the ethics of otherness – also leads to a significant divergence about the possibility of ever reaching a genuinely ethical relation to others. And this, in turn, reveals that Derrida’s relation to psychoanalytic theory is deeply political.

In a recent assessment of Derrida’s legacy for psychoanalysis, Réné Major emphasizes the importance of his work on political subjectivity and cosmopolitan citizenship as an extension of the ethical position he articulates in, among other places, \textit{The Other Heading}, \textit{On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness}, and \textit{Monolingualism of the Other}.\textsuperscript{31} Major is also careful, however, to stress the enduring resistance that Derrida’s philosophy offers against any Kantian restoration of a moral universal. The instance of the unconscious, on the contrary, allows deconstructive philosophy to challenge the metaphysics of presence at all levels. This means that any presence is but a process of residual traces and that all appeal to a fixed origin is structurally delayed. This hiatus or deferred action is originary and it implies that everything begins in rewriting, in duplication, citation, and repetition. For both psychoanalysis and for deconstructive philosophy, Major argues, this duplication of traces without originals destabilizes the logocentric pretensions of sovereign reason without, however, falling into its dialectical opposite. It simply installs a new political economy of meaning in iterability, repetition, and a structural debt to otherness. The political force of deconstruction lies precisely in its critique of both the transcendentalism of the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See, for example, Jacques Derrida, \textit{Memoires for Paul de Man}, Cecile Lindsay et al. (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
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philosophical subject and the coercive power of a Logos that functions through assignations to a subject position, a proper noun, and a steady place.

The Phallus as Law then emerges as an explicit concern for Derrida, whereas it was implicit in previous psychoanalytic debates. Derrida's critique of the transcendent claims of the Law and of its structural violence is part of this debate: he stresses both the violence and basic irrationality of the Law – with reference to Walter Benjamin – but also its resolute and non-negotiable presence. This position can be described as hysterical because it simultaneously asserts and denies the presence of the crucial instance of Phallic power – erasing with one hand what it is writing with the other. This position, which oscillates between recognition and disavowal, draws Derrida closer to the question of the feminine as the trace of writing as the simultaneous – and hence hysterical – assertion and disavowal of the power of the master signifier. Thus, Derrida takes from Lacanian psychoanalysis the emphasis on the feminine and on sexual difference, but he radicalizes them both.

The question of the feminine is endemic to psychoanalysis and it touches on the question of its very legitimacy as discourse. The indefinable nature of the feminine – its lack of frame, form, and focus – raises the question of the possibility of its representation, that is to say, of writing. Lacan opts to solve the problem by confining the feminine to symbolic absence and hence to unrepresentability within the Phallic symbolic system. Derrida, on the other hand, argues that the centrality of a master signifier/the Phallus allows for sexual difference to be conceptualized not as a symbolic absence, but rather as différence, that is to say, as incommensurably different, but in nonbiological terms. The feminine as the effect of a Law of signification that privileges the Phallus and the Logos as operators of meaning paves the way for active deconstruction of the master discourse itself. A woman is, in other words and pace Lacan, something other than either the dialectical opposite of a man or that for which there is no possible symbolic representation. She is other, in the full positivity of that radical otherness.

The position of the feminine is a crucial concept in Derrida's work: it is the location of a fundamental erasure or structural hiatus, in relation to the Phallic illusion of presence, without which there can be no thought and no production of meaning. The discursive strategy proposed by Derrida's deconstruction is to retrace the steps of this erasure in the texts and systems of thought, which

34. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, Positions, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, Barbara Harlow (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University
results in a process of writing as resistance against the gravitational pull of the Phallic master signifier. Thus, the feminine as différance is the site of fundamental destructuring without which no affirmative politics is possible. It consequently is also the precondition for a nondespotistic and antitotalitarian theory and practice of political agency. In this respect, Derrida emerges as one of the sources of inspiration for the feminism of sexual difference and especially for the movement known as écriture féminine.35 Best expressed by Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, this radical movement encourages writing as an experimental method to recover the traces of those subject positions for which there is no adequate representation within the Phallic master signifier.36 The central position granted to sexual difference and différance as a constitutive element for the constitution of the subject and the antiessentialist reading of difference are the key contribution of Derrida to feminist thought.37 And, as should now be clear, this Derridean contribution comes directly through his critical engagement with Freud, Lacan, and psychoanalysis.

IV. FEMINISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Feminist theory provides one of the most productive sites and testing grounds for discussing and assessing the basic tenets of psychoanalysis and its relationship to critical thought. In Freud’s time, the problematic of the centrality of the paternal metaphor to the constitution of the social field led to disagreements about whether the libido is one, and masculine, in both sexes – also known as the penis-centered theory of psychic development – or whether there is sexual difference at the unconscious level. The latter results in the hypothesis of the specificity of both female libidinal development and hence of feminine sexuality, which challenges Freud’s patriarchal assumptions about the psychic consequences of the anatomical differences between the sexes.38

This was a point of vehement debate in the first psychoanalytic society among Freud’s early followers such as Karen Horney, Helene Deutsch, and Ernest

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Jones, who, not unlike Irigaray forty year later, championed the cause of the specificity of female libidinal and psychic structures. Since those early debates, feminist psychoanalytic thinkers in Britain and the United States have picked up on psychoanalytic theories of various stripes: not only Freud and Lacan, but also Self Psychology (based on the work of Heinz Kohut [1913–81]), and the affect theory of Sylvan Tomkins (1911–91) have all received serious attention from, among others, Juliet Mitchell, Nancy Chodorow, Elizabeth Grosz, Teresa Brennan, Jessica Benjamin, and Judith Butler. In France, center stage is taken by Irigaray’s work, to which we will return.

The main themes that feminist philosophers took from psychoanalysis can be organized around the following cluster of ideas. The first is a renewed emphasis on “embodiment” in the sense of a postphenomenological understanding of the intelligence of the flesh. This idea, also rendered by terms such as “morphology,” positions embodiment as a process, not an essence, which links nature and culture in a new creative manner that contests both biological determinism and naive social constructivism. Psychoanalysis, through its theory of desire, allows for a process-oriented ontology of the body, which in turn redefines the terms of

39. Karen Horney (1885–1952) was born and educated in Germany, before relocating to the United States in 1930. A strong critic of the Freudian notion of penis envy, she was the first psychoanalyst to publicly criticize the psychoanalytic account of female psychological development. She remains highly regarded for her theory of neurosis and her pioneering work in feminine psychology.

Helene Deutsch (1884–1982) was the first psychoanalyst to specialize in women, and her Psychoanalysis of the Sexual Functions of Women (1925) was the first book by a psychoanalyst on women’s psychology. Born in Poland, she worked closely and remained close with Freud from 1916 to 1935, when she emigrated to the United States.

Ernest Jones (1879–1958), the first English-language psychoanalyst, worked closely with Freud from 1908 until Freud’s death in 1939. In addition to being Freud’s official biographer, Jones played a crucial role in the establishment of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1911 and the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1919. He shared with Karen Horney the critique of Freud’s view that female sexuality was dependent on women’s recognition of their “inferior body” and, thus, derivative on male sexuality.

the relation to memory, cross-generational transmission, and other unconscious productions.

The second crucial cluster of ideas is related to the theory of desire outlined above and the extent to which that dialectical vision renews our understanding of power relations and of their productive function in psychic life and interpersonal relations. Feminists are quick to point out the unbalanced symbolic burden carried by both sexes in the constitution of the social field. More specifically, the role of the female body in the sacrificial ontology that founds the patriarchal social system through the primordial murder of the father becomes the focus of intense debates. Loyal to the isomorphic relation between the social and the psychic, feminists have also pointed out the prize women play in the ideology of love, the patriarchal structure of the family, and their symbolic absence from the phallocentric symbolic system. This has generated a rich debate \(^{41}\) on the structural role of violence in erotic fantasy and social life and on the enormous importance of heterosexual normativity as the implementation of a phallocentric social and symbolic contract that sacrifices the bodies of women on the altar of transcendental masculinity.

The third central cluster of ideas concerns the role of unconscious identifications, dominated by the phallocentric symbolic, in the constitution of identity. The notion of imaginary interpellations and their role in constructing the subject are important, but also highly contested. The instance of the unconscious as a structural element in political subjectivity is central to the feminist debates about sexed identities, alternative sexuality, homosexual, lesbian, and queer theories. \(^{42}\) The philosophical idea they relay is that political change and transformation requires shifts on the deep structures of the self and these cannot be activated by the standard mechanisms and protocols of political life. Another politics is required: one that activates affects and undoes or at least unveils unconscious formations.

Psychoanalytic feminism claims the importance of a theory of the subject to hold together the complex and internally contradictory structures of the self as a social and symbolic entity structured by unconscious processes. \(^{43}\) Social


\(^{42}\) For a further discussion of this issue, see the essay by Gayle Salamon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.

\(^{43}\) See Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. 
instances and psychic processes need to be activated together for lasting changes to be enacted in the sexual and psychic life of human beings. This creates the need for a methodology based on psychoanalytic techniques of careful and staged repetition; choreographed re-enactments; positive deconstructions; and visionary blueprints for empowering alternatives.

One of the most influential schools of feminist psychoanalysis, however, does not pay any allegiance to Lacan, but rather refers to both Melanie Klein and the British school of Donald Winnicott.44 “Object relations theory,” as it is known, stresses the importance of the relationship to the mother and hence also of the maternal imaginary in the constitution of the subject. Focusing for instance on the primacy of the breast, object relations theory both emphasizes the specificity of female morphology and criticizes in Freud the penis-centered theory of human development. The focus on the mother–child/mouth–breast relation, which also proves influential for Deleuze and Guattari, casts a different light on the negative political economy that is central to Freud’s later thought. Klein stresses both the relevance of envy and psychological negativity to the process of human development, and also the potential for positivity through the pursuit of gratitude or the acceptance of melancholia as a productive mode of relation to the former object of love.

The popularity of object relations theory among feminists, as testified by the influence of the work of Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin, among others,45 is due to a number of factors that stress the need for more philosophical reflection. The first factor is that object relations theory suits the aims and the logic of social constructivist thought. Without falling into a sociological reduction of unconscious processes, this theory nonetheless offers dynamic possibilities for active interaction between social processes of change, for instance in labor relations, but also in models of parenting and alternative family structures, and the psychic life of individuals. Chodorow, for instance, is firm in arguing that different forms of child-caring and parenting by men will necessarily change

44. Melanie Klein (1882–1960) was born in Vienna, studied with Karl Abraham in Berlin, and was invited by Ernest Jones to London, where she worked from 1927 until her death. Klein was perhaps the first analyst to use traditional psychoanalytic techniques with young children. One of the innovators of “object relations theory,” she was and remains a significant influence on psychoanalytic technique and theory, especially in Great Britain.

Donald W. Winnicott (1896–1971) was born in Plymouth, England. A pediatrician and psychiatrist, he was trained in psychoanalysis by, among others, James Strachey and Klein. Focusing on infant and family therapy (among his key ideas are the “good-enough mother” and the “transitional object”), he was a major influence in the development of object relations theory and also an important influence on the “Middle Group” (today the “Independent Group”) of the British Psycho-Analytic Society, which developed as an alternative to the competing factions in the 1940s associated with Anna Freud and Klein.

both gender relations in society and the psychological models of masculinity. This profound optimism about history’s capacity to alter the patterns of unconscious repetition stands in sharp contrast to Lacan’s psychic essentialism and to the pessimism with which he viewed the possibility of radical transformations.

A second, less conceptual factor to explain the success of object relations theory in general is the fact that it is very compatible with the culture of human management and coaching, which has become so prevalent in the postindustrial era. Less abstract than Lacanian psychoanalysis, and less seduced by high philosophical concepts, object relations theory is a very applicable method of restructuring intersubjectivity and reframing violence and aggression. As such it plays a large role in epistemology (Fox Keller and Harding),46 in ethics (Benjamin), and in policy-making on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for politics and development.

While the preceding paragraphs indicate that feminist theorists have looked for resources in several different approaches within psychoanalysis, in the feminist debate between psychoanalysis and philosophy, the agenda has been set by the Lacanians. Foremost among them is Irigaray,47 who takes on Lacan’s indictment of the feminine as symbolic absence and turns it into a discursive and political strategy. She adopts as her starting premise the notion that the feminine as jouissance exceeds representation and that it is an act of Phallic violence to construct this generative force as a lack or a symbolic absence. The feminine falls outside the political economy of utterability in the Phallic system because of her too-much-ness, not because of lack: the problem is her infinite multiplicity, not her silence. Thus, precisely because of her capacity to evoke the necessary grain of unsaid or unspeakable presence, the feminine is for Irigaray the essential premise for the elaboration of alternative symbolic forms of representation.

Irigaray attempts to inscribe the feminine via psychoanalysis into philosophy, by a double strategy: first, not unlike Derrida, she detects the traces of the feminine, in texts and systems of thought, as the site of resistance to the power of the master signifier. Second, and unlike anyone else, she firmly attaches these explorations of the feminine to the lived existence and the embodied experience of women: individual entities embodied female and socialized as such. This strategic form of essentialism is crucial to Irigaray’s political project of exploring and creating alternative ways of expressing that which the Phallo-logocentric system has reduced to silence and represented as necessarily absent or silent. It is also the central concept in Irigaray’s feminist politics of sexual difference as


*47. Irigaray’s work is also dealt with elsewhere in this volume; see the essay by Mary Beth Mader.
the enterprise that aims at revolutionizing difference from within and at forcing social recognition of that which is given as devalued, or absent.\footnote{48}

In the earlier phase of her work, Irigaray defends sexual difference as the principle of non-one,\footnote{49} which aims at stressing the asymmetrical relationship between the two poles of sexual difference – the feminine and the masculine – and hence also their irreversibility. This results, as mentioned above, in a critique of the very conceptual premises of equality-thinking as a reactive and noncreative simulation of the dominant subject position. Whereas the early Irigaray is a thinker of complexity and openendedness, her later work evolves more in the direction of explorations with ways of empowering and enacting the metaphysical primacy of the heterosexual “Two”: two sexually opposed others united in equality at a profound ontological level. This project aims at redesigning a radical heterosexual politics that would be based on the symbolic equivalence of the two sexes and would reconstruct the world on this radical basis. In her first phase, the challenge is how to express the feminine of women – also known as “the other of the other”; in the second phase of Irigaray’s work,\footnote{50} the emphasis falls rather on the utopia of a heterosexual contract that would bypass and circumvent the sacrificial ontology of phallo-logocentrism and the symbolic elimination of the feminine that it entails. The conceptual backbone of Irigaray’s formidable \textit{oeuvre} remains sexual difference as a political project that aims at empowering the virtual potential contained in subjects sociosymbolically constructed as marginal.

This radical reading of Lacan contrasts sharply with the far more orthodox approach to Lacanian psychoanalysis in the work of Julia Kristeva, who unites the semiotic philosophy of language with the psychoanalytic view of the formation of the subject in language. Influenced also by Roland Barthes, Kristeva is very faithful to Lacan’s conceptual premises, but has produced her own account of how thought, affect, and representation come together in the making of the


49. See Braidotti, \textit{Metamorphoses}, esp. 46–7.

subject. While upholding the Lacanian scheme of the sovereignty of a trans- scendent Phallic master signifier, Kristeva manages nonetheless to highlight the specific features of the feminine.

The specificity of the feminine is linked to the maternal in several ways: first, because the preoedipal relationship to the mother is precisely what escapes capture by the sovereign master signifier. Kristeva’s emphasis on the “semi- otic” position can be seen not as the dialectical opposition to the power of the symbolic, but as the trace of the impossibility of a complete closure of the subject within the phallic signifier. The “chora” indicates for Kristeva the acoustic and prelinguistic traces of our originary belonging to a material maternal body. The maternal is both foundational and liminal at the same time, in that it traces the structural openness of the subject.\(^51\)

Second, this is linked to the idea of the maternal as abjection,\(^52\) that is to say, a structural organizing principle that marks the boundaries of representation and thinkability. The maternal is situated in a boundary-zone between life and death, time and space, being and becoming. In some ways it is the location where the fullness of meaning of these dichotomous concepts implodes and they get to coexist in uncomfortable proximity. This is a more helpful and more feminist position than Lacan’s reduction of the feminine to symbolic absence and structural unrepresentability. Contrary to radical feminists like Irigaray, however, Kristeva is not aiming at a redefinition of the maternal as a sort of prototype of alternative female subjectivity. She is satisfied with a humbler task, namely, that of reappraising the fundamental importance of the maternal. Like all traces, this fundamental bond is never fully lost but can rather be retrieved through the work of the poet and other creative spirits who escape total identification with the master signifier.

Striking a cautionary note that becomes more conservative in her later work, Kristeva is concerned by facile utopias that lead the subject to believe that she/he can just step out of the order of the symbolic law. Following the isomorphism between the psychic and the social dear to Lacan, Kristeva argues that the willful elements of many political ideologies are delusional and can be seen both as symptoms of psychosis and as the threat of social anarchy.\(^53\) This approach results in an interesting methodology in Kristeva’s later work: a sort of psycho-pathological mapping of social events and phenomena. Although this often

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52. See Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

results in issuing strong warnings about the dangers of radical politics and deep social and psychic upheavals, it also brings to the fore significant insights about the processes of transformation themselves. This position is perfectly ethical for the practicing psychoanalyst that Kristeva has become, and it does justice to the resurgence of symptoms in our advanced societies also and especially among its radical elements.

This results in due course in significant social and cultural analyses of depression, mourning, and melancholia as aspects of the increasing friction between the psychic and the social in advanced capitalism.54 They are the price one must be prepared to pay for engaging in radical processes of resistance against the dominant norms. On the affirmative side, Kristeva also develops an original methodology to assess the specific contribution of more moderate women to culture in general and to philosophy in particular. This becomes evident in her trilogy about female genius55 and by the rather surprising rapprochement to the egalitarian politics of Beauvoir, which is surprising in light of the very radical positions originally taken by Kristeva on feminist politics in her Maoist youth,56 a position that had made her dismissive of all egalitarian politics.

Prolific as a writer and firmly established in the English-speaking academic world, Kristeva remains an influential thinker. The growing normative dimension of her work, however, which stresses the ethical component of the psychoanalytic experience and cautions against political change, shows clear signs of political conservatism. This is made explicit in her firm stand against the decline of the paternal metaphor, the crisis of the traditional family, and the rise of gay parenthood. This position, compounded by her increasing nationalism and anti-Islamic militant secularism, makes Kristeva’s approach to psychoanalysis problematic for many contemporary feminists.

V. DELEUZE AND GUATTARI, OR THE UNCONSCIOUS IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

The single most important conceptual critique of psychoanalysis in itself, and also in relation to the institutional and disciplinary practice of philosophy, is

elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in a series of texts that constitute the most incisive contribution to the contemporary debate in this field. Taking their distance from the linguistic turn, the theoretical arrogance of the Lacanians, as well as the Hegelian legacy of their thought, Deleuze and Guattari enact a genuine conceptual return to Freud, Klein, and the early psychoanalytic insights. They do so by stressing the corporeal – rather than linguistically mediated – structure of the self; by disengaging the body from any suggestion of inert matter; and by attacking the notion of desire as lack. We shall refer to these respectively as: transcendental empiricism, nomadic embodiment, and the positivity of desire or “epistemophilia.”

As suggested above, Deleuze and Guattari take issue with the Hegelian legacy that highlights the structural function negativity plays in our psychic life. The Freudian theory of the libido harnessed the drives back on to a system that indexes desire on a dialectical structure of competing consciousnesses in the pursuit of recognition and their respective libidinal fulfillment. This admittedly does inscribe alterity – the structural presence of others – as a necessary and vital presence, but it also marks it as the limit or necessary threshold of negativity at the core of the desiring subject. This negative view of otherness and the dialectical struggle of competing consciousness – which Jessica Benjamin has articulated so eloquently as “the bonds of love” – produce insights into the rationality of domination and its ruthlessly logical function in the political economy of love and hate in the Western world. Central to this is the notion of the death drive, which Deleuze and Guattari analyze not only as a major concept in psychic life, but also as a political concept that explains the self-destructive logic of capitalism. Coherent in their pursuit of the isomorphism between the psychic and the social, but opposed to the dualistic logic of oppositions, Deleuze and Guattari turn to Spinoza’s philosophical monism in order to undo this constitutive violence.

The theory of the death drive has a number of important implications. The first is that the libidinal drive or energetic charge is neutral in terms of normative content: it merely marks a quantitative level of energy. The second is that the death drive functions by withholding or subtracting energy. It does not dispose of any libidinal energy of its own, but merely prevents, deviates, or defers the libido itself. Hence the need to bring in forms of mediation that account for that which becomes subjected to the negativity of the death drive. It is important to note, here, that the libido or life force is the one genuine vital force, whereas the death drive disposes of no energy of its own. The third implication is that of the entropic curve, or the idea that the function of desire is to fulfill itself and then get extinguished. The drives aim only at self-fulfillment, but paradoxically their

fulfillment means returning to the zero level of energy, that is to say, emptying out. This is consequently the primary definition of the death drive: returning to the zero degree of energy. Fourth is the emphasis on repression, denial, or psychic defense as a major category of human sexuality. The active desire is transposed by the subject into the fantasy of his/her being seduced. This shift from activity to passivity not only relinquishes the subject from his/her responsibility, but also prevents an adequate account of sexuality itself.

Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that while Freud “discovers” the productivity of the unconscious (and desire), his conservatism leads him to withdraw from the productive potential of this insight and trap desire in the Oedipal drama played out on a stage of representation, rather than playing out in terms of vital forces. Accordingly, confronted by the evidence that sexuality tends to be experienced as an invasion or a violation, as a disruption of the order guaranteed by the ego, that it aims at self-extinction by consuming the object of desire, Freud reinvests the model of rational consciousness as the organizing principle of order, unity, stability, and cohesion of the self. The theory of the drives is indexed on the centrality of the ego and the necessity of positing the authority of a willful subject. Deleuze and Guattari argue that we are confronted here by a lasting paradox: on the one hand, a notion of the libido as that which aims at its own death and, in opposition to it, the ego as that which longs for life and self-preservation. The paradox is that sexuality, which circulates through both, shares in the characteristics of the former rather than in the opaque stability of the latter. The implication is that the pleasure principle is not a vital, but rather a dissipative structure, a zero approximation machine that aims at shedding the very memory traces or ideational contents that it travels through. Sexuality is a perfect vampire, if you wish, or a viral infection that destroys the site that incubates it. Thanatos equals Eros via the flow of Libido.

Taking a stand against Freud’s and Lacan’s political conservatism, Deleuze and Guattari draw a very different set of conclusions from the psychoanalytic evidence that desire and death are tied together by a double knot in the Western psyche and its culture. Whereas Freud concludes from this the necessity of reasserting the biological organism as a necessary mediator, a store of energy ruled by the ego, Deleuze and Guattari resist both the humanizing affect and the humanistic influence of normative reason. They state that Freud downplays the far more forceful fact that this coagulation or stratification of forces that get bundled up as an organism, a self, an individual, or an ego, is merely a wrapper. The death drive is a principle of anti-life, a force that is both vital and dissipative, and that serves as the constitutive principle of libidinal circulation within the subject. In opposition to this dissipative force is the binding force, the libido, which, operated by the death drive, aims at reaching the state of pure movement discharging its affects as it goes, moving within the chain until it is
completely spent. Thus, the death principle that Freud says cannot be represented is relocated at the heart of the unconscious and hence of the subject, so as to become its most radical expression. By choosing to re-embrace standard morality, Freud leaves us a mixed legacy, because the “Life” that this morality venerates is in psychoanalytic terms the denial of the very libidinal force that is the source of the subject’s vitality. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, reassert the primacy of “Life,” not as a logocentric “bios”-power, but rather as the raw force of “zoe,” the nonhuman or posthuman otherness that stands for the unassimilable outside of the human.58 Thus, a dynamic, nonessentialist form of vitalism comes to replace the mechanisms of the Freudian drives, the psychic essentialism of the Lacanian formulas, and their mutual Hegelian legacy.

The next step in Deleuze and Guattari’s argument is the shift of emphasis toward affirmation, which takes the form in A Thousand Plateaus of a switch to a Spinozist, rather than Freudian–Hegelian political ontology. Such a shift of paradigm means, among other things, that less emphasis is placed on dialectics of consciousness and more attention is paid to issues of relationality, processes of rhizomic interconnections, and an ethical project based on affirmation and the critique of the negative. The background to this shift is political: by the end of the second millennium in Europe, Freud’s metaphysics of death and desire, which inscribes loss and mourning at the heart of the human subject, came to be seen as a dated vision of the subject position and by extension of the shape of contemporary capitalism.59 Renewed stress is placed on the link that advanced capitalism has forged with hyperindividualism and the ego-indexed political economy of consumerism that goes with it. In different ways, political theory and cultural criticism turn their backs on the glory of the ego, the pathos of the ego, the obsession with “me, myself, and I” and hence also the binary “me–you/self–other/west and rest” that are constitutive of our social and symbolic space.

Contemporary thinkers echo Deleuze’s rhizomes and Guattari’s molecular politics in arguing for forms of social interaction by desiring subjects that are nomadic, not unitary; multirelational, not phallocentric; connective, not dialectical; simulated, not specular; affirmative, not melancholic; and relatively disengaged from a linguistically mediated system of signification. If we look at recent figurations of several major theorists and thinkers, they all attest to multilayered relationality: Negri’s multitudes; feminist critiques of scattered hegemonies by


Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan; diasporic belongings by Avtar Brah; Donna Haraway’s cyborgs; Paul Gilroy’s conviviality; Jean-Luc Nancy’s hospitality; Butler’s queer subjectivity, and Braidotti’s nomadic subject.60 This shift of paradigm from classical psychoanalytic hermeneutics to more multilayered neomaterialist approaches, however, should not be allowed to obscure the relevance of psychoanalysis to contemporary concerns, but rather testify to its enduring legacy.

Contrary to the Hegelian tradition, alterity is no longer seen as a structural limit to the deployment of desire and hence to the constitution of the subject. It has rather become the condition of expression of affirmative, that is, nonreactive, alternative modes of desire. The other is, for Deleuze and Guattari, both a human and nonhuman threshold of transformative encounters.61 The “difference” expressed by subjects who are especially positioned as “other-than” – that is to say, always already different from – has a potential for transformative or creative becoming. This “difference” is not an essential given, but a project and a process that is ethically coded. This position in favor of the positivity of desire as complexity promotes consequently a triple shift. First, it emphasizes the radical ethics of transformation in opposition to the moral protocols of Kantian universalism. Second, it shifts the focus from unitary rationality-driven consciousness to a process ontology, that is to say, a vision of subjectivity propelled by affects and relations. And third, it disengages the emergence of the subject from the Hegelian logic of negation and attaches subjectivity to affirmative otherness – reciprocity as creation, not as the recognition of Sameness. This emphasis on affirmation, or the critique of the negative, results in affirmation as the politics of life itself, as “zoe,” or generative force.62

Thus, the Deleuzian critique of the transcendental fallacy of Lacan’s work brings psychoanalysis back to its more political edge. Desire is the driving force that constitutes the subject, in a constant process of social and symbolic negotiations with the dominant or majoritarian structures. Discourses about


61. See especially the chapter on “Becoming” in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, Brian Massumi (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

affectivity, desire, and self–other relations are therefore positioned at the center of social theories about the social contract, the constitution of the social field, and the possible evolution of democracy. More importantly perhaps, by stressing a process ontology instead of a metaphysics of presence, nomadic philosophy develops the conceptual tools provided by psychoanalysis so as to help us refine our understanding of how power works through invisible *apparati* of capture/identification. It also renews our capacity for, and innovates our powers of, resistance accordingly.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

Squeezed between the trivialization of popular culture and the disdain of academia, the legacy of psychoanalysis remains a formidable historical and intellectual factor that continues to affect our understandings of the structures of subjectivity. The evidence is overwhelming to prove that mental distress, depression, stress, pathological behavior have not at all disappeared, but their symptoms have shifted. What sex-driven hysteria was in the nineteenth century, today is an epidemic of anorexia, bulimia, and other eating disorders mediated by visual culture.63 This points to the necessity of stating that the patient and rather humble task of coming to terms with the complexities of the unconscious processes and of connecting them to broader social phenomena contrasts with the hasty and often instrumental ways in which contemporary societies tend to deal with both psychic suffering and disorders and with issues of desire. Psychoanalytic insights can offer an alternative to the relief of psychopharmaceuticals on the one hand and the formidable advances of neurosciences on the other. They can also add both complexity and dignity to discussions about the structures and aims of desire as a fundamental human passion. The question of the lasting influence of psychoanalysis after the critical revisions brought on it by the poststructuralist and feminist generations and the refocusing they induced on some of the insights of psychoanalytic theory remains, therefore, high on the philosophical agenda.

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The immediate, natural and necessary relationship of human being to human being is the relationship of man to woman. In this natural relationship of the sexes man's relationship to nature is immediately his relationship to man, and his relationship to man is immediately his relationship to nature, his own natural function. Thus, in this relationship is sensuously revealed and reduced to an observable fact how far for man his essence has become nature or nature has become man's human essence. Thus, from this relationship the whole cultural level of man can be judged.

(Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, 1844)¹

Luce Irigaray² is a French philosopher, linguist, psychoanalyst, activist, poet, and author of more than twenty books, many of which have been published in

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1. Karl Marx, Karl Marx: Selected Writings, David McLellan (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 88, emphasis added. The passage continues: “From the character of this relationship we can conclude how far man has become a species-being, a human being, and conceives of himself as such; the relationship of man to woman is the most natural relationship of human being to human being. Thus it shows how far the natural behavior of man has become human or how far the human essence has become his natural essence, how far his human nature has become nature for him. This relationship also shows how far the need of man has become a human need, how far his fellow men as men have become a need, how far in his most individual existence he is at the same time a communal being.”

2. Luce Irigaray (1930/1932?–; born in Blaton, Belgium) received a licence and Masters in philosophy from the University of Louvain (1954, 1955), a doctorat du troisième cycle in linguistics from Nanterre (1968), and a doctorat d’état in philosophy from the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes (1974). Her influences include Freud and Lacan, and she has held appointments
translation around the world. She is best known for her critique of the conceptual, practical, psychological, philosophical, spiritual, and political quasi-exclusion of women, and of things culturally coded as feminine, from the central institutions, customs, texts, and collective imagination of the canonical cultures of the West. Aside from this critique, her chief project has been to think out possibilities for the development of two sexuate cultures, and to craft proposals for specifically political innovations—in sexuate civil rights, for example—critical to the advent of a true culture of sexual difference. This aim reposes on the foundational charge that present cultures of the West are pseudo-heterosexual social orders. The claim is that they are essentially male monocultures that understand and imagine women and girls as deficient versions of a single human ideal, a standard that covertly is not neutral but is sexed and male. More precisely, thinking about the sexuate nature of human beings has only and always been carried out on the basis of a single sex that is allegedly already known: that of men and boys. Thinking of woman as identical, equal, complementary, opposite, or a declination of man is no better an approach. Instead of being a woman-being with a specificity, subjectivity, and identity of her own, woman has been thought only in relation to man. This means she has never been thought in true relation to man; strictly speaking, then, there is no *hetero*-sexuality unless there are first two *different* sexes to meet, exchange, and relate.

Irigaray does not employ the conceptual distinction between the terms “sex” and “gender” that is common to feminist and social thought in the anglophone world since the work of Margaret Mead. Her thought on the relation of culture and nature with respect to the question of sexual difference is rooted rather in the work of Hegel and Freud. Hers is the project of envisioning the spiritualization of the natural reality that is the sex dualism of the human species. In her view, to fail to cultivate this reality in thought and human culture is to let it founder in animality and to live in a false social order. A world democratic culture that respects many kinds of socially and politically salient differences must make the respect and cultivation of sexual difference its priority. On the basis of the lived phenomenological, ontological, genealogical, and relational realities of two sexed human kinds, a collective, ethical culture of sexual difference can be created, and two sexed subjectivities developed, for the first time in the history of Western societies.

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3. Whether or not Irigaray would want to extend this charge to include non-Western cultures remains an open question, as she has almost entirely restricted her analysis to “Western cultures” and, more specifically, to “Europe.”
Irigaray’s writings are deeply and deliberately intertextual, addressing the thought of the chief figures of Western philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology, linguistics, political economy, and the tradition of philosophical reflection on Christianity. She treats these same thinkers and topics across the entirety of her corpus, although from changing angles and through different source texts. For these reasons, this chapter presents her thought in a thematic rather than chronological order. The chapter examines her views of the history of Western philosophy and of influential work in anthropological thought, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, philosophy of Christian modernity, feminist philosophy, and Levinasian ethics, as well as of individual figures from these traditions and movements: Aristotle, Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, Beauvoir, Levinas, and Derrida. The most important and influential aspect of her work, and our starting-point, is her thought on the history of Western philosophy.

I. IRIGARAY AND THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

All our symbolic codes need to be reinterpreted as codes meant for the needs and desires of masculine subjects and for an economy of exchange among men.

(Luce Irigaray, “A Bridge Between Two Irreducible to Each Other”)4

Irigaray follows Heidegger in claiming that each age has a single, core philosophical question whose urgency demands an answer. For our age, Irigaray holds, this question is that of sexual difference. Sexual difference has been left to exposition by the empirical sciences despite the fact that it is an ontological question that requires answer, therefore, by philosophy and other nonempirical discourses. But it is not merely a question that demands a formulated reply. It is a query that requires a lived response, and above all, a collectively cultivated living rejoinder: it calls for the creation of a new culture, not for a set of true propositions or an abstract conceptual framework. Indeed, the gap between the theoretical and practical domains that structures much thought in the West is a result of the ethical and philosophical failures to think through and to create a culture of sexual difference.

Like Nietzsche and Heidegger, Irigaray offers a critique of the whole of Western philosophy. Her chief proposal, articulated in various ways in all of her many texts, is that the Western philosophical tradition is a reflective, speculative,

representational enterprise. Its ambition to seize all of reality in its reflective grasp ends in a great solipsistic oblivion of any authentic difference or alterity. True difference is never attained in such philosophical efforts, or difference is structurally occluded or excluded so as to create a kind of reflective knowledge. A project of reflecting the universe in thought ends up reflecting only the reflecting subject cut off from a supposed world of others.

Similar critiques of the various projects of representation found at the heart of Western philosophical efforts can be found in the works of Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Rorty, Deleuze, Derrida, Cixous, and many others. The distinction of Irigaray’s thought is to identify these homogenizing moves of Western philosophy, across the long shelf of its canonical texts, with the goals and desires of one human sex. Plenty of philosophers have noted the conceptual enclosure in which Western philosophy has trapped itself, but none before have identified that hermeticism as the product of a specifically sexuate will to power and knowledge. For Heidegger, the blind alleys of ontotheology and metaphysics are the outcome of a long and continuing forgetting of the meaning of being, as distinct from the availability of beings. Irigaray agrees with the language of oblivion, but provides alternate accounts of what is forgotten and of why this forgetting occurs. Her oft-repeated central charge is that Western philosophy rests on that which it excludes from its reflections – woman, nature, body, matter, and most importantly, sexual difference – but which, in its expelled status, serves as the sustaining condition for these reflections. Thus, the reason for Western philosophy’s failure to achieve a thought that goes beyond itself is that its fundamental motivation is to be man’s reflection. It is in fact achieving its aim, then: man’s wish to show himself to himself is a wish to show that he is purely of himself.

Here, Irigaray relies on a psychoanalytic framework. The psychoanalytic claim is that Western man truly seeks to be self-made. Continuing Aristotle’s valorization of self-sufficiency, the male subject in the West seeks to be the sole origin of himself, and the cultural productions of men in this tradition express an aversion to ontological dependency on a specifically sexuate other. Thus, the subject in the West is consolidated as such on a covertly sexuate basis. The subject as historical or genealogical receives its continuity and its integrity on the ground of a male monosexual reproductive order. Western projects of reproduction are projects of the reproduction of a uniquely male line of reason and being. They are most fundamentally the establishment of male identities through predation on a disavowed “feminine” matter. For Irigaray, this is a grave and perilous denial of the sexuate order of the natural and, therefore, of the human world. This denial requires countless torsions and distortions of reality: Western philosophy is a prime expression of this project of otherless male self-establishment. The sorts of femininity, womanhood, women’s identity,
feminine essence, or women’s spheres that are instituted by Western systems of thought are artifacts constructed for this reflective purpose of demonstrating to “Western man” his own self-sufficient, purely male origin. The tradition of femininity is a masculine creation that serves the psychic needs of “Western man.” “Woman” in this system is the repository of those human features that are feared, envied, or loathed by a fragile subject who cannot abide its dependency on a sexuate other, or on a capacious, surrounding, unmasterable natural environ.

Hence, it is not by chance that difference does not figure in Western philosophy; Western philosophy as it is structurally requires the founding denial and exclusion of sexual difference. How is this so? Is supposing that philosophy should address sexual difference like supposing that it should discuss a real but trivial or nonphilosophical phenomenon, something about which philosophy could and therefore should have nothing to say? Irigaray’s reply would be to specify the points at which the traditional terms and stakes of philosophy have precluded treatment of sexual difference in any sophisticated way. The foundational exclusion can be discerned in the basic ontological conceptions central to Western philosophy’s self-definition and self-delimitation in terms of its objects and matter. That is, its defining ontologies have not only described the objects of philosophy but in doing so have specified the proper reach of philosophy.

Chief among the pertinent ontological distinctions are those of universal and particular, matter and form, species and accident. Aristotle’s thought on these distinctions has prompted old and continuing debate. In De Interpretatione, Aristotle distinguishes universals from particulars. He explains that “man” is universal but “Callias” is particular. Typically, philosophy has taken its object to be the study of universals, according to Irigaray. She wishes to retain a notion of the universal but to limit it by another category, namely, that of sexed kind; in effect, she wishes to create a double universal. This would be a move inconsistent with Aristotle’s hylomorphic ontology, in which form consistently takes explanatory and causal precedence over matter. Aristotle makes this plain at many points, including in his discussion in Metaphysics of why female and male, although different and contraries, are not distinct species. His answer is that, like the paleness of a pale man, being a male or female animal is only a material and not a formal modification of the animal. “Matter,” he writes, “does not create a difference.” Hence, male and female are “modifications peculiar to ‘animal,’ … but in the matter, i.e., the body.”

the idea that being a sex must be an incidental or accidental modification of a species, and hence not an aspect of the human species that warrants more philosophical attention than that classification itself. Any philosopher who suspects that the distinction of sex in the human species may hold more as a subject for thought than this classification suggests must confront these powerful ontological categories. Irigaray’s thought challenges this ancient classification of sex as an incidental material difference, and the prioritization of form over matter, arguing at length that it leaves man severed from the natural world and from his own body. Derelict, he is invested in conceptions of these beings that warp and deform them precisely by compelling reality to assume form in order to ...

This logic of form’s priority is traced through the course of the history of Western philosophy. Irigaray argues that this preference for form, this morphologic, has meant that no sufficient ontology of fluids has been developed. The collective imagination of the West has granted full existence only to what appears as a solid form, as isomorphic with one erotic ideal of male sexuality. This means that the condition for the possibility of the appearance of solid form, namely, a fluid, accommodating medium or ground, against and in which the solid form stands out as such, is forgotten: air. The fluid elements remain unthought, even while they are necessary for any formal reality to exist and to appear. This critique is presented most extensively in Irigaray’s *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. Irigaray follows Heidegger’s meditation on the forgetting of being, the oblivion with which he charges the history of metaphysics, and appreciates his readings of Presocratic elemental philosophy. But she finds that even Heidegger’s later language of Being as a clearing or *Lichtung* does not achieve a fluid ontology of the nutritive elemental openness that she seeks. Instead, Heidegger uses metaphor to render air an ideal fluid. He does not acknowledge the elemental source for his naming of Being as clearing. Yet air has all the qualities he ascribes to the clearing, especially since it is an unobtrusive medium for the entry of all into presence and absence. Irigaray’s objection is ultimately about philosophy’s creation of various divisions: between material and ideal, sensible and transcendental, matter and form. After the split that creates mere materiality, its functions – to join, to permit belonging together, and to supply passage – are demoted or ignored. Irigaray’s appeal to the biological feature of mucous membranes, found throughout the body, evokes this facility to provide passage. It is the tribological properties of mucous membranes, rather than an abjecting Sartrean fascination with the viscous, that render them relevant to the development of an ontology of passage.

The Presocratic philosophers, although distant forbearers of modern science, did not make absolute distinctions between human, divine, and natural worlds. Irigaray finds their work fruitful sources, then, for her interest in reuniting the
split-off categories that emerge in the tradition thereafter. In particular, she examines the contemporary sciences from a perspective that differs greatly from the self-conceptions generally promulgated by scientific practitioners. But her training is not without its scientific components, including empirical work, if linguistics be classed as a science. In the collection of her linguistic works, To Speak is Never Neutral, the essay “In Science, Is the Subject Sexed?” takes aim at the professed sexuate neutrality and universal pretensions of psychoanalysis and of the physical, mathematical, biological, logical, and linguistic sciences. She questions the desires that move scientists, as well as the topics and solutions they propose. She wonders about the “imperialism without a subject” that characterizes political orders in which scientific results are used by political leaders but scientists themselves are anonymous participants in these uses. Irigaray can be said to be opposed to science only if science must by definition be incompatible with the preservation of the earth and the cultivation of subjectivity.

II. SEXED KIND

Irigaray argues for the development of “sexual identity,” or a “generic identity,” using the term genre sexué, which might also be translated as “sexed kind” or “sexuate kind.” She locates the ethical solutions to oppressive or violative extensions of subjective and unilaterally sexuate power at this level of “sexed kind.” It is belonging to a sexed kind, not simply being a subject of unlimited scope, or a human being among other human beings, that will allow a subject to conceive of itself as necessarily limited. A subject can escape autological hermeticism by belonging to a sexed kind, and since its sexed kind is one of two, it could never claim to be all of what it is to be human. I am precisely insufficient because I belong to this greater group of a sexed kind, and because in that generic identity, I can never embody human being in itself. This partiality is an ontological impasse on which limitations that make up the ethical modesty of the subject can be based. The sexed other is the real occasion for encountering an irreducible, free, mysterious subjectivity that is forever inassimilable by one’s own subjectivity. It is not, it should be added, that people of the same sexed kind are entirely reducible, unfree, or unmysterious in relation to each other. But comparing intrasexuate relations with relations between sexed kinds varies depending on whether we are considering contemporary ways that Irigaray critiques or her vision for those relations in an era of authentic sexual difference. For today’s men and women, such relations take place precisely without the benefits of nonpredatory generic identities. For Irigaray, there is no such thing, today, as a woman’s identity, created by women, but not modeled on a required set of necessary and sufficient conditions for womanhood. Nor is there
a non-monosexual version of male identity; what exists culturally for men and boys are reactive, phobic versions of masculinity that seek a fantastical world where women are only natural instruments for the housing of male bodies and desires, either as the servile mothers of sons or as the carnal homes for playing out a mechanical eros, an unconscious, unsublimated, uncultivated relation both to one’s body and to the body of others. In the imagination of this culture, then, there are no women, or men, since to be either, one must be in relation to a true sexuate other. Since women have been bowed to the demands of one sex’s need for sexual sameness, the culture has failed to collectively create the practices needed for meetings in love and respect between true sexuate others.

Although she calls for the cultivation of a people of women, or an “among-women,” this is an appeal to break with the models of identity, fraternity, sameness, and homogeneity that she thinks have customarily bound men in monosexuate, exclusionary solidarities. The species of solidarity that would purportedly obtain in a culture of sexual difference would differ from those presently operating on the bases of abstract imitation, resemblance, reproduction, or traditional laws of identity. Irigaray seeks a new notion of identity to supplant the version developed in the sexual monocultures to fend off the fact of sexuate difference. She lends special attention to the representations of female goddesses in Greek myth and tragic drama, especially where those depict mother–daughter relations, whose genealogical erasure in Western kinship systems she argues is pathological for women.

III. IRIGARAY AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL THOUGHT: LÉVI-strauss

In Lévi-Strauss’s account of kinship, sexuate difference is the fundamental opposition on the basis of which symbolization in a culture, and hence, a culture itself, can emerge. Relying primarily on interpretations of “primitive” societies, Lévi-Strauss famously argued that human culture is inaugurated by a system of

8. Nicole-Claude Mathieu, L’Anatomie politique (Paris: côté-femmes, 1991), 138 n.7, cites Nicole Loraux in “Sur la race des femmes et quelques-unes de ses tribus,” Arethusa 11(1/2) (1978), on the matter of women as a kind. According to Loraux, an ancient view of women as “a people, a gens, an ethnicity or a ‘race,’ and men as another (superior one)” (ibid., 44, my translation) can be found in Hesiod’s Theogony. The relevant Greek expression from this text is genos gynaikōn, the race, breed, people or kind of women – here, an accursed one. Mathieu claims that this is only one of many societies to class women and men as distinct peoples. Nowhere does Irigaray seek a return to this or any other ancient relation between men and women, or suppose that models from geographically and historically different cultures could be adopted in the cultures of the West.

symbolic exchange. The exogamous exchange of women between groups of men founds a culture and is one of its fundamental signifying activities. This idea of the exchange of women by men is Lévi-Strauss’s recasting of the incest taboo, which he contends fundamentally structures all societies. Instead of a prohibition on licit mating partners, as the language of “taboo” implies, the exchange of women is a positive injunction to a male member of a group to give women of his group – sister, cousin, daughter – to men of another social group.10 This takes place in a kinship system that tends to guarantee some sort of reciprocal giving of women, whether direct or indirect, immediate or deferred: hence, the language of “exchange.” The “synthetic” power of the bonds of alliance that women afford families or groups is the chief reason for the purportedly foundational value of women to “society.”11 Lévi-Strauss famously argues that unions of a man and woman are best regarded not as bonds between individuals but as alliances between the male givers of women in the families being joined. They are most essentially syntheses of male members of families; the important union is the groom’s linkage with his brothers-in-law and with other male relatives in the bride’s initial family.

In Sexes and Genealogies, Irigaray takes Lévi-Strauss at his word, matter-of-factly interpreting contemporary Western societies in the terms offered by his theory of “primitive” kinship. Irigaray’s analysis of the notion of the exchange of women makes explicit use of Marx’s concept of the general equivalent. In a process of the homogenization of economic objects under capitalism, a single commodity becomes the representative of all abstract labor, while it is excluded from circulating as a commodity itself; this is the function of money, the general equivalent. Irigaray notes that in the case of women-as-commodities, they have no value in themselves, but gain value because they can be exchanged among men, who compare them and regard them as equivalents. She suggests both that women as commodities can undergird a system of general equivalence, and that Lévi-Strauss’s theory of kinship implies that they serve as this noncirculating general equivalent measure for all other commodities. In “Commodities Among Themselves,” she contemplates the abandonment of markets that circulate objects according to a rule of general equivalence.12

10. “The prohibition of incest is less a rule prohibiting marriage with the mother, sister or daughter, than a rule obliging the mother, sister, or daughter to be given to others” (Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Elementary Structures of Kinship, Rodney Needham [ed.], James Harle Bell and John Richard von Sturmer [trans.] [Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969], 481).
11. “[T]he synthetic nature of the gift, i.e., that the agreed transfer of a valuable from one individual to another makes these individuals into partners, and adds a new quality to the valuable transferred” (ibid., 84).
Irigaray argues that kinship is the forgetting of sexed kind in the substitution of man for the species. By this she means (i) that the female sexed kind has been denied a nongenealogical identity and (ii) that it has been compelled to assume a genealogical identity that is bowed to the purposes of an emphatically male genealogy. Point (i) implies that relations between women who are not considered to be related genealogically have no cultural standing or representation. Point (ii) implies that women in the genealogical systems that she considers have only a punctual rather than a linear scope; each mother is the beginning and terminus of her “line.”

Further, she holds, sexed kind is subsumed into species, and more particularly into the sense of species as filiation, as distinct from its related sense of categorical, synchronic differentiation. She thinks that a people cannot be conceived without a prior conceptual elaboration of kind as sexed.13 If a people is defined as necessarily comprising a genealogical element, yet there is no recognition of sexual difference as a necessary component of that genealogical element, then a conceptual error and an ethical fault have taken place. Her view is that sexual difference is the self-perpetuating generative origin of the human sex dimorphism and, therefore, of human groups of individuals that are distinguished on the basis of this generative difference.14

IV. IRIGARAY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: FREUD AND LACAN

Irigaray is a consistently and profoundly psychoanalytic thinker, a feature that has not prevented her from issuing critiques of psychoanalytic theory and prac-
Luce Irigaray

tics.\textsuperscript{15} Her most notorious assessment of the psychoanalytic record on the topic of sexual difference came in the 1974 work \textit{Speculum: De l’autre femme}. The English translation of this title, \textit{Speculum of the Other Woman}, might better read \textit{Speculum of the Woman Other} or \textit{Speculum of the Other as Woman}. The book’s sharp mockery of Freud and Lacan on the topic of female sexuality provoked Irigaray’s expulsion from a university post at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes and a break with the \textit{École Freudienne}, the Lacanian school of psychoanalysis in which she had trained.

The book relentlessly questions the thought of Plato, Descartes, Freud, and Lacan, closely scrutinizing their own words, to bring out their roles in an allegedly specular project that reflects man the mirror-maker rather than an independent world. The creation of a mirror, a \textit{speculum mundi}, from beings treated as passive material – women, matter, elements, bodies, and the natural world – is identified at every turn in the texts examined. The title’s term, “speculum,” meaning that which pertains to a mirror, points to a complex of related senses. Irigaray argues that the thrust of man’s self-mirroring cultures has been to lend primacy to the visible and to prioritize the sense of vision over other senses, such as touch and hearing. This critique of the ocularcentrism of Western thought has its precedents in phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. But, following Derrida’s critique of the phallogocentrism of Western philosophy, Irigaray links this prioritization of vision to Freud’s emphasis on the visibility of male genitalia, and to Lacan’s account of the mirror stage\textsuperscript{16} as the period in which a child’s identity, language, and sociality emerge.

The influence of French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s practice of deconstruction on \textit{Speculum} is difficult to miss. This renowned strategy of reading texts is a generously skeptical immersion in a text that is directed by an extreme openness to the tensions between a text’s propositions and its implicit suppositions about those propositions. Language itself requires investment in unmasterable suppositions. Hence, any text can be read, and written about, so as to display the blind spots around which its propositions are organized; it will always contain discursive elements that must remain untreated by it. The relations between these untreated suppositions and the explicated propositions are the material for deconstructive readings. The renderings of the chief figures of the Western canon of thought offered in \textit{Speculum} are examples of deconstructive, psychoanalytic feminist readings.

\textsuperscript{15} Irigaray’s relation with psychoanalysis is also discussed in the essay by Rosi Braidotti and Alan D. Schrift in this volume. For a detailed discussion of Freud and his appropriation by continental philosophy in the twentieth century, see the essay by Adrian Johnston in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3}.

\textsuperscript{16} Lacan’s mirror stage is discussed in the essay on Lacan by Ed Pluth in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5}.
To make this textual blind spot appear is Irigaray’s task in “The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of Symmetry,” a chapter in *Speculum* on Freud’s essay “Femininity.” Freud’s formulation “The little girl is a little man” serves as neat summary of what Irigaray takes to be his psychology of sexual indifference. Again, Irigaray’s strategy is to take him at his word. Freud’s frustrated efforts to understand the specificity of female psychology and sexual development stem from an inability to conceive of a sexuate alterity that would not be reducible to or entirely translatable into a male set of experiences. Freud begins his account with boys and girls sharing a love object of the same sex, that is, a mother, only to struggle with how to account for the outcome of adult heterosexuality in women. Likewise, Freud supposes that children of two different sexes are autoerotically identical and then has the difficulty of explaining reproductive adult female eroticism. Moreover, Freud makes clear that as girls gradually come to the realization that relative to boys they are effectively castrated beings, their desire is to be genitally identical to males. Failing this transformation, they eventually seek to have children, who will psychologically substitute for the missing phallus that marks women as failed men. Irigaray exposes the numerous contradictions, reversals, and equivocations that Freud must include in order to retain the primacy of a phallic standard for sexuate identity and for eroticism. In particular, what must be repressed or omitted is the differential relation of boys and girls to their origin in the body of a mother. More precisely, Freud quite plainly judges the female version of this relation to be identical to that of the boy.

One of Irigaray’s foundational views is that these relations are not in fact identical. Rather, she claims, although children of both sexes have an existential puzzle to solve about their origins, their ways of resolving this puzzle must differ by sex. Girls, when they can grasp that they share a generative mode with their mothers, can emotionally settle the issue of their existential dependence on another for their being by envisioning their own potential future gestation, bearing, and birthing of a child. Boys, whose generative mode will not include gestation, bearing, and birthing a child, cannot solve this problem through such identification with the mother and anticipation of generating a child in the same way. Irigaray concludes that boys’ potential to beget a child cannot serve this purpose of putting to rest the antipathies raised by the realization of one’s existential dependence on a mother, and it is this differential relation to one’s dependence on a mother that grounds the differing relational identities that constitute

sexual difference. Boys have a much more difficult problem to solve than have girls, given that boys cannot rely on the resemblance of generational mode to mitigate their existential dependence on a being of another sex.

Irigaray alleges that the cultural achievements of male monocultures are failed and deluded strategies for resolving this puzzle. Efforts to enclose women in definitions that effectively create them as castrated beings, of inferior cognitive, creative, conceptual, logical, or rational faculties, are compensatory projects of sexuate resentment. Law and custom that restrict women to a domestic or private realm, or permit their circulation only as commodities, likewise seek reactively to enclose in reprisal the sex in whom all initially were held in body.

As with Freud, Irigaray takes Lacan at his word, considering that he expresses accurately the state of relations between men and women in his culture with his formulation: “There is no relationship between the sexes [Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel].”¹⁹ This claim is part of a complex model of the relations of men and women worked out by Lacan first in the structuralist linguistic register and later in terms drawn from topology. In essence, he depicts a kind of structural deadlock of sexed subject positions that, as in Freud’s thought, implies that relations between men and women can never harmonize. Freud came to the conclusion that love relations between men and women would necessarily always be asynchronous, or out of phase, since heterosexual men pair with women who substitute for their mothers, their true love objects, while heterosexual women, thus, must be wives not to a substitute father but to a substitute son, that is, to a man whose primary identity is that of the son of a mother whom she must simulate. For Lacan, in the cultural imaginary that he exposes, men occupy the position of phallic, paternal lawgivers and have that power, whereas women occupy the position of the object desired by that power, and hence paradoxically show up its unacknowledged lack and fragility. As Slavoj Žižek writes: “Human sexuality is marked by an irreducible failure, sexual difference is the antagonism of the two sexual positions between which there is no common denominator.”²⁰ Irigaray follows Lacan’s topological idiom to show Lacan’s sexual indifference: the sexual relation as he conceives of it is doomed to fail since it is falsely dimensional. Like a Moebius strip or a Klein bottle, it manages to have fewer surfaces than it is


supposed to have.\textsuperscript{21} Irigaray rejects this dire scenario and locates the source of its dead ends in the philosophical presupposition that commonality is the necessary ground for desiring and ethical relations.

\section*{V. IRIGARAY AND THE DIVINE}

Irigaray draws on the work of Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, J. J. Bachofen, Mircea Eliade, and René Girard, among others, to argue that male monotheisms damage men and women, although in differing ways. The damage to men is that transcendence is always elsewhere, not in the sensible realm. Irigaray’s notion of the sensible-transcendental is a refusal of this split between an otherworldly, ideal, vertically transcendent and inhuman realm and a base, sensible realm to be overcome and surpassed in human achievement. “Sensible-transcendental” is a neologism that expresses this refusal but also implies the aim of re-fusing the separated realms that have placed the ideal of man’s telos beyond the sensible, material, and sexuate realm of embodied human life. But this transcendent male god has produced psychic benefits for human males. Echoing Feuerbach, Irigaray claims that to masculinize divinity is essentially to divinize masculinity. Hence, men and boys have a god made in their image, a divine horizon toward which to orient their earthly strivings.\textsuperscript{22} The monotheistic traditions she considers lack a female divine principle that might fill an analogous role of providing a divine ideal in the female mode.

Not only does Irigaray advocate the creation in the cultures she discusses of a mode of divinity that is female, but she proposes correction to the error of locating transcendence in an otherworldly beyond. This sort of transcendence is an escapist fantasy that can be corrected by attention to the inevitable, ubiquitous alterity of sexual difference: it is this horizontal transcendence between sexuate human beings here and now that ought to be the true site of transcendence. But orthodox interpretations of Christian texts in particular have specialized in denying the sexuate incarnation that marks human creatures. In \textit{Marine Lover: Of Friedrich Nietzsche} and other texts, Irigaray reads the Hebrew Bible and New Testament with an ear for the sensuous, embodied, carnal elements

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\textsuperscript{21} Irigaray also uses these topological phenomena to question the countability customarily applied to surfaces, and to question, along the lines of Bergson, Heidegger, and many others, both ancient and modern conceptions of homogeneous, denumerable, abstract space. In this use of the dimensional ambiguity of surfaces and spaces, she argues that distorting desires to enclose and entomb a maternal origin or its substitutes are the motive source for these questionable conceptions of space and place.
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\textsuperscript{22} For a discussion of Feuerbach’s account of God as a projection of man’s own idealized self, see the essay by William Clare Roberts in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2}.
\end{footnote}
found in the meetings of divine and human presences. The strange and inhuman generations found in the creation story and in the story of the birth of Christ represent flights from the reality of the cooperation of male and female progenitors. These tales elevate paternal genealogies or debase the human, mortal origins of human beings. Of importance in them is the male creation of women (Eve), the paternal creation of sons (God’s paternity of Christ the son), the servitude of mothers of sons (Mary), virginal birth (God begets by Word, and Mary is a virgin), and the venerated, immortal mother (Mary does not die). None of this may suitably serve as the ideal for actual, mortal women, even or especially in their potentially maternal modes. The orthodox reception of these figures also tends to strictly identify being a woman with being a mother, an identification that Irigaray consistently opposes. The historical creation of genealogies in which generative power is so overwhelmingly male demands an explanation. Irigaray’s characteristic attempt at explanation is the psychoanalytic tale of relations differentiated by sex, on the basis of the allegedly different responses to being born of someone whose generative mode one shares, in the case of girls, or that one does not share, in the case of boys.

Irigaray also often gestures to an unarrived sort of divinity, one that would be mobile, unlocated, fundamentally open and enlivening, essentially linked to a natural order inherent in the cosmos, and celebrating and safeguarding the flourishing of the natural and human worlds. In Marine Lover, Christ, the god-man, divinizes carnality, the everyday with its rhythms, and the sociality of “living people” who share needs and desires.23 This divinity, so different from the sudden intrusion of the Greek gods, or the remote commands of a completed text, does not represent an “alien perfection.” Rather, “he is made flesh. Continues on in the flesh…. That can be affected by pathos – his own and that of others.” He is not the “master of truth or of morality” or the son obedient to a Father, but a mobile, multidimensional, ever-living, resurgent, body who is open and vulnerable. He is a loving becoming in the flesh, a version of the “Good News” of the incarnation that Christianity has repressed or forgotten. The “mania for All-Powerfulness” that creates orthodox conceptions of “man and the world” misses the idea that the divine desire to “dwell in the flesh” is the simplest of all of Christ’s messages.24 Nietzsche’s intimate and iconoclastic rereadings of Christian texts open the way for Irigaray’s own unfolding of such “simple” messages in these scriptural sources of Western self-understanding.

24. Ibid., 186.
VI. IRIGARAY AND BEAUVOIR

The views of Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir on how the sexes are two differ significantly.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, Irigaray describes her position on sexual difference as “in some way the inverse” of Beauvoir’s, even though she supports and admires Beauvoir’s efforts and successes in helping to institute liberal reforms in the area of economic and social justice and equality for women.\textsuperscript{26} Equality, however, is not a sufficient cultural goal for women, according to Irigaray, and to make it a goal constitutes a grave philosophical, ethical, and political error. Irigaray understands Beauvoir’s position so: Women have occupied the position of Other and man has made woman the Other. Women, however, are also complicit in their secondary status, which is a historically contingent status and can be changed. Escape from this subjection requires claiming the status of subject and emerging from the debased status of Other by becoming like the male subject. Assimilation to the male subject will eliminate the inferiority of woman indicated by the term “second” in the title \textit{The Second Sex}. There are no necessarily insurmountable barriers to that assimilation.

Irigaray understands the \textit{prima facie} liberating appeal of Beauvoir’s arguments, but she contends that the solution to the problem of women’s exploitation must take place \textit{in the terms of} that exploitation, namely, in terms of difference, not sameness. Comparing her views with those of Beauvoir, she writes: “Instead of refusing to be the other kind (l’autre genre), the other sex, what I ask is to be considered as really an other, irreducible to the masculine subject.”\textsuperscript{27} Irigaray rejects Beauvoir’s determination of woman’s sexual difference solely in relation to man, and her assessment of that difference as inferior. She claims that what is needed instead is an identification of woman’s sexual difference in relation to herself, and the cultivation of two irreducibly different sexed subjects. This sexual difference assumes the utmost priority for Irigaray, occupying for her the position that Heidegger reserves for ontological difference. She writes:

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In order to get out of the all-powerful model of the one and the many, we must pass into the \textit{two}, a two that would not be one same repeated two times, nor one big one and one little one, but a two made of \textit{two} that are really different. The paradigm of this two is
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\footnote{25. For further discussion of Beauvoir, see the essay by S. K. Keltner and Samuel J. Julian in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4}, and the essay by Sara Heinämaa in this volume.}
\footnote{27. Irigaray, “La question de l’autre,” 40, my translation.}
\end{footnotesize}
found in sexual difference. Why there? Because it is there that two subjects exist who must not be situated in a hierarchical or genealogical relation, and because these two subjects have the task of preserving the human species and of developing its culture through respecting their differences.28

VII. IRIGARAY AND LEVINAS

Irigaray’s thought on those differences is deeply marked by Levinas’s ethics of alterity,29 his critique of Western philosophy’s traditional ranking of ontology over ethics, and his philosophical approach to the question of the divine. As explicated in Totality and Infinity, Levinas’s notion of the Other “as irreducibly and infinitely other” implies that alterity cannot be understood according to the categories of traditional Western ontology. A complete description of the relation of self and other would do violence to the alterity of both self and other. Self and other always exceed any theoretical attempt to grasp them, for the other is not an aspect of the self’s phenomenal field. “Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.”30 Levinas opposes the notion of infinity to any effort to bring entities under the rule of the Same by means of a totalizing neutrality. While finite totalities are inherently violent, infinity precludes violence. It is the Other that is infinity, and hence, “absolutely limits my power.” The infinity of the Other is the origin of the ethical. In Levinas’s phenomenology of the advent of the ethical, the relation to the other is inescapably asymmetrical; ethics cannot be a matter of reciprocity, equilibrium, or equality based on sameness.

Irigaray addresses Levinas’s thought in Ethics of Sexual Difference and in “Questions to Emmanuel Levinas.”31 She clearly adopts the language of absolute alterity from Levinas, but predictably locates the crucial sort of alterity in sexual difference. Notably, Levinas cannot be charged with entirely overlooking the question of relations between men and women in his ethical philosophy. For this philosophy includes a depiction of erotic relations that gives a role to “the feminine.” Irigaray and others, including Derrida, will critique this account of

29. For a discussion of Levinas’s ethics, see the essays by Robert Eaglestone and Bruce Ellis Benson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
the feminine, arguing that Levinas reserves transcendence for the genealogical father–son relation while the erotic relation with the feminine implies a carnality that is always a “fundamental disorder” rather than a sensibility with potential for transcendence. Irigaray faults Levinas for depicting the sexual other as modeled always in terms of a male subject; when he attempts to discuss sexuality in terms of neutrality, it is always merely a masked masculinity. Moreover, the centrality of the father–son relation and the necessary detour through a paternal divine guarantor of human ethical life are questioned as, once again, blindly relying on the exclusion of women and girls from these relations.

But Irigaray wholeheartedly adopts the Levinasian approach to ethics by seeking an ethical limit to a potentially violent and invasive monadic ego. A constant in her work is the view that the cultivation of sexual difference is the necessary preventative to such ethical violation. Only sexual difference, she holds, can serve as the ubiquitous, invariant, insurmountable, and natural guard against the great and small imperialisms of which human beings have proven capable. Sexuate alterity is the inevitable human difference that issues the ethical command that, heeded, can open the way to our honoring all other forms of human differences that are the occasions of strife and oppressions today. Sexual difference in its futural, cultivated form is an absolute alterity, distinct from empirical or unsymbolized versions of natural sex difference.

VIII. IRIGARAY AND “FRENCH FEMINISM”

A number of works in philosophy produced by women in France have seen translation into English and attentive reception by anglophone academics. Among those whose writings have found early and regular dissemination in English are several quite different thinkers who have been classed together by some of their anglophone readership in a purely extranational grouping called “French Feminism.” Along with Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, Irigaray is one of the thinkers to receive this classification. Yet, none of the three writers


33. Kristeva and Cixous are discussed in the essay by Sara Heinämaa in this volume.
resolutely claim the designation “feminist” for themselves or their work, and none were born in France, although all work in France and write in French. Moreover, in France, the term “French Feminism” does not refer to this triad of authors; if anything, it implies a host of activists, associations, editors, journals, and political figures that made up the general movement for the liberation of women that agitated for social and political change in the 1960s and 1970s. Or it brings to mind the influential work of Beauvoir, socialist and trade union feminists, or contemporary postcolonial feminists.

That such a grouping has been devised outside the French context is a problem if it is assumed by itself accurately to represent the chief trends in feminist thought and action in France. The variety of feminist thought in France is much greater than these three figures could represent. In addition, it is understandable that their work should have quite different receptions abroad than it has had at home, if one considers the differing intellectual and political contexts in which it has been read. All three authors employ or critique psychoanalytic thought, one of the reasons for which their approaches contrasted with the more empirical tendencies, or with work grounded in analytic philosophy of language, found in parallel anglophone feminist philosophy at the time of their initial importations. Their influences also include deconstruction, semiotics, phenomenology, the canonical figures of European philosophy at the time, especially German and French philosophers, and more broadly European linguists, anthropologists, historians, and literary authors.

Although all three address psychoanalysis and Western culture, generally, their positions differ significantly. Kristeva devises a psychoanalytic linguistic theory that seeks to rescue an ethics and a semiotics from traditional notions of maternity. For Kristeva, maternity must be partially reconceived to include the notion of a mother as a speaking social subject. She rejects a feminism that emphasizes sexual difference, such as Irigaray’s, since in her view it unacceptably risks sexual separatism and marginalization. Cixous is a prolific author of prize-winning novels and plays, as well as of more theoretical works that blur conventional genre classifications. Her emphasis on human psychic bisexuality accompanies her better-known proposals for the creation of an écriture féminine, an expression of female subjects’ experience that Western culture has suppressed. Thus, in comparison to Irigaray, the creation of a sexuate subjectivity, although part of Cixous’s aim, would take a different form for her, given the distribution of masculine and feminine traits across the sexes, an implication of her notion of bisexuality. They differ on many more points than these, but all maintain a constant engagement with the canonical figures and central problems of European thought. Their theoretical innovations are made

34. Irigaray was born in Belgium, Kristeva in Sliven, Bulgaria, and Cixous in Oran, Algeria.
alongside a fundamental allegiance to one or more starting-points set by that European tradition, whether it be psychoanalysis, deconstruction, or semiotics. Both the choice of allegiance and the degree to which these alliances are preserved are the targets of criticism from other feminists both in France and abroad.

**IX. IRIGARAY’S RECENT WORK**

Irigaray’s recent work advances specific political and cultural proposals for Europe. In *Democracy Begins Between Two*, she presents a vision of sexuate rights, democratic citizenship, secularism, and multiculturalism based on her notion of sexual difference. To harmonize the people of Europe, including arrivals from former European colonies, Irigaray suggests that a new civil status be crafted for a male–female couple that may be multicultural, multireligious, and multiracial. This couple would be secured by sexed civil rights, and its internal sexuate difference would be the basis for the protection and respect of its other possible differences of culture, religion, and race. The various forms of neutralizing and amalgamating traditional legal unions of male–female couples must be overcome by granting a specific sexed civil status to women and to men. *Between East and West* explores in a more poetic than political vein the relation of the breath to subjectivity, sensuality, perception, and sexuality. This work is inspired by the practice of yoga and by its understanding of the relation between mind and body, and between subject and nature. *I Love to You* experiments with the notion of a preserved interval of distance between two differently sexed subjects who love and respect each other precisely in virtue of that unbreachable gap. It offers a vision of dialogue between men and women that attends to their supposedly different ways of using language. Several of the later texts also emphasize the customary relation of women to the fertility of the natural world, and present this affinity as a feature of women’s history worth preserving, amplifying, and studying.

Luce Irigaray’s fearless and inventive philosophical voice resounds in social movements, and academia, as well as feminist, ecofeminist, psychoanalytic, political, religious, and aesthetic work around the globe. Critics of many sorts have found her vision startling, regressive, or imponderable while proponents find that she has cracked Western philosophy open to the failures that help compose it, and subjected it to a sexuate regard that it could not think existed.35

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35. Irigaray is aware of resistances to her proposals. She writes: “Unfortunately, women are the first to say that woman does not exist and cannot do so. Which means that they refuse to accept a generic identity for the female. The denial eliminates the possibility of constituting
a culture of two sexes, two kinds. We remain in the horizon in which man is the model of human kind, and within this human kind, there are empirical women or natural entities without an identity of their own” (Luce Irigaray, I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity within History, Alison Martin [trans.] [New York: Routledge, 1996], 65).
The concept of French feminism emerged in the USA and Britain in the 1970s when selections of the works of French theoreticians were translated into English. The writers included in this category are all feminists in the sense that they work to question traditional misogynistic conceptions of femininity and masculinity, women and men. They operate, however, with different theoretical and practical interests and within different disciplines: philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, semiotics, literature, and history. The critical attacks of the French feminists are directed at the tradition of Western thinking and writing, at its androcentric concepts, metaphors, and questions, but these theorists also problematize the prevailing forms of feminist theory by historical and conceptual-critical inquiries.

The aim of this article is to clarify the concepts and methods that French feminist thinkers have used in analyzing, interpreting, and criticizing traditional philosophies of human existence and in developing new alternatives to these accounts. I will proceed in a systematic manner and study the central themes and arguments of three French feminist thinkers: Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Michèle Le Doeuff. I will also compare their discourses to those of Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir, who are presented separately in this volume but who both are usually classified among the French feminists.

I will begin, however, by questioning the unity of the category itself and by arguing that French feminism cannot be pinned down by any necessary or sufficient features. Rather than forming a closed totality, French feminism functions as a family resemblance concept in Wittgenstein’s sense.
The best-known representatives of this category of feminist thinking are Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray, but often Le Doeuff, Sarah Kofman, Monique Wittig, and Catherine Clément are also listed among “the French feminists.” For example, Elisabeth Grosz’s early commentary, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (1989), provides an interpretation of the philosophies of Kristeva, Irigaray, and Le Doeuff, whereas Toril Moi’s book *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) associates Kristeva and Irigaray with Cixous but bypasses Le Doeuff’s work. Kofman was added to the main representatives of French feminism by Nancy Fraser in a volume that she edited for *Hypatia* in 1989. When Penelope Deutscher introduced the second wave of French feminist philosophy to Anglo-American scholars in *Hypatia* in 2000, she referred to Fraser’s earlier selection – Beauvoir, Kristeva, Kofman, Irigaray, and Cixous – and proceeded to discuss the works of philosophers who are less familiar to the English-speaking audience, including Le Doeuff in the updated category.

In order to understand the theoretical and practical resources invested in the concept *French feminism* – and to be able to use the concept in an effective and responsible way – it is crucial to understand that the category is external to the works that it describes. The category betrays its artificial character in several ways.
related respects: doctrinal coherence, historical framing, strategic unity, and the shared language. Closer studies show that such connections are secondary and that they cover both more fundamental differences but also deeper philosophical alliances.

First, the category of French feminism suggests a doctrinal unity, when in fact the scholars and the scholarly works subsumed in the category are connected by multiple and partial links, which are not doctrinal but methodological and conceptual. The syntactic form gives the impression that the term “French feminism” would function in a similar, or comparable, way as the terms “British empiricism” and “German idealism.” In reality, however, it is closer in function to “Modern Aristotelianism”: rather than expressing a well-defined historical or metaphilosophical concept, it gathers together several philosophical approaches and theoretical interests. More precisely, French feminists do not share any theory or thesis about women or femininity. At most we can say that they take part in the same philosophical discussions aiming at solving fundamental problems concerning women’s relationship to being, knowledge, and language.

Second, the theses and arguments associated with and attributed to French feminists usually stem from sources other than their works. Kristeva and Irigaray, for example, are often identified as “deconstructive,” “poststructuralist,” and/or “postmodern” feminists, and thus classified among the successors of Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard. The classification is repeated despite the fact that both Kristeva and Irigaray work to develop alternatives to Derridean deconstruction and Lyotard’s post-Hegelianism. The neglect of these
distancing moves and critical interventions has led to even more misleading groupings in anglophone contexts: French feminists are lumped together with American postmodernists, such as Linda Nicholson, Donna Haraway, Linda Martín Alcoff, and Judith Butler, who in fact are influenced by and remain closer to classical American pragmatism (James, Dewey) and its antifoundationalism than to the transcendentalism of Heidegger and Derrida or their feminist critics.

Despite their disagreements and divergences, Derrida and his feminist interlocutors, Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray, share an interest in the transcendental constitution of being and reality as well as a radical attitude in their investigations of subjectivity and selfhood. In this tradition, truth is understood by the concepts of evidence and unveiling, and being is always related to some level or type of subjectivity – intellectual or affective, unitary or split, stable or processual – by which it discloses itself. For these fundamental reasons, the works of the French feminists should be kept apart from contemporary (post)pragmatism, which, despite its multiple manifestations, ultimately frames the problems


9. Butler frames her ontological and political arguments by readings of contemporary continental philosophers: Irigaray, Kristeva, Lacan, and Derrida. Despite these references, it seems to me that her overall strategy is more pragmatist than is usually realized. Most importantly, her vehement anti-foundationalism and anti-Cartesianism connects her not just to Foucault and Nietzsche but also to the tradition of James and Dewey. Moreover, her work also shows traces of her early engagement with Hegel. For an interesting attempt to combine Butler’s theory of performance with Irigaray’s discourse of sexual difference, see Alison Stone, Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). [*] Butler’s work is the focus of the essay by Gayle Salamon in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.

10. This difference has a historical background: The American pragmatists and naturalists share with their postmodernist successors a suspicion of all forms of Cartesian foundationalism. The continental transcendentalists, rather than rejecting or abandoning the Cartesian heritage, aim at radicalizing Descartes’s insight.

of knowledge, truth, and subjectivity by the ideas of use and practicality, functionality and efficacy.

Third, being based on external interests, the category *French feminism* cuts across methodological ties that connect French thinkers to their philosophical interlocutors, contemporary and past. As an effect of the selective operation, a certain methodological blindness characterizes Anglo-American commentaries and critiques of the works of the French feminists, as most commentaries neglect crucial connections to contemporary discussions and to relevant historical sources. The most harmful consequence of this mistaken perspective is that the French feminists are represented as antagonists of French existentialism and classical phenomenology, and they are considered to have abandoned the philosophical questions of Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre. 12 This is a fundamental misunderstanding, for even though the French feminists criticize their existential predecessors,13 many of them accept and retain the transcendental approach of the existentialists and the phenomenologists, and none propose a (re)turn to naturalism or empiricism.


13. Irigaray, for example, rejects Beauvoir’s existentialist thesis about woman’s becoming on the grounds that it implies an opposition between being and becoming, nature and culture: “It is not as Simone de Beauvoir said: one is not born, one becomes a woman (through culture); but rather: I am born woman, but I must still become this woman that I am by nature” (Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity within History*, Alison Martin [trans.] [New York: Routledge, 1996], 107, translation modified; originally published as *J’aime à toi: Esquisse d’une félicité dans l’histoire* [Paris: B. Grasset, 1992], 168). In *Je, tu, nous: Pour une culture de la différence* (Paris: Éditions Grasset et Pasquelle, 1990), published in English as *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, Alison Martin (trans.) (New York: Routledge, 1993), Irigaray explains that her disagreement with Beauvoir concerns the ideal of equality and the role of psychoanalysis in the thinking of sexual identity (see “Égales ou différentes?,” 8–9; published in English as “A Personal Note: Equal or Different?,” 11; cf. *J’aime à toi, 168, I Love to You*, 107). These comments have led some commentators to conclude that Irigaray and Beauvoir occupy “dramatically oppositional positions” (Naomi Schor, “This Essentialism Which Is Not One: Coming to Grips with Irigaray,” in *Engaging with Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, Carolyn Burke et al. [eds] [New York: Columbia University Press, 1989], 62). It has also been argued that Cixous marks her divergence from Beauvoir’s existentialism by not mentioning Beauvoir’s work in “Le Rire de la Méduse” (“The Laugh of the Medusa”), which was first published in a special *Simone de Beauvoir* issue of *L’Arc* (1975). From a scholarly perspective, such conclusions are premature, as Cixous’s and Irigaray’s texts are appeals for *thinking*, not academic theses, and as French philosophers in general do not mention their sources but expect their readers to recognize the historical and conceptual links.
An additional effect of this blindness is that the methodological and conceptual innovations of the French feminists are seldom connected to the modernist tradition of European literature. Thus, the intellectual and poetic links to the works of female writers, such as Virginia Woolf, Marguerite Duras, and Colette, are seldom noticed by philosophical commentators.

Fourth, the theoreticians included in the category are French but only in the sense that they all live in France and write in the French language. Their ethnic backgrounds and their native languages as well as their intellectual genealogies vary greatly because they come from different communities and areas of Europe: Cixous from Algeria, Irigaray from Belgium, Kristeva from Bulgaria, and Le Doeuff and Kofman from France. The neglect of the heterogeneity of the origins of the French feminists has produced a number of misleading criticisms. One example here is the accusation of racial insensitivity, often voiced by American critics. In fact theoretical questions of ethnicity and racial discrimination are not forgotten or neglected by the French feminists, as so many commentators suggest. They are included in the continental tradition from the start, but in a different way than they appear in the theoretical disputes that have developed in the USA and Britain: “race” is not so much an issue of color in this tradition as it is an issue of ethnic, linguistic, and religious identity.

To summarize: it is important to notice that many of the criteria of categorical inclusions and exclusions do not emerge from the works of the French feminists but come from certain disputes that dominated the English-speaking academic community in the 1960s and 1970s. These disputes concerned the scientific character of metaphysics and the relation of philosophy to literature and the arts, on the one hand, and empirical sciences, on the other hand. The disputed problems were inherited from the positivist tradition of British philosophy and from its American successor in pragmatism and naturalism, and were

15. See, for example, Jane Flax, Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 171–7.
alien to continental thinkers. Neither the borderline between metaphysics and science nor the borderlines between philosophy and art, on the one hand, and philosophical and empirical inquiries, on the other, were regarded in the same manner on the continent as they were regarded in postwar Britain and the USA.

In the following, I will discuss four topics that both connect and separate the feminist thinkers that are subsumed under the category French feminism: embodiment, subjectivity, exclusion, and the imaginary. While focusing on these four topics, my aim is not to suggest any doctrinal unity nor to undermine the importance of any other themes, problems, or phenomena discussed by the French feminists. Rather, the aim is to open four perspectives that help to identify those alliances and divergences that are methodologically and conceptually significant and important for the development of feminist philosophy. Most importantly, I want to show how the different feminist projects proposed by “the French thinkers” relate to Beauvoir’s classical account of sexual difference and to the tradition of existential-phenomenological philosophy that lays the methodological basis for her work. I do this because I firmly believe that Beauvoir’s feminist arguments provide a forgotten ground for many contemporary projects that we find developed on the continent.17

II. EMBODIMENT: MATERNITY AND DESIRE

In the usual understanding, poststructuralist and deconstructivist French feminists – Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray – question and abandon two central assumptions of Beauvoir’s existential approach. First, Beauvoir is claimed to devalue or neglect those aspects of life that are specific to women and crucial for their creativity: embodiment, maternity, and desire. Second, Beauvoir is said to privilege those functions that are associated with masculinity: rationality, objectivity, autonomy, and transcendence. In this interpretation, Beauvoir argues that if women want to be emancipated they must downgrade their bodily functions and engage in male activities.

The poststructuralist French feminists, on the other hand, are presented as theorists of embodiment and female creativity. Focusing on certain topical

17. I have chosen not to focus on the psychoanalytic background of the French theorists, but instead want to clarify their existential-phenomenological starting-points. This is not to diminish the influence of Freud and Lacan, or Melanie Klein and Helene Deutsch, but to refine and correct the received view of the French feminists as “Lacanians.” Detailed accounts have been presented of the relation between French feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, already by early commentators, for example Jane Gallop, Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter’s Seduction (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), and Elisabeth Grosz, Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).
connections, commentators argue that their accounts of sexual difference reaffirm and revalue women’s bodies and bodily functions, sexuality, and maternity. Moreover, French feminists seem to privilege these functions in their investigations of intersubjectivity and communality: Cixous questions the Kantian idea of moral law by reference to the creative feminine practice of Clarice Lispector,\(^\text{18}\) Kristeva suggests a new form of relatedness – “herethics” (l’héréthique) – that is built on or modeled by maternity,\(^\text{19}\) while Irigaray argues for an ethics of desire and love that affirms sexual difference.\(^\text{20}\) This has led many interpreters to claim that there is a clash between Beauvoir and her successors. Moira Gatens, for example, argues that “under the influence of deconstruction, both Irigaray and Cixous reverse de Beauvoir’s strategy by re-instantiating the female body and the feminine and treating both as sites for exploration in feminist politics.”\(^\text{21}\)

Despite repeated suspicions and accusations of “heterosexism,”\(^\text{22}\) French feminists are usually praised in Anglo-American contexts for their abandonment of Beauvoir’s androcentric universalism and naïve humanism, and for their

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attacks on classical ethics and epistemologies that contrast mind with body, reason with emotion, intellect with sensibility, concepts with desire, and operate on a secret privileging of the masculine over the feminine.

This simple contrast between Beauvoir and her poststructuralist critics is, it seems to me, a fundamental misunderstanding and constitutes a main obstacle for the development of contemporary philosophy of gender relations and sexual difference. The contrast is not just historically mistaken; it also downgrades and hides certain systematic – conceptual and methodological – connections that are crucial for the understanding of the alternatives offered by contemporary French feminists. Moreover, the neglect of the Beauvoirian background of contemporary French feminism easily leads to false accusations of naturalism and essentialism. In order to clarify the relation between Beauvoir and her poststructuralist critics it is necessary to update and re-examine the received view of Beauvoir’s feminism and its philosophical starting-points.

The first thing to notice is that Beauvoir did not neglect the task of theorizing embodiment; on the contrary, she introduced and developed powerful conceptual distinctions that allowed her, as well as her French successors, to argue for the specificity of feminine experience. Her main contribution to the philosophy of embodiment is her argument against naturalistic and bioscientific (anatomical and physiological) conceptions of human sexuality. The first part of The Second Sex shows that biological concepts cannot provide a foundation for the philosophical understanding of the relations between the sexes. To account for these relations, Beauvoir claims, we must introduce the phenomenological-existential concepts of sensibility and lived embodiment. The Second Sex shows that radical feminist thinking cannot proceed unless it incorporates these concepts and bases its investigations of sexual difference on them.

The poststructuralist feminists accepted Beauvoir’s conceptual solution. Their accounts of feminine desire and maternity do not fall back on any naturalistic or biologistic conceptions of the human body and sexuality, but develop further the description and interpretation of the lived experience outlined by Beauvoir. More precisely, Cixous’s insistence on feminine desire, Kristeva’s inquiries into maternity, and Irigaray’s discourse of fluidity and the mucous membranes of the

23. Despite her critique of Cartesianism, Irigaray operates within the Cartesian tradition and, instead of rejecting its methods, works to radicalize them and turn them against the Cartesian doctrine. See, for example, Irigaray, Éthique de la différence sexuelle, 19–23, 75–84; An Ethics of Sexual Difference, 12–15, 72–82. On Irigaray’s relation to Descartes’s philosophy and Cartesianism, see my “Verwunderung und sexuelle Differenz: Luce Irigarays phänomenologischer Cartesianismus,” Silvia Stoller (trans.), in Feminist Phenomenology and Hermeneutics, Linda Fisher et al. (eds) (Würzburg: Köningshausen & Neumann, 2005).

24. For a detailed argument for this reading, see my Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
feminine body do not depend on any anatomic or physiological theories. Rather, they all describe the body as it is given in direct sense-perception, affection, and empathetic intuition. The body thus described is not a hormonal, neural, or genetic mechanism – all such mechanisms are scientific abstractions. The body at issue is a lived, experienced reality, constituted in sensibility and movement. As such, it is a dynamic and changing form, not a static entity or substance. Following from this understanding, all these thinkers inquire into the constitution of objects and values in the actions and passions of humans as bodily subjects.

To be sure, Beauvoir’s discourse involves highly negative claims about maternity, and this distances her from poststructuralist feminists. However, in order to understand the philosophical significance of this difference, two things must be emphasized. First, what is groundbreaking in Beauvoir’s analysis is not her evaluation of femininity but her new way of conceptualizing embodiment. Poststructuralist feminists follow Beauvoir in privileging the first-person perspective on experience and in rejecting all naturalistic accounts of embodiment and subjectivity. Second, Beauvoir’s negative descriptions of the maternal body do not constitute her final positions on these matters but belong to her critical argument about traditional ways of framing and representing women’s bodies. The Second Sex shows that the Western tradition has repeatedly identified the female body with the animal body and associated male existence with spirituality and rationality. Beauvoir questions these connections, and argues that human existence, in both variations – feminine and masculine – is a paradoxical condition and incorporates spirit with matter, and reason and understanding with emotion and embodiment. Cixous’s and Irigaray’s early critiques of the hierarchical oppositions of Western philosophy owe at least as much, if not more, to Beauvoir’s problematization of the sexual mythology as to Derrida’s and Heidegger’s de(con)struction of metaphysics.25

To see concretely the connections between Beauvoir and her poststructuralist and deconstructivist critics, let us compare their accounts of women’s experiences of maternity and desire. The following quotations make clear that all these thinkers share the idea that maternity and desire, as lived by women in the first-person singular, are particular modes of experience that challenge traditional androcentric representations of the human condition. At the end of The Second Sex, Beauvoir summarizes her argument by writing: “There is a whole region of human experience which the male deliberately chooses to ignore because he fails

to think about it: this experience woman lives.”26 Pregnancy and the intimate, paradoxical relationship with the child is one of such lived experiences:

[P]regnancy is above all a drama which is played within the woman herself. She feels it at the same time as an enrichment and as a mutilation. The fetus is part of her body, and it is a parasite that exploits the body. She possesses it, and she is possessed by it. It epitomizes the whole future and, by carrying it, she feels herself vast as the world. … But she also feels herself moved by obscure forces, tossed and violated. What is specific to the pregnant woman is that the body is experienced as immanent at the moment when it transcends itself. … The transcendence of … the man of action is inhabited by one subjectivity, but in the becoming mother the opposition between subject and object is abolished. She forms with this child from which she is swollen an equivocal couple overwhelmed by life.27

This mystery of a collar of blood that inside the mother’s belly changes into a human being is one no mathematics can put in equation, no machine can hasten or delay; she feels the resistance of duration that the most ingenious instruments fail to divide or multiply; she feels it in her flesh, submitted to the lunar rhythms, and first ripened, then corrupted, by the years.28

Kristeva develops Beauvoir’s description of the inner division of the maternal body in her well-known essay “Stabat Mater.” I quote a rather lengthy passage, in order to bring to the fore the similarity with Beauvoir’s text as well as the richness of Kristeva’s description:

The immeasurable, unconfinable maternal body.

First there is the separation, previous to pregnancy, but which pregnancy brings to light and imposes without remedy.

On the one hand – the pelvis; center of gravity, unchanging ground, solid pedestal, heaviness and weight to which the things adhere, with no promise of agility on that score. On the other hand – the torso, arms, neck, head, face, calves, feet: unbounded liveliness, rhythm and mask, which furiously attempt to compensate for the immutability of the central tree. We live on that border, crossroads

beings, crucified beings. A woman is neither nomadic nor a male body that considers itself earthly only in erotic passion. A mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language – and it has always been so.

Then there is this other abyss that opens up between the body and what had been its inside: there is the abyss between the mother and the child. What connection is there between myself, or even more unassumingly between my body and this internal graft and fold, which, once the umbilical cord has been severed, is an inaccessible other? My body and ... him. No connection.29

The French feminists are also well known for their celebration of feminine desire and enjoyment (jouissance). Cixous and Irigaray especially are presented as theorists of feminine desire and both are praised and criticized for their defense of the specificity of feminine experience and expression. Moreover, they are claimed to argue that feminine speech and writing – écriture féminine – emerge from the functions of the feminine body. This is often taken as a naturalistic argument that reduces women’s creative expressions to the biology of the female organism. Such readings involve several misconceptions. First, as we have seen, the feminine body, as described by the French feminists, is not any natural reality or substantial unity but is a dynamic form of motility and sensibility. Cixous can thus argue that also a writer that anatomically and socially is posited as male can express femininity.30 Second, feminine speech and writing has an origin in feminine bodies but this should not be taken in any causal or functional sense. Rather, the relation between verbal expression and embodiment is constitutive: the rhythmic kinaesthetic structures prepare the body for the constitution of linguistic forms. Thus we find Kristeva claiming that the primitive operations of breathing, swallowing, and tasting “provide a bed for words.”31 Third, bodily

structures are unique to individual subjects. This means that “femininity” is not used within this theoretical context as a name for an essence or an entity but for a style.

The specificity of feminine desire is not a new invention but has a long history in French literature and feminist writing. We find it thematized already in the writings of George Sand, Colette, and Duras. Beauvoir gave these descriptions a new critical and theoretical function by arguing that the dichotomous concepts of Aristotelian philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis cannot capture the specificity of feminine desire. Feminine enjoyment and sexual pleasure cannot be described by the oppositional concepts of activity and passivity, action and reaction, attraction and repulsion, charge and discharge, means and ends. To express its original temporal form we must overcome all such dichotomies:

Feminine enjoyment radiates throughout the whole body; it is not always centered in the genital organs; even when it is, the vaginal contractions constitute, rather than a true orgasm, a system of undulations that rhythmically arise, disappear and re-form, attain at times a paroxysmal condition, become vague, and sink down without ever quite dying out. Because no definite term is set pleasure strives for infinity.

Irigaray’s This Sex Which Is Not One resonates:

But woman has sex organs more or less everywhere. She finds pleasure more or less everywhere. Even if we do not talk about the hysterization of her whole body, the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined – in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness.


35. Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, 28, translation modified; Ce sexe qui rien est pas un, 28.
And in “Sorties,” we find Cixous arguing as follows:

She has never “held still”; explosion, diffusion, effervescence, abundance, she takes pleasure in being boundless, outside of herself, outside same, far from a “center,” from any capital of her “dark continent,” very far from the “hearth” to which man brings her so that she will tend his fire which always threatens to go out … She doesn’t hold still, she overflows. An outpouring that can be agonizing, since she may fear, and make the other fear, endless aberration and madness in her release. Yet, vertiginous, it can also be intoxicating.36

III. SUBJECTIVITY AND EXCLUSION

The relations of contemporary “French feminists” to Beauvoir’s existential feminism are not unitary or homogenous but different in each case. In this respect, Kristeva and Cixous can rightly be associated with Irigaray, as long as one remembers that they are not just poststructuralist thinkers but also are influenced by classical and existential phenomenology. However, one should also keep in mind that the relations that these three French feminists have to phenomenology are multiple and different.

Kristeva is a reader of Husserl and a theorist of subjectivity and selfhood. The philosophical significance of her concepts of the semiotic, the speaking subject, and the abject cannot be understood unless one takes into account their background in the phenomenology of pre-thetic and affective experiences, analyzed already by Husserl but also by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. It is crucial to notice that in Revolution in Poetic Language, Kristeva defines her central concept of the semiotic not just by Lacanian but also, and equally importantly, by Husserlian concepts: the semiotic is what precedes all thetic (positing) activity.37 Thus defined, the semiotic processes belong to the level of prethetic, prepredicative, experience explicated by Husserl in Experience and Judgment. The subject of these experiences is very different from the subject of cognitive and judgmental acts conceptualized by Husserl in his early works: it is hidden, operative, and affective.38

In the essay “Ethics of Linguistics,” Kristeva explains how her own studies of *the speaking subject* are inspired by Roman Jakobson’s works, which combine historical-political sensitivity with theoretical rigor. The phenomenological background of this part of Kristeva’s work is in Merleau-Ponty’s discussions of the speaking subject and his distinction between “spoken language” and “speaking language.” Following Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Kristeva reminds us of the necessity of subjectivity in all linguistic expression. She does not suggest that selfhood or subjectivity is an effect, a fiction, or an artifact, as some postmodernists do. Her caution is not against subjectivity as such, but against traditional attempts to unify or solidify the subject, to reduce it to the “punctual ego” of judgments, categorical perceptions, and propositional activity.

Kristeva’s main argument is that theories of expression fail if they neglect the multilayered, fractured, and dynamic character of the human being. The speaking subject has to be understood, not just as the guarantee of order and unity, but also as the locution of movement and change. This is not a rejection of transcendental subjectivity or the ego, as prejudged readings may suggest, but is a rejection of narrow and superficial notions of subjectivity.

Kristeva’s inquiries into abjection also have a phenomenological background. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva introduces her concept of the *abject* with reference to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, but she argues that the phenomenon challenges both versions of the analytic theory as it does not involve any representation of a desired object or any repression of an ambivalent content but is founded on an ambiguous distinction between inside and outside, own and alien. Kristeva ends the introductory section by writing: “This preliminary survey of abjection, phenomenological on the whole, will now lead me to a more straightforward consideration of analytic theory on the one hand, of the history of religion on the other, and finally of contemporary literary experience.” Her descriptions of abject phenomena and qualities substantiate her methodological claims: they question the concepts of psychoanalysis, Freudian and Lacanian, and develop further the phenomeno-
logical insight into affectivity presented by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{44}

Cixous, on the other hand, works out her feminist insight in a close collaboration with Derrida, both being strongly influenced by Heidegger’s destructive approach to Western philosophy and his redefinition of subjectivity as \textit{Dasein}. Irigaray, for her part, takes issue with the whole philosophical canon – from Plato and Aristotle to Descartes and Spinoza, and to Nietzsche, Heidegger, Levinas, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty – but her readings of classical texts are at the same time strongly informed by those of Heidegger, Levinas, and Merleau-Ponty. Thus her understanding of feminine subjectivity is closely connected to her critical discourse of spatiality, elemental being, and the futurity of human life.\textsuperscript{45}

In contrast, Le Doeuff starts her reading of Beauvoir, and the history of philosophy, not from any close encounters with phenomenologists, but from a harsh critique of all phenomenology. In \textit{Hipparchia’s Choice}, she explains that she rejects phenomenology for three related grounds: First, she claims that the transcendental ego discovered by the phenomenologists is cut off from the world and all empirical relations. Most drastically, and this is Le Doeuff’s second complaint, the ego lacks all relations with others; the best it can do is to constitute, within itself, the phenomenon of the alter ego, but such a creation is far from the concrete fleshly others that we encounter in our everyday dealings. Third, Le Doeuff claims that the phenomenological enterprise leads to skepticism about the philosophical relevance of the objective and natural sciences.\textsuperscript{46} Her argument is that Beauvoir’s uncompromising political commitment to women’s cause led her to question and finally to abandon the theoretical, epistemological, and ontological concepts of Sartre as well as those of Husserl and Heidegger. For Le Doeuff, the writer of \textit{The Second Sex} is not a theoretical philosopher but an ethical and political thinker. Thus, in her account, Beauvoir’s

\textsuperscript{44} Elisabeth Grosz explains this methodological and conceptual link by the fact that Kristeva was influenced by Mary Douglas who, in her \textit{Purity and Danger}, relies on Sartre’s existential psychoanalysis and his account of the vital values of being; see Grosz, \textit{Volatile Bodies}, 192–4.


feminism should be related and compared to Hannah Arendt’s political works rather than to Husserl’s epistemology or to Heidegger’s ontology.⁴⁷

But Le Doeuff’s reading of classical phenomenology, while not uncommon today, is not the one that Beauvoir accepted. While writing The Second Sex, Beauvoir was influenced, not just by Sartre and his early theory of the ego, but also by Merleau-Ponty, who in his Phenomenology of Perception presented a very different account of Husserl’s philosophy.⁴⁸ According to Merleau-Ponty, the Husserlian ego is not a transcendent object nor a formal element of consciousness; rather, it is a paradoxical subject that is connected to the world by its sensations, affections, and perceptions, but is also able to slacken these ties by reflective activity. Moreover, the fundamental relation that the ego has to the world is not cognitive but affective and sexual. Merleau-Ponty even argues that the affective perceptual relation lays the ground for all objectification and ultimately also for the objective sciences: “Let us try to see how a thing or a being begins to exist for us through desire or love and we shall thereby come to understand better how things and beings can exist in general.”⁴⁹ In Merleau-Ponty’s understanding, phenomenology does not develop in opposition to the sciences – natural, biological, or human – but in constant interchange with them. It retains its transcendental tasks but renounces the false hope of laying down the foundation of all sciences once and for all. On this point as well, Beauvoir seems to agree with Merleau-Ponty, as her discourse of the feminine condition combines transcendental-existential descriptions and analyses with empirical findings from the fields of history, anthropology, psychology, and the social sciences.

The feminist topic of Le Doeuff’s philosophical inquiries is women’s continuous exclusion from the institutions and practices of knowledge. Beauvoir’s work figures in these inquiries both as a case study and as a source of feminist insight and strategic guideline. The aim is to demonstrate and analyze the multiple forms of exclusion, its different mechanisms as well as the false justifications that cover them, and to recognize and counter its contemporary operations. These mechanisms include disparaging representations of intellectual women and women’s cognitive and creative contributions. Corresponding to these gender representations, Le Doeuff analyses the ways in which the process of knowing and its results are pictured by gendered metaphors. She does not claim that the exclusion of women would be total or complete; on the contrary, she shows

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⁴⁷ See, for example, Le Doeuff, L’Étude et le rouet 125–27; Hipparchia’s Choice, 108–11.
⁴⁸ For Beauvoir’s indebtedness to Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of classical phenomenology, see my Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference, and “An Introduction to Beauvoir’s Review of Merleau-Ponty’s Phénoménologie de la perception,” in Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophical Writings, Margaret Simons et al. (eds) (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005).
⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty, Phénoménologie de la perception, 180; Phenomenology of Perception, 154.
that it is always partial. Through centuries women have been allowed to occupy secondary positions in philosophical and scientific enterprises. Most of the intellectual women that we know have worked as intellectual helpmates or assistants for male inventors, or as teachers, defenders, and distributors of their doctrines. Women have been denied the positions of independent, self-governed cognitive agents. In other words, women have been, and still are, allowed to take part in auxiliary scientific tasks, they are allowed access to the subfields of philosophy (most easily ethics and history of philosophy), but they are not supported in their attempts to develop mastery of the complete field. On the contrary, all such attempts are jeopardized.

Le Doeuff’s thesis of exclusion is not a conceptual but an empirical claim. She does not argue that the concepts or meanings of femininity and knowledge would be oppositional or in conflict. Her claim concerns concrete women in real historical circumstances and the ways in which they have been treated by their contemporaries and by their successors, by colleagues and collaborators, by historians and philosophers. The exclusion that her work discloses consists of a multiplicity of particular actions and deeds performed by individual agents. For her, the androcentric order is a contingent historical formation. She explains: “Lacking any basis on the side of the involuntary (nature, economy, the unconscious), the phallic order must secure itself against every circumstance with the forest of props.”

Le Doeuff continuously argues and works for women’s intellectual independence. She questions theoretical obedience and doctrinal loyalty, that is, all limitations by which female or feminist thinkers confine themselves to this or that philosophical approach. But she does not suggest that intellectual independence would be an easy achievement. Rather, it is, in her analysis, a result of a painful and demanding work of separation and transference. Each thinker has to start by thinking together with a more advanced and established thinker. But no real thinker can remain in this infantile position. Female thinkers especially must struggle hard to break their way from theoretical(-erotic) couples – from teacher–pupil, professor–assistant, philosopher–writer dialogues – and find access to the open field of conflicting ideas and concepts:

The result of the imprisonment in such a [dual] relationship is that philosophizing women have not had access to philosophy but to a particular philosophy, which, it seems to me, is something very different. Their relationship to the philosophical is limited, from

outside the theoretical field, by the very relationship from which they could not possibly detach themselves.\textsuperscript{51}

Thus Le Doeuff connects the feminist topic of women’s exclusion to the great themes of Western philosophy: love of wisdom and independence of thought. Her analyses show that the institutions of Western philosophy have flattered themselves by attributing to themselves intellectual virtues – wisdom, objectivity, creativity, and self-critique – but in reality these institutions work for quite different values when they downgrade and neglect women’s intellectual capacities and when they take possession of women’s innovations and creations without acknowledging the debt.

This argument is different from Cixous’s and Irigaray’s concerns for the exclusion or subordination of the feminine in Western discourse and thinking. Whereas Le Doeuff studies how real women are excluded from the material and social institutions of knowing, in concrete spatiotemporal and sociohistorical situations, Cixous and Irigaray investigate how the \textit{meaning} or \textit{sense} of woman is constituted in Western philosophy. The shared claim of the latter is that the sense of woman has repeatedly been constituted in distinction from the primary sense of man. The idea is that Western discourse allows no independent meaning for (being) woman, but reduces, through different operations of negation, woman’s being to that of man. Thus woman is represented as an incomplete man, a child, or an animal, or she is pictured as man’s opposite, complement, or supplement.

This argument has roots in Beauvoir’s critical investigation of mythical thinking operative in religion, philosophy, and literature. While conceptualizing the exclusion of the feminine, Cixous and Irigaray are not just rephrasing Lacan or Derrida; more importantly, they reformulate and develop the argument that Beauvoir developed in \textit{The Second Sex}:

\begin{quote}
She is an idol, a servant, a source of life, a power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip, and falsehood; … she is man’s prey, his downfall, she is everything that he is not and that he wants to become, his negation, and the justification for his being.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Beauvoir argued that this dualistic and oppositional construal of sexual difference is operative in contemporary human sciences and life sciences as well as in the philosophical tradition, from Aristotle to Heidegger and Levinas. Moreover,


\textsuperscript{52} Beauvoir, \textit{The Second Sex}, 175, translation modified; \textit{Le Deuxième sexe}, 242.
she demonstrated that sexual opposition also motivates Freud’s concept of libido and his account of feminine desire as a passivity.53

We can find Beauvoir’s argument radicalized in the writings of Cixous and Irigaray. In the essay “Sorties,” Cixous writes: “Philosophy is constructed on the premise of woman’s abasement. Subordination of the feminine to the masculine order which gives the appearance of being the condition for the machinery’s functioning.”54 In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray puts forward a similar analysis: “[T]he articulation of the reality of my sex is impossible in discourse, and for a structural, eidetic reason. My sex is removed, at least as the property of a subject, from the productive mechanism that assures discursive coherence.”55 For both thinkers, the subordination of the feminine to the masculine means that sexual difference remains to be articulated; what we have are merely different representations of masculine subjectivity and its negative modifications that are claimed to stand for the feminine.

The methods and practices that Cixous and Irigaray develop for this project of rethinking are similar but not identical. Both are influenced by Heidegger’s destructive reading of classical philosophy (directly and through Derrida’s deconstructive modification), both recommend Nietzschean strategies for inventing new metaphors and concepts, both resort to the poetic aspects of language, and both develop a practice of disruptive mimesis, a playful repetition.56 But whereas Irigaray inserts her concepts in canonical philosophical texts, Cixous takes distance from the “master’s discourse” and works to renew the literary practices of prose, poetry, and theatre.

To summarize: whereas Le Doeuff’s thesis is about the exclusion of individual concrete women in sociohistorical circumstances, Cixous and Irigaray study critically the hierarchical constitution of the meanings of sexual difference, femininity, and masculinity. These two arguments have interesting connections but they should not be lumped together because they concern two different levels or aspects of our lives.

It is also worth emphasizing that Le Doeuff comments explicitly on the approaches and solutions of her postphenomenological colleagues. In the

55. Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un*, 145; *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 149.
56. Irigaray describes the mimetic practice in the following way: “There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of mimicry. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it” (*This Sex Which Is Not One*, 76; *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un* 73–4). On her relation to Nietzsche, see Ingeborg Owesen, *Sexual Difference as a Philosophical Problem: The Philosophies, Styles and Methods of Luce Irigaray and Friedrich Nietzsche*, PhD thesis, theoretical philosophy, University of Oslo (2007).
early work, *The Philosophical Imaginary* (1980), she acknowledges the innovations of Irigaray. Later she becomes more concerned about the dangers of overemphasizing feminine specificity and feminine desire. In the fourth notebook of *Hipparchia’s Choice*, she presents a detailed critique of “the feminism of difference.” According to her, all contemporary theories of sexual difference have deep roots in the philosophical tradition of the Enlightenment, and most approaches repeat Rousseau’s claims about the specificity and distinction of feminine capacities and virtues. Against this model Le Doeuff presents a nominalist and empirical approach that argues that we cannot judge women’s spiritual, creative, or intellectual powers until we have taken down the social institutions that favor and support male performance and power. In her latest work, *The Sex of Knowing* (1998), Le Doeuff’s reaction to the feminism of difference is even more skeptical, and dismissive. Here she joins those American feminists who have rejected the discourse of sexual difference as essentialist, idealistic, and apolitical.

### IV. THE IMAGINARY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Despite her very different methodological approach, Le Doeuff shares with the feminists of difference one central concept, the concept of the *imaginary*. Commentators quite rightly warn that Le Doeuff’s analyses of the philosophical imaginary should not be confused with the analyses of Lacan and his feminist critics: whereas Le Doeuff’s analyses of images concern an integral element of *philosophical discourse*, the Lacanian concept of the imaginary names a developmental phase or a constitutive element of *subjectivity*. The realization of this difference should not, however, lead us to overlook the fact that Le Doeuff shares with Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray at least one crucial metaphilosophical interest: they all attack, in their different ways, the intellectualistic self-representations of Western philosophy. They all work to demonstrate that the dominant metaphilosophical discourse is not just false but self-deceptive: that is, nonphilosophical *par excellence*. In Le Doeuff’s words: “Philosophy reworks elements of a mode of discourse which philosophy elsewhere repudiates.”

57. See, for example, *L’Imaginaire philosophique*, 153; *The Philosophical Imaginary*, 117.
60. See, for example, Le Doeuff, *Le Sexe du savoir*, 14, 118–19; *The Sex of Knowing*, xiv, 65.
Traditionally, philosophers have defined their discourse in opposition to narrativity (myth, fable), poetic language (rhetoric, prosody), and/or pictorial presentation (icons). There are some thinkers who have questioned this self-understanding (e.g. Peirce, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida), but most claim that philosophy is, or should be, independent of all figurative, sensible, and material elements of language. Le Doeuff joins the rare dissidents, and argues that in truth the paradigmatic cases of philosophical work – Plato’s dialogues, Descartes’s *Rules* and *Principles*, and Kant’s first *Critique* – combine conceptual and narrative-poetic elements in unique and creative ways. Moreover, the metaphoric and pictorial elements of language are not extrinsic or additional to philosophy, as if decorations or ornaments, but are necessary means of thinking and writing about truth and being. To be sure, the imaginary elements are usually framed as superficial and dispensable, but Le Doeuff’s analyses intend to show that they operate in keeping the argument, or the conceptual system, together.

Le Doeuff focuses her inquiries on the works of certain central philosophers: Plato, Descartes, Rousseau, and Kant. Her general argument, however, is that the images that are used by philosophers are not unitary, homogenous phenomena but combine several different meanings that stem from different historical periods and contexts. Thus the image is always a multiple and unstable element: it is both functional and dysfunctional for the stability and coherence of the text. Le Doeuff puts forward several additional arguments about philosophical images. First, she argues that philosophy is able to renew itself through its images, and even more strongly: “No philosophical thought is without its imaginary plane and it is perhaps on this level that the most significant changes take place.” Second, she claims that images usually appear when the question concerns the existential value of epistemology, that is, when philosophical insight or knowledge is claimed to contribute to happiness or the good life. Third, her analyses show that philosophical images are not common possessions but particular and specific means of thinking that come to us through particular lines of influence and inheritance. She explains: “images in philosophical texts

regularly turn out to have been taken from precise earlier sources making their study into part of a history of learning’s fabulous motifs.”

This latter insight has led Le Doeuff to study some less central or less prominent philosophical figures, such as Galileo, Francis Bacon, and Thomas More. She shows, for example, that the image of an island of truth that we find in Kant’s *Critique* is an inheritance from Bacon. These analyses are valuable as such, and they communicate in interesting ways with Anglo-American feminist epistemology, but for our purposes, it is crucial to notice that they also betray an important difference between Le Doeuff and her postphenomenological colleagues. Whereas Cixous and Irigaray work to disrupt, or to “destroy” in Heidegger’s terms, the teleological movement of Western thinking, from its ancient sources to its latest developments in psychoanalysis, Le Doeuff rejects all claims about the internal teleology of thought. Instead of struggling with transhistorical forces, she tracks a contingent development that depends not on any necessities, but on particular actions and choices, practices and institutions established by individual actors. In this antiteleological interest, her work bears similarities to that of Foucault, both being influenced by the tradition of French history of science (Bachelard, Canguilhem). In her understanding, the images that we find in philosophical texts do not threaten their conceptual, theoretical, and discursive categories, but rather support and assist them. The task is not to find or to create another speaking locus, outside the conceptual order, but to demonstrate the mutual dependence of the theoretical and the imaginary: “the imaginary which is present in theoretical texts stands in a relation of solidarity with the theoretical enterprise itself (and with its troubles) … it is, in the strict sense of the phrase, at work in these [theoretical] productions.”

So even if Le Doeuff’s explications of her critical practice resemble those of Cixous and Irigaray, there are important differences between these two approaches: whereas one studies philosophical texts as contingent formations, the other attacks them as phases or stages of a teleological movement; whereas one sees images as contributing to theoretization, the other studies them as traces of a pretheoretical order.

66. For a discussion of this tradition, see the essay by Pierre Cassou-Noguès in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
Kristeva offers a third perspective on Western images and imagination. Her inquiries into literary expressions and visual images of suffering and love are strongly influenced by Freud’s and Lacan’s theories of subjectivity, but her analyses are empowered and refined by conceptual distinctions that she finds developed by Husserl and Peirce. Both these philosophers argued that not all signs signify in the same way or in the same sense. Some signs represent determinate or fully constituted objects, whereas other signs merely indicate something indeterminate outside the sense-giving forms of conceptual language. Drawing on this idea, Kristeva argues that in addition to their representative functions, Western images and expressions of suffering and love also have indicative functions: they signify what cannot be captured by any forms of representation, verbal or nonverbal. Thus it is not just that we find representations of death anxiety in our tradition of religious, literary, and artistic creations, as Freud already argued; we also find elements that indicate the nonrepresentable power of the death drive: “the work of death as such … can be spotted precisely in the dissociation of form itself, when form is distorted, abstracted, disfigured, hollowed out.”

Kristeva sets out to study the operation of both types of signs in the images of desire and suffering that we find in the Western traditions of religion, literature, and visual arts.

The distinction between representation and indication also allows Kristeva to put forward a critical account of the feminine subject that finds pleasure in the cultivation of the unrepresentable. In Soleil noir, she argues that this is not any ideal – as Irigaray’s and Cixous’s early texts may suggest – but only one possible type of feminine subjectivity, specific both culturally and historically.

Despite this divergence in the analysis of the feminine condition, there is a deep theoretical alliance between Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray: all are successors of Lacan, and through Lacan all are indebted to the phenomenological analysis of signification and intentionality. In a lecture course held at the University of Paris VII in 1995–96, Kristeva explains: “Lacan has bequeathed us a psychoanalysis informed by phenomenology: his structural linguistics did not ignore Sartre or Merleau-Ponty, any more than Husserl or Heidegger.” The crucial idea in this tradition is that all psychic life, all mental states and processes, unconscious as well as conscious, are characterized by absence, or nonpresence. This is the fundamental structure of all signification, and more generally of all intentionality. Thus all presence of objects, subjects, goals, values, and events – clear or obscure, external or internal, real or imaginary – is given to us with some

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68. Kristeva, Black Sun, 27; Soleil noir, 38.
69. Kristeva, Soleil noir, 77–8; Black Sun, 66–9.
type of absence. There is no simple or pure presence in psychic life, and in most cases the given presence involves references to many different types of absence. The absence constitutive of the perception of a physical thing, for example, differs in kind from the absence that characterizes the perception of a person; and the nonpresence that belongs to imagined events is very different from the nonpresence of remembered happenings. This means that we can succeed in our analyses of different psychological functions – imagining, desiring, and remembering – only if we manage to keep apart the different forms of absence involved in them: “What phenomenology has taught us – particularly Sartre’s rereading of it, as well as Merleau-Ponty’s – is that intentionality is in the mode of not being [n’être pas]: in other words, all psychic representation (conscious and, a fortiori, unconscious) is of an essential negativity.”\textsuperscript{71}

\textbf{V. CONCLUSION}

I have argued that the feminist interventions of Cixous, Kristeva, and Le Doeuff have deep roots in the existential and phenomenological traditions of modern philosophy. This does not mean that these theorists would relate to the phenomenological movement in a similar way. On the contrary, we have seen that Le Doeuff takes a very critical position toward phenomenology and rejects its basic concepts, whereas Cixous and Kristeva question specific results and assumptions and proceed to develop new analyses of feminine experiences and new interpretations of the human condition.

In short, French feminism is a complex and heterogeneous field of inquiry that includes many different positions and approaches. None of these positions or approaches, however, can be understood, or rightly criticized, without studying how they relate to the discussions of subjectivity, intentionality, and embodiment that evolved in classical and existential phenomenology earlier in the twentieth century. The role of Beauvoir is crucial here, as she was the first French feminist who used phenomenological and existential tools to account for the hierarchical relation between the sexes. The fact that some “French feminists” do not refer to Beauvoir’s works while others dedicate whole volumes to the interpretation of her ideas should not mislead us into ignoring the profound and multiple impact of her feminist philosophy on contemporary debates.

\textsuperscript{71} Kristeva, \textit{Intimate Revolt}, 127, translation modified; \textit{La Révolte intime} 195.
MAJOR WORKS

Hélène Cixous


Julia Kristeva


Michèle Le Doeuff


Deconstruction first arrived in the North American academic world not as philosophy, but as literary theory. Indeed, throughout his career, Jacques Derrida’s major standing appointments outside France (Johns Hopkins University, Yale University, University of California-Irvine) were located in literature departments, rather than philosophy departments.1

Derrida’s academic debut in North America took place at the famous 1966 “Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” conference organized at Johns Hopkins by literary critics Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. The purpose of the conference, and the two-year series of events that followed it at Hopkins, was, in the organizers’ words, “to bring into an active and not uncritical contact leading European proponents of structural studies in a variety of disciplines with a wide spectrum of American scholars.”2 In short, the conference was intended to introduce contemporary European (especially French) thought to English-speaking audiences, and in the process to reinvigorate a somewhat stagnating Humanities discourse in the US.

By the mid-1960s, New Criticism – in its American (Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren), British (F. R. Leavis, I. A. Richards), and European (René Wellek) modalities – had ruled over literary and humanistic studies for several decades, and French structuralism promised to add new methodological life to a set of disciplines desperately in need of new directions. Indeed, as the American university began to “corporatize” in the 1960s and 1970s, the humanities came

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1. For a discussion of Derrida’s career, see the essay in this volume by Samir Haddad.
under increasing pressure to conform to a science-based model of publication and evaluation, and structuralism (with its neoscientific insistence on the underlying linguistic structures of art and experience) seemed to offer a very promising methodology for moving beyond New Criticism’s primarily pedagogical emphasis on literary evaluation and its neo-organic appeals to poetic wholeness. Structuralism seemed a much-needed potential cure for the malaise of the North American humanities, and the Hopkins conference was intended to be structuralism’s “product launch” in North America. It turned out, however, to function not so much as the debut of structuralism, but as the introduction of deconstruction, the “poststructuralist” theoretical orientation that would come to dominate North American literary studies in the 1970s and 1980s.

Indeed, when the conference proceedings were republished in 1972, under the revised title The Structuralist Controversy, the organizers had already seen the deconstructive writing on the wall: looking back from the early 1970s, they see that “evidence was already available in the Johns Hopkins symposium of the ensuing moment of theoretical deconstruction.” Indeed, while the 1966 conference saw memorable presentations from many well-known French intellectuals associated with an emergent structuralism (Roland Barthes, René Girard, Jacques Lacan), the most lasting and subsequently anthologized presentation was the one given by Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” And, despite the intentions of the conference organizers to bring the gospel of structuralism to American shores, Derrida’s essay was not so much an explanation or demonstration of structuralist principles as it was a deconstruction of them.

I. “STRUCTURE, SIGN, AND PLAY”

Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and Play” takes as its topic the heart of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism, which teaches us that the ground of any given system is not to be found somewhere outside that system’s regulated play; rather, it is the play within a (linguistic or kinship) structure that makes possible the distinction between meaning and nonsense, presence and absence, norm and taboo. Meaning is generated relative to a structure, and is not grounded by a positive relation to some founding moment outside the parameters of the system (such as the universal incest taboo or some transcendental signified). As concerns

3. Ibid., ix.
4. The linchpin text here is Saussure’s Course in General Linguistics, and its grounding claim for structuralisms of all kinds: “in language, there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system” (Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics,
literary criticism, this general methodological breakthrough was structuralism’s
great leap forward from New Criticism. However, Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and
Play” also produces a devastating critique of structuralism: when it thinks struc-
ture, Derrida argues, structuralism continues to replicate a displaced version of
the metaphysical drama, where underlying conditions of structural or social
possibility (like kinship systems, the unconscious, or grammatical constraints)
continue to regulate the emergence of objects in an all-too-transcendental
manner.

If Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and Play” and its critique of structuralism is in
some sense the inaugural moment of deconstruction in America, the essay’s
initial translation in The Structuralist Controversy (and that version’s subsequent
anthologization in a litany of introductory theory handbooks) inscribed a prob-
lematic reading at the heart of deconstruction’s English-language reception. The
“play” (jeu) in “Structure, Sign, and Play” (“La Structure, le signe et le jeu”) was
in strategic places throughout the essay translated into English as “freeplay,”
which inexorably suggested to English-speaking readers that Derrida’s critique
of structuralism consisted of arguing that any notion of structure denies the
“free,” originary openness of play, in favor of the rigid totalizations of regulation.

For example, Derrida writes toward the conclusion of that essay: “Le jeu est la
disruption de la présence … Le jeu es toujours un jeu d’absence et de présence,
mais si l’on veut le penser radicalement, il faut le penser avant l’alternative de
le présence et de l’absence; il faut penser l’être comme présence ou absence à
partir de la possibilité de jeu et non l’inverse.”

5. Jacques Derrida, “La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines,” in

Macksey (trans.), in The Structuralist Controversy, Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato

is or can be “free,” in the sense of being unregulated, originary, or not subject to the rules of a set of structures. There is no “outside” or “before” to structurality in Derrida’s work: there is, as Derrida (in)famously insists, no extra-text, nothing outside the play of structures.8 This insistence on structures, against the Romantic metaphysics of an unfettered, originary “beginning” in “freeplay,” is in fact where Derrida’s work most clearly agrees with, rather than criticizes, the doctrines of structuralism.

Derrida’s critical point in “Structure, Sign, and Play,” then, is not that structuralism has a totalizing notion of structure which is everywhere opposed by an inherently disruptive “freeplay,” an excessive and unbounded pre-originary moment that structure could never hope to tame; rather, Derrida’s argument is that structuralism cannot adequately think the structurality of structure. In other words, structuralism’s notion of structure is troublesome not because concepts, persons, or signs are naturally excessive (“free”) and thereby escape the determining strictures of regulation, but because structure is itself a concept that is subject to structuration. Any supposedly grounding structure is subject to a series of other strictures and structures: at the ground of any system there will always be a “play” among a series of other structures. So linguistic meaning, for example, is not excessive because of an inherent semantic fertility that cannot be captured by grammatical predicates, but because those grammatical, meaning-making structures themselves are beholden to many, many other “originary” structures – historical, political, theoretical, idiomatic, performative, institutional, and so on. Deconstructive “play,” in short, does not have to be “free” in order to be excessive – quite the opposite, in fact. As Derrida demonstrates time and again in his work, it is calculation or determination (in short, reading) that mobilizes excess, rather than that excess being the hidden origin (or its flipside, the originary abyss) to be revealed, uncovered, or “freed” by a deconstructive analysis. As Derrida writes in an essay on Emmanuel Levinas, “everything must be so calculated that calculation should not have the last word over everything.”9

In any case, it is this supposed commitment to deconstructive “freeplay,” against the seeming tyranny of structures and structuralism, that for better or worse laid the groundwork for Derrida’s reception in English-language literary

8. Derrida writes in Of Grammatology (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), “il n’y a pas de hors-texte,” translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as “there is nothing outside the text [there is no outside-text]” ([Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976], 158). He retranslates the phrase himself in the Afterword to Limited Inc.: “there is nothing outside context. In this form, which says exactly the same thing, the formula would doubtless have been less shocking” (“Afterword”, in Limited Inc., 136).

DECONSTRUCTION AND THE YALE SCHOOL OF LITERARY THEORY

studies, and it also opened the door to a litany of critiques that accused deconstruction of being a ludic discourse dedicated to the apolitical nihilism of linguistic freeplay. As, for example, British critic Terry Eagleton writes in his hugely influential 1983 introduction, *Literary Theory*, deconstruction:

frees you at a stroke from having to assume a position on an important issue, since what you say of such things will be no more than a passing product of the signifier and so in no sense to be taken as “true” or “serious”…. Since it commits you to affirming nothing, it is as injurious as blank ammunition.10

II. THE YALE SCHOOL

It was at the fateful 1966 Johns Hopkins conference that Derrida first met Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller, who would both land at Yale in the early 1970s, and along with critics Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman, as well as Derrida himself, would form the Yale School of deconstructionist literary critics through the 1970s to the mid-1980s. The moniker “School” is a bit misleading, however, as even during the heyday of the Yale School, it was clear that these five thinkers shared no coherent doctrine, much less a “deconstructive” methodology supplied by Derrida’s texts and then applied to literature.11 While much reference was made to the centrality of Derrida’s texts and their philosophical authority, each of the Yale deconstructionist critics had his own distinct set of interests and characteristic habits of thought.

In his introduction to the 1979 Yale School manifesto *Deconstruction and Criticism*, Hartman already makes a distinction between what he termed the “boa-deconstructors Derrida, de Man, and Hillis Miller,”12 and fellow travelers Bloom and Hartman himself. And this methodological heterodoxy of the Yale School became even clearer in subsequent years: Bloom and Hartman have remained much more invested in a certain aesthetic criticism, which became at times in fact hostile to “deconstruction,” while Hillis Miller continued to carry the deconstruction flag beyond Yale.

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11. Of course, deconstruction was not the only thing going on at Yale during those years. For example, Fredric Jameson was a member of the Yale French department from 1976 to 1983, and while he is and was sympathetic to deconstruction, his own Marxist itinerary differs sharply from the habits and interests of Yale School deconstruction.
In the end, what the Yale School critics had in common was probably nothing other than an insistence on the excessive, abyssal, or “undecidable” character of literary language. In Hartman’s words, all deconstructors are interested in “figurative language, its excesses over an assigned meaning.” For his part, de Man writes, “A deconstruction always has for its target to reveal the existence of hidden articulations and fragmentations within assumedly monadic totalities.” As Hillis Miller expands in his contribution to Deconstruction and Criticism, “Deconstruction’ is neither nihilism nor metaphysics but simply interpretation as such”, or, “deconstruction,” he writes even more straightforwardly, “is analytic criticism as such.” In short, for the Yale School of deconstruction, the closer one reads a text, the more the meaning escapes or becomes elusive, and the more the nature of reading is revealed not as the attainment of a single meaning or correct reading, but univocal meaning’s ultimate failure. For many critics of deconstruction, this commitment to close readings of canonical texts was the Yale School’s not-so-secret continuation of a traditionalist New Critical methodology. For his part, de Man seemingly concurs:

I don’t have a bad conscience when I’m being told that, to the extent that it is didactic, my work is academic or even, as it is used as a supreme insult, it is just more New Criticism. I can live with that very easily, because I think that only what is, in a sense, classically didactic, can be really and effectively subversive.

Thus understood (as close reading intensified to a fever pitch of undecidability rather than assured meaning), deconstruction became the dominant movement in literary criticism of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As de Man wrote in the aftermath of his deconstructive reading of Proustian metaphor and metonymy in his 1973 “Semiology and Rhetoric,” deconstruction was poised to become the literary critical Zeitgeist:

The whole of literature would respond in similar fashion, although the techniques and patterns would have to vary considerably, of course, from author to author. But there is absolutely no reason why analyses of the kind suggested here for Proust would not be

13. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 252.
applicable, with proper modifications of technique, to Milton or to Dante or to Hölderlin. This in fact will be the task of literary criticism in the coming years.18

And the ensuing period did in fact see such a heyday of American deconstruction: its unique methodology applied to virtually “the whole of literature.” Deconstruction may have taken much criticism both from the Right (conservatives who took it to be an anything-goes nihilism) and from the Left (those who took it to be merely an apolitical reading method), but the sheer amount of fire deconstruction took only solidified its place as the theoretical dominant in North American literature departments.

Deconstruction’s reign as the dominant paradigm of literary criticism lasted well into the early 1980s. Tragically, however, its linchpin figure, Paul de Man, would die unexpectedly from cancer in December 1983. Shortly thereafter it was discovered that, as a young man in Belgium during the Second World War, de Man had written several newspaper columns that contained overtly anti-Semitic statements. A great deal of discourse was produced in the aftermath of these findings, both by people sympathetic to deconstruction and de Man and by those for whom this was the final proof of deconstruction’s evasiveness and inability to grapple with political questions.19 In any case, the de Man affair ushered in the beginning of the end for deconstruction as the dominant methodology in American literary criticism. Following de Man’s death, Hillis Miller left Yale and went to the University of California-Irvine (in 1986, the same year he was elected president of the Modern Language Association), and Derrida would soon follow, effectively ending the period of the Yale School.

III. CRITIQUES OF THE YALE SCHOOL

Essentially, critics of the Yale School fell into three broad camps. The first comprised literary traditionalists, who felt that deconstructive “undecidability” was to be the death of literature and literary criticism. This critique was quickly dispensed with, however, insofar as the reign of deconstruction saw an explosion, rather than a constriction, of books and articles in literature and literary theory.

19. See, for example, de Man’s collected Wartime Journalism, 1939–1943 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), as well as the responses to it collected in Responses: On Paul de Man’s Wartime Journalism, Werner Hamacher et al. (eds) (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).
The second tier of critiques came from those who felt that deconstruction was never a radical enough break from formalist literary criticism. Cultural critic Simon Frith, for example, suggests that deconstruction as literary theory could be categorized “as a new scholasticism, a set of terms and techniques to be applied, rigorously but routinely, to any passing text.”

On this line of reasoning, although deconstructive reading claimed to be something radically new, in actuality it functioned as simply another version of New Criticism’s traditional methodology of close reading, cloaked in a theoretical vocabulary and reapplied to a series of texts in order to yield “new” readings. As Jane Tompkins points out in her 1980 “The Reader in History”:

What is most striking about reader-response criticism and its close relative, deconstructive criticism, is their failure to break out of the mold into which critical writing was cast by the formalist identification of criticism with explication. Interpretation reigns supreme both in teaching and publication just as it did when the New Criticism was in its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s.

These detractors pointed to the way in which deconstructive readers of literary texts hunted for self-canceling binary oppositions in the same (essentially unproblematic) way the New Critics hunted for themes and ironies. In addition, according to this line of reasoning, the end result of both readings is the same: a New Critical reading totalizes the text by offering an all-inclusive meaning or interpretation, while a deconstructive reading totalizes the text in exactly the opposite way – denying meaning or interpretation by showing how oppositions in the text cancel themselves out.

A third line of critique, related to the second, emphasized the supposedly apolitical and ahistorical bent of much Yale School deconstruction. As Rodolphe Gasché writes in his hugely influential critique of the Yale School in *The Tain of the Mirror*:

By neglecting the pragmatic and historical context of the utterance of what is dramatized in such a manner as to cancel it out, the criticism in question reveals its origins in Romantic (as well as, in a certain interpretation, Idealist) philosophy. It is a suprahistorical criticism

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that pretends to speak from a position free of ideology – that is, from an absolute point of view.22

Additionally, those concerned with the worldly dimensions of literature studies pointed to the danger of the political despair inevitably fostered by these readings’ notions of textual self-cancellation, the danger of fostering passive acceptance as the political result of a supposedly nihilistic textual undecidability. For the Marxist, feminist, or (new) historical literary critic, Yale School deconstruction was surmounted by a reorientation in literature departments toward the situated, political and social dimensions of literary texts and of the discipline of literary criticism itself.23

IV. DECONSTRUCTION AND LITERARY THEORY
AFTER THE YALE SCHOOL

Ironically, deconstruction probably had its greatest impact on literary theory not during its Yale School heyday, but afterwards. Or, to put it somewhat more precisely, deconstruction had its greatest impact not as a method for reading texts or producing literary-critical interpretations, but as a larger and more robust theoretical orientation toward questions of culture, ethics, and politics: the very “worldly” things that Yale School deconstruction had been criticized for supposedly ignoring. And much of this work of expanding deconstruction’s critical role beyond an interpretive method was carried out by scholars who were trained by the Yale School and its allies.

On the theoretical and pedagogical scaffolding of the more orthodox rhetorical deconstruction of the Yale School, an emergent political deconstruction could be found, for example, in the work of the boundary 2 group. There emerged also the postcolonial deconstruction of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the African-American deconstruction of Henry Louis Gates, the philosophical deconstruction of Derrida himself and thinkers such as Gasché, and the feminist

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23. Of course, there was at the time an emergent neo-Marxist deconstruction, most overtly presented in Michael Ryan’s Marxism and Deconstruction and in the group around the journal boundary 2 (Jonathan Arac, Donald Pease, Daniel O’Hara). There are also the various feminist deconstructions mentioned below, as well as a kind of “pedagogical” deconstruction associated with the work of Gregory Ulmer (see Applied Grammatology [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985]) and others. Yale School (or “rhetorical”) deconstruction was, already by the 1980s, one among many.
deconstruction of scholars such as Barbara Johnson, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Judith Butler.24

In short, the Yale School appropriation and usage of deconstruction was expanded in the 1990s, and refashioned for use in feminist, historicist, and political modes of theory and criticism. Importantly, this expansion constituted not so much an outright rejection of Yale School deconstruction, but an extension of its scope and its objects of study – beyond the literary canon, and indeed beyond the interpretation of literature itself. As cultural critic Colin MacCabe writes:

If the full cultural history of the complex transformation of French theory as it made the Atlantic crossing is impossible until much more time has elapsed and a full inventory can be made, it is [nevertheless] now possible to see clearly what was at stake in the de Manian appropriation of Derrida. De Man transformed Derrida's use of literature to interrogate the philosophical tradition into a celebration of literature as the timeless bearer of sceptical truth . . . . At this point the radicalism of deconstruction becomes moot. The anti-humanist ethic of literature as the perpetual staging of linguistic crisis remains absolutely wedded to the traditional curriculum, that curriculum structured to salvage substantial moral truths from the best that has been written and thought.25

24. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is University Professor at Columbia University, and author of the first American dissertation directed by Paul de Man at Cornell University, as well as author of Critique of Postcolonial Reason and translator of Derrida's Of Grammatology. Judith Butler (PhD in philosophy, Yale, 1984) is Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California-Berkeley, and author of Gender Trouble. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950–2009) (PhD in English, Yale, 1975) was Distinguished Professor of English at the CUNY Graduate Center, and author of Epistemology of the Closet. Barbara Johnson (1947–2009) (PhD in French, Yale, 1977) was Professor of English and Comparative Literature and the Frederic Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society at Harvard University, and author of A World of Difference. Henry Louis Gates, Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard, was finishing his Oxford dissertation as a Yale lecturer from 1976–79, and was subsequently appointed Assistant Professor at Yale from 1979 to 1984; his groundbreaking study The Signifying Monkey is greatly influenced by Yale School deconstruction.

For an extensive list of Hillis Miller's doctoral students, at Yale and after, see www.humanities.uci.edu/english/j/aboutjhm.html (accessed June 2010). For an overview of de Man's pedagogical career at Yale, see Marc Redfield's "Courses Taught by Paul de Man during the Yale Era," an appendix to a special issue of Praxis on "Legacies of Paul de Man": www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/deman/appendix1.html (accessed June 2010).

Likewise, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, even while calling her work in feminism and queer theory “deconstructive,” recalls that “a deconstructive analysis of ... definitional knots, however necessary, [is not] at all sufficient to disable them.” She continues: “Deconstruction, founded as a very science of différ(e/a)nce, has both so fetishized the idea of difference and so vaporized its possible embodiments that its most thoroughgoing practitioners are the last people to whom one would now look for help in thinking about particular differences.” Sedgwick very concisely marks the movement from thematizing of difference as textual undecidability, to a more robust interest in embodying, mobilizing, and responding to specific social, political, and ethical differences: gender, sexuality, race, sexual orientation. After deconstruction understood as a discipline or method, an other deconstruction surfaces: a deconstruction that concerns itself with social alterity, specificity, and the ethical response to the other.

This “other” deconstruction, then, returns literary theory specifically to Derrida’s work and its engagements with political issues. Recall Derrida’s caveat in his 1989 essay on the states of theory: “Deconstruction,” he writes:

is neither a theory nor a philosophy. It is neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens, what is happening today in what they call society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on and so forth. Deconstruction is the case.

Certainly, this “other” deconstruction was there all along, beside or before the more widely known literary critical method. But it is precisely this “other” deconstruction that came to the fore after the Yale School. Perhaps this is the kind of deconstruction that Butler calls for when she writes:

If essentialism is an effort to preclude the possibility of a future for the signifier, then the task is surely to make the signifier into a site for a set of rearticulations that cannot be predicted or controlled, and to provide for a future in which constituencies will form that have not yet had a site for such an articulation.

Something like this, finally, may be what deconstruction has to offer to the future of literary theory: the necessary trace not of the hermeneutic past but of the reinscriptive future. Deconstruction here teaches us that future reinscriptions are necessitated or foreclosed by the inscription at hand, by the question and promise that is today. The project of deconstruction, thus defined, would not then consist in showing the monotonous remainder-producing undecidability of texts and other cultural products, but rather in asking how, through a specific analysis, we can account for other, future reinscriptions of their sense. Perhaps one could say in shorthand that this is a deconstruction of futural production rather than originary undecidability or lack. As Derrida writes, “any coherent deconstruction is about singularity, about events, and about what is ultimately irreducible in them.”

V. “LIVING ON”

Derrida died, after a bout with pancreatic cancer, in October 2004. But deconstruction, as he had already made clear in his contribution to the Yale School’s *Deconstruction and Criticism*, does not live or die: rather, deconstruction is characterized by “Living On.” In the present, deconstruction lives on and proliferates in literary theory not so much as a method for reading texts, but as a general set of critical orientations, political engagements, and ethical responses. In the end, Derrida’s work on political and ethical questions – gender, apartheid, the new Europe, his final works on terrorism, globalization, and the American rogue state – have perhaps had more influence on recent literary theory than his earlier works on literature. Ironically, one might say that while deconstruction arrived in America as literary criticism and theory, it lives on most decisively as philosophy.

**MAJOR WORKS OF THE YALE SCHOOL**


31. Derrida’s essay in *Deconstruction and Criticism* is called “Living On/Border Lines.”
Harold Bloom


Paul de Man


Geoffrey H. Hartman

The Fate of Reading and Other Essays. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

J. Hillis Miller

When Richard Rorty\(^1\) died in June 2007, nearly every obituary began with a statement about the controversy surrounding his work and his international influence. Perhaps no American philosopher has attracted such international attention and the controversial nature of his work is only part of the reason. No philosopher in recent memory was as adept at transcending the schism that had divided Western philosophy for half a century and his influence transcended the restrictive boundaries of academic philosophy.

Rorty first sparked controversy with his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, in which he argued that the philosophical tradition from Plato through Descartes and Kant had simply outlived its usefulness. But worse, his argument drew on central currents in the tradition of analytic philosophy, turning them against its favored preoccupations with the foundations of knowledge, the nature of mind, truth, and realist interpretations of science. If that was not bad enough, he had favorable things to say about Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, and Foucault, luminaries of contemporary European philosophy ignored by analytically trained philosophers. The book established Rorty as philosophy’s chief gadfly in the United States, a role that he occupied unflinchingly to the end. It also stimulated interest in European philosophy among some younger, analytically trained philosophers in the United States. It attracted the attention of

\(^{1}\) Richard Rorty (October 4, 1931–June 8, 2007; born in New York; died in Palo Alto, California) received a BA and MA from the University of Chicago (1949, 1952), and PhD from Yale University (1956). His influences were Dewey, Heidegger, Sellars, and Wittgenstein, and he held appointments at Yale University (1956–57), Wellesley College (1958–61), Princeton University (1961–82), the University of Virginia (1982–98), and Stanford University (1998–2005).
European philosophers at least in part because he flirted with postmodernism, a term he later regretted using, and because he paid increasingly serious attention to Heidegger as well as other contemporary European philosophers.

Rorty remained controversial not only as the arch “truth denier” and a “self-hating” philosopher — a philosopher who seeks to end philosophy — but also because of his provocative readings of other philosophers, both Anglo-American and European. He was accused of being a relativist, an irrationalist, and an ethnocentrist. He was criticized for turning everyone he liked into pragmatists by dismissing the parts that did not seem to fit his reading. Furthermore, as he elaborated the political consequences of his views, he was condemned from both the left and right of the political spectrum. One popular conservative commentator condemned him for “hating America.” Political theories criticized him for the thinness of his account of liberalism. Feminists routinely attacked what they viewed as his old boys’ clubby sense of solidarity, and many international philosophers viewed him as merely an apologist for US style liberal democracy, treating him as its latest global export. I will not attempt to detail these criticisms or assess them since they have been organized in several substantial collections of essays and Rorty has responded to them frequently. What I wish to do instead is situate Rorty’s work between its American context and European resonances in order perhaps to make sense of his appearance in this volume of essays on “master thinkers” of recent continental philosophy.

To appreciate the initial controversy Rorty caused in the United States it is worth recalling the state of philosophy in the US when Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature exploded on the scene. The philosophical house was not only divided, as the title of a recent collection of essays has described it: analytic philosophy was by far the dominant and dominating approach to philosophy. This occurred in part because Rudolph Carnap and other European positivist philosophers who fled the Nazi advance through Europe and immigrated to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s came to exert an influence on the direction of philosophy in American universities that was to marginalize the indigenous philosophy, pragmatism. But their influence also led to the dismissal of the most influential schools of European philosophy. As a consequence, analytic philosophy became established as the dominant form of philosophical training and practice. The

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marginalization of pragmatism and the so-called “analytic/continental” split that was opened up did not simply produce alternative styles of philosophy: they polarized the philosophical landscape, resulting in real antipathy among leading proponents of each camp.

Carnap had set the tone in “The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language,” by famously quoting a passage from Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics*, using it as an unusually telling example of “pseudo-statements of a kind where the violation of logical syntax is especially obvious, though they accord with historical-grammatical syntax.” For the next generations of analytically trained philosophers, that is about the only exposure to twentieth-century European philosophers they were to receive or thought to need. But the criticism went both ways. Herbert Marcuse, for example, a very influential philosophy for other US students at the time, criticized logical positivism as merely a philosophical version of one-dimensional society: “The radical empiricist onslaught … provides the methodological justification for the debunking of the mind by the intellectuals – a positivism which, in its denial of the transcending elements of Reason, forms the academic counterpart of the socially required behavior.” Positivism, and by extension analytic philosophy generally, were simply part of the problem of late capitalist culture.

The dominance of analytic philosophy to the exclusion of pragmatists and continentally oriented philosophy was to become an especially fractious aspect of disciplinary politics in the late 1970s. A group of nonanalytic philosophers led a “pluralist revolt” against the analytic philosophers who dominated the American Philosophical Association (APA) and especially its largest division, the Eastern Division, accusing them of controlling the leadership and program committees of this major disciplinary association to the detriment of other philosophers. It is not without a little irony that Rorty was president of the Eastern Division of the APA during the pluralist revolt, yet he was on the receiving end of a good deal of hostility from all quarters of the conflict. But that story is best told in a different setting. The reason for mentioning it here is to contextualize both the reception of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and

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what Rorty’s role in the profession was to become in the remainder of the twentieth century in the United States.

The book was seen by analytic philosophers as a betrayal. That it was not exactly embraced by pragmatists is another matter, but it at least gave some initial aid and comfort to continentally oriented philosophers in the divided landscape. And for many young philosophers at the time, myself included, it opened up exciting possibilities for meaningful dialogue across traditions heretofore kept distinct. Rorty, more than any other philosopher at the time, challenged the aspirations of analytic philosophy while bringing the icons of the warring camps – Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger – together in fruitful dialogue.

Until the publication of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty was generally viewed as a bright and rising star among analytic philosophers. He had published significant papers on the range of topics then occupying analytic philosophers – on language, truth, the foundations of knowledge, the mind–body problem – and he had proposed an alternative in the mind–body identity theory debate that was attracting attention.9 Rorty had not been trained as an analytic philosopher, however. At the young age of fourteen, he had attended the University of Chicago, which had initiated a special program for gifted students, and through his study at Chicago he was influenced by the deeply historical approach that Richard McKeon10 had established there. In an autobiographical essay, Rorty says that in those days he had tried very hard to be a Platonist – “to hold reality and justice in a single vision”11 – but it had not worked out. He went to graduate school at Yale where he wrote a dissertation on Alfred North Whitehead under the direction of Paul Weiss, a leading process philosopher. He did not turn seriously to analytic philosophers until he joined the Princeton philosophy department. But when he did so, it was with considerable skill.

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10. Richard McKeon was Professor of Greek Philosophy and became dean of the humanities at the University of Chicago. In addition to his teaching and scholarship in the history of philosophy, he led the establishment of the University of Chicago’s signature general education program and its interdisciplinary committee on ideas and methods. He was also an originating member of the “Chicago School” of literary criticism.

Rorty’s social and political convictions, so prominent in his later work, however, go back to his childhood and a family steeped in progressive and leftist politics of the 1920s and 1930s. His grandfather had been one of the founders of the “Social Gospel” movement in America, his father was prominent in leftist literary circles, and his mother had studied at the University of Chicago during the time of its preeminence in reform-oriented social sciences. His parents, however, made a bitter break with their circle of New York City leftists and communists over the Rortys’ opposition to Stalinism. They left the city for rural New Jersey, where Rorty grew up around political talk and the comings and goings of political activists. By the time he was twelve, he says, “he knew that the point of being human was to spend one’s life fighting social injustice.”

These formative themes – the inability to hold reality and justice in a single vision and a progressive political conscience formed at an early age – give shape to his work and his sense of himself beginning with Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature and continuing to his last collection of philosophical papers, Philosophy as Cultural Politics. One theme informed the primarily critical aspect of his work – his view of the philosophical tradition from Plato through Descartes and Kant as a merely contingent development that had outlived its usefulness for us; and the other constituted the positive aspect of his work that sought to replace traditional philosophical preoccupations with the foundations of knowledge, truth, and reality with concern for expanding freedom and social hope. I will sketch the development of each of these themes.

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature is a challenging book. It has unusual historical sweep for a work that is also filled with detailed and technical arguments within the literature of analytic philosophy: arguments about foundational theories of knowledge; theories of truth, language, and meaning; and realist theories in the philosophy of science. The thesis of the book, however, is relatively easy to state: philosophy, since the time of Plato and especially since Descartes and Kant, has been held captive by an image of the mind as a mirror of nature; of knowledge and language as accurately representing in thought the world independent of mind; and of philosophy as the foundational discipline for the rest of culture because of its special understanding of the fundamental problems that arise within this image about consciousness, knowledge, truth, and reality. The book argued, however, that this image was contingent and thus optional. Further, analytic philosophy and its preoccupations remain stuck in this image, an image that has outlived its usefulness. What we need, Rorty argued, is a postphilosophical outlook that favors a pragmatic sensibility.

12. Ibid., 6.
about knowledge focused not on whether we accurately represent the world but instead on what people do to successfully cope with the world; an outlook that seeks descriptive freedom rather than truth – that resists attempts to find the single true vocabulary at the foundation of all vocabularies but rather fosters proliferation of incommensurable ways to talking about ourselves and the world; an outlook that seeks to replace the philosopher as adjudicator of the rest of culture with the public intellectual, informed dilettante, “the polypragmatic, Socratic intermediary between various discourses.”

Rorty claimed that this was the view held in common by Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. However, his arguments were drawn primarily from analytic philosophers: from Wilfrid Sellars, Willard Van Orman Quine, and Donald Davidson. It is impossible in this context to detail their views or Rorty’s controversial interpretation. A sketch will have to suffice in order to make two points. The first is that Rorty’s central claim was and continued to be that it is the dialectical direction of analytic philosophy itself that undermines the image of mind, language, and truth at the heart of the analytic conception of philosophy; and equally controversially, that analytic philosophy ultimately leads us back to the pragmatism of Dewey. Rorty did not see Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature as debunking analytic philosophy as much as carrying out its consequences.

The second point is that Rorty was initially led to Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and other European philosophers because of the resonance he found in them for the antifoundationalist view he drew from Sellars, Quine, and Davison. This led him to interpret them as simply arriving at the same place from somewhat different paths. And, more provocatively, he claimed that the place they arrived at had already been occupied by Dewey and pragmatism.

The first part of Rorty’s account was drawn from Sellars’s “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” in which Sellars had argued against what he called “the myth of the given”: the idea central to empiricism that all knowledge must ultimately be grounded in the immediacy and incorrigibility of sensory aware-

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15. For a more detailed discussion of this tradition in analytic philosophy, see the essay by John Fennell in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.


ness. Sellars had argued that awareness, in the sense of raw sensory stimulation, can play no role in grounding knowledge claims. Awareness in an epistemologically significant sense is a linguistic matter – awareness as or of something; and that sort of awareness already presupposes a range of concepts whose possession are necessary for awareness of that sort to be possible. Furthermore, knowledge must always have a linguistic, propositional structure – a justified true belief that can be formulated into a proposition that something is the case – and like the later Wittgenstein, Sellars had argued that these propositional claims make sense only within a community of language users and shared norms about reasons and justification. The empiricist idea that knowledge is ultimately grounded on the immediacy of bare sensory awareness was a myth. Knowledge is a matter of the relationship among some proposition and other propositions in the context of a linguistic community. Knowledge is a social practice.

The second part of Rorty’s account was drawn from Quine. Quine had exposed another myth in his very influential essay, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism.” It has been standard since Hume for empiricists to distinguish between claims that are true in virtue of meaning (analytic claims) and therefore necessary, and claims that are true in virtue of experience (synthetic claims), which are contingent. In addition, empiricism assumed that every meaningful empirical statement was reducible to a statement of immediate experience. Against the first presupposition, Quine had argued that a boundary between analytic and synthetic propositions cannot be drawn except conventionally and that any distinction between necessary and contingent truth was no more than a distinction between what, at some time, we were willing to hold immune from possible revision and what we allow to be revisable. He had argued that any proposition was revisable in principle if we are willing to make enough adjustments elsewhere in our system of beliefs. Against the reductionist presupposition, Quine had argued that no proposition, no matter how reductively atomic, can be meaningful apart from the meaningfulness of other propositions: that ultimately the unit of meaningfulness of an empirical proposition was the totality of empirical propositions, the whole of science.

Finally, Davidson had exposed a third dogma of empiricism in “The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme.” Empiricism presupposed a distinction between thought and the world: between a conceptual scheme, on the one hand, and the empirical content that the conceptual scheme organized, on the other. This presupposition, of course, has led to questions about whether we can know that

our conceptual scheme accurately represents the empirical content (the world) and, thus, produced various attempts to combat skepticism about the external world. It had also led to questions about the possibility of alternative, incommensurable conceptual schemes against which it produced various attempts to combat relativism through correspondence theories of truth and realist interpretations of science. Davidson had framed these issues in terms of language and the possibility that a language might fail to fit the world or the possibility that there might be incommensurable languages, languages for which it would be impossible to translate from the propositions of one to the other because they organized the empirical content in radically different ways. His argument was complex and subtle but the high points are these. In order for conceptual relativism to make sense, it must make sense to distinguish between the meaning of a linguistic community’s beliefs and the empirical content of those beliefs; otherwise we would not be able to distinguish beliefs that are merely different in relation to some factual content within a linguistic community from fundamentally different meanings across different linguistic communities. But Davidson had argued that the distinction between meaning and belief cannot be clearly drawn when interpreting what others say, and, furthermore, he had argued that we can only attribute a language or conceptual scheme to others if we assume that most of their beliefs are true. Why would we be inclined to think of something as a linguistic community if it had mostly false beliefs? If this were the case, then to suggest that a linguistic community could have beliefs that are incommensurable with our own amounted to saying that an alternative conceptual scheme was true but untranslatable into our own. Drawing on Tarski’s analysis of truth, Davidson argued that such a suggestion was incoherent. And if the idea of alternative but untranslatable languages was incoherent, the idea of a conceptual scheme as distinct from the content it organizes was incoherent too. In a provocatively titled article, “The World Well Lost,” Rorty drew out what he thought was the consequence of this Davidsonian argument: the philosophical notion of “the world” was vacuous and theories of truth that seek to connect language with the world, as well as the realist and idealist arguments they support, were also vacuous. And Rorty concluded that:

if we can come to see both the coherence and correspondence theories as noncompeting trivialities, then we may finally move beyond realism and idealism. We may reach a point at which, in Wittgenstein’s words, we are capable of stopping doing philosophy when we want to.21

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While Rorty drew on a wide range of philosophical sources – including European sources such as Heidegger and Derrida – it was this Sellars–Quine–Davidson dialectic that was the core of his argument in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, and he returned to it unwaveringly across the span of his work. It formed the basis for the critical thrust of his work – his antifoundationalism, antilessentialism, antirealism, and anti-Philosophy (in the sense he defined it) in his early work. He continued to elaborate this critical aspect in occasionally new but always provocative ways throughout his career. What he did with the consequences of Sellars–Quine–Davidson, however, he owed to his reading of John Dewey and to what he found to be common among Dewey, the latter Wittgenstein, and aspects of Heidegger. I will return to this triumvirate shortly, but the obvious should be stated at this point: Rorty’s readings of his heroes are controversial and sometimes eccentric. A cottage industry has grown up around attempts to save them from his embrace. Some traditional pragmatists have claimed that he distorted Dewey. Sellarsians have objected to the consequences he drew from Sellars. Quine and Davidson themselves denied the consequences Rorty drew from their work. Students of Heidegger blanch at his pragmatized reading that dismisses significant chunks – for some, the most important chunks – as insufficiently pragmatic. However, while sometimes idiosyncratic, Rorty’s readings were always strong readings, in Harold Bloom’s sense. I think it is more interesting to focus on what he did with them rather than whether he got them quite right or read them comprehensively.

Rorty was clear in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* that the upshot of his reading of his heroes was that we should not seek new and better theories of knowledge, truth, and language. Rather, he argued that the spaces vacated by epistemology, theories of truth, and philosophy of language should not be filled. Thus, the self-undermining of analytic philosophy in the works of Sellars, Quine, and Davidson undermined the traditional conception of philosophy itself, as Rorty understood that traditional conception. In the last chapters he toyed with ways of expressing this hope that the space of traditional philosophy would not be filled, invoking Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* and adapting the German conception of *Bildung*, which Rorty dubs “edification,” in contrast with philosophy. It will come as no surprise that Rorty’s reading of Gadamer is somewhat idiosyncratic. Gadamer’s views of hermeneutics and *Bildung* were deeply connected to culture and historical consciousness whereas Rorty used hermeneutics not as a method but as the hope that the space vacated by epistemology will not be filled, and he used edification in a future-oriented way “to stand for the project of finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of

speaking” (PMN 360). I do not want to dwell on his interpretation of Gadamer and his appropriation of hermeneutics and edification, at least in part because he dropped these terms, for the most part, after Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. It is what edification meant for Rorty at this stage and how he elaborated this intent subsequently that is important. Crucially, edification does not aim at discovering truth since the upshot of Sellars–Quine–Davidson is that truth is just what the social norms of justification, the practice of giving reasons and of normal discourse, allows us to get away with saying. Truth, in other words, is not in need of a theory.

[T]he point of edifying philosophy is to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth. Such truth, in the view I am advocating, is the normal result of normal discourse. Edifying philosophy is not only abnormal but reactive, having sense only as a protest against attempts to close off conversation by proposals for universal commensuration through the hypostatization of some privileged set of descriptions. The danger which edifying discourse tries to avert is that some given vocabulary, some way in which people might come to think of themselves, will deceive them into thinking that from now on all discourse would be, or should be, normal discourse. The resulting freezing-over of culture would be, in the eyes of edifying philosophers, the dehumanization of human beings.

(PMN 377)

Edification seeks to advance human freedom by resisting attempts to reduce all descriptions of ourselves to one description. Edification functions by always sending the conversation off in new directions. It is edification rather than philosophy that he claimed was the shared goal of Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.

Rorty said in an interview that the most significant change in his thinking after Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature was in his appreciation of Heidegger. He had read Being and Time as early as the 1950s and during the time of writing Philosophy and Mirror of Nature, it was primarily Heidegger’s drawing out the consequences of Nietzsche’s critique of the Western metaphysical tradition that interested him. It interested him first and foremost because it resonated with Dewey’s critique of the “quest for certainty” and Dewey’s pragmatism. He dismissed the rest of Heidegger as unfortunate nostalgia for the Greeks before Plato and for what he characterized as Heidegger’s desire for something for philosophers to do at the end of metaphysics.23 After Philosophy and the Mirror

of Nature, Rorty had intended to write a book on Heidegger that would explore Heidegger more fully. Although he abandoned the project, he gave some lectures and published parts of the project that are included in the second volume of his philosophical papers. Still, his issue with Heidegger remained whether Heidegger was entitled to his nostalgia for the early Greeks and for thinking about Being:

The question of Heidegger’s relation to pragmatism can be seen as the question: does Heidegger have any right to nostalgia? Any right to regret the golden time before Platonism turned out to be simply implicit pragmatism? Is there any room in his story for the notion of belatedness …? To put it another way, should we read him as telling a story about the contingency of vocabularies or about the belatedness of our age? Or rather: since he is obviously telling both stories, can they be fitted together? I do not think they can.24

In an essay on Wittgenstein and Heidegger, he struck the same theme by arguing that the later Heidegger had reverted to a position he had earlier rejected. Rorty suggested that if the young Heidegger had read Wittgenstein’s Tractatus and its nostalgia for what was unsayable, mystical at the limit of language and the world, young Heidegger would have recognized it as simply another piece of the Western metaphysical tradition, another attempt to distance itself from the world of contingency. Rorty went on to claim that at about the same time the later Wittgenstein came to reject his earlier self and recognize that language was just a matter of contingent social practices and that philosophy was just therapy that we can quit doing whenever we like, the later Heidegger had reverted to the idea of Thinking after the end of metaphysics, something the later Wittgenstein would have rejected for the same reasons he rejected his own Tractatus.25 On Rorty’s reading, the later Wittgenstein and the early Heidegger had it just about right. Wittgenstein had cured himself of nostalgia for the mystical. Rorty read Derrida as ridding Heidegger of his nostalgia for something more elemental after metaphysics.26

That said, Rorty rejected both the Heideggerian implication that the history of metaphysics and the history of the West were synonymous and also the

ominous centrality Derrida implied for philosophy and the metaphysical tradition in Western culture. Against Heidegger he said:

I want to protest the tendency to take Heidegger’s account of the West for granted. There is, it seems to me, a growing willingness to read Heidegger as the West’s final message to the world. This message consists largely of the claim that the West has, to use one of Heidegger’s favorite phrases, “exhausted its possibilities.”

Rorty did not think that the West was held captive by the sort of metaphysical drag that required either Heideggerian Thinking or Derridean deconstructive strategies against metaphysics. And what became clearer in Rorty’s relatively more recent writing about Derrida was that he thought that metaphysics-bashing, while admirable, did not have much relevance for politics, and it was the political consequences of his antifoundationalism that increasingly dominated his thinking. Finished with foundationalism, Rorty shrugged off philosophy, rejecting its pretension of centrality to Western culture. He was to pursue instead the continuing “adventure of the West” still alive in the literature of Dickens, Emerson, Whitman, Kundera, Larkin, Nabokov, and Orwell. It is not insignificant that in 1982 Rorty left his position in the philosophy department at Princeton University for a professorship in humanities, teaching mostly in the English department and law school at the University of Virginia; or that in 1998 he became a professor of comparative literature at Stanford University.

While Rorty returned again and again to the critique of traditional philosophical preoccupations, much of his subsequent work was a celebration of contingency and its political consequences, drawing his inspiration from literary as much as philosophical sources. This celebration of contingency was to come together in the figure of the liberal ironist, the central figure in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.

There was both an existential strand and a pragmatic strand to Rorty’s work from the 1980s on. The existential strand drew out the implications of his claim that the modern, Cartesian–Kantian notions of mind and the self are contingent and optional. He supplemented Dewey and the later Wittgenstein with his readings of Nietzsche and Freud as well as Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault. It was this existential strand that informed his view of private life and irony developed in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity. The pragmatic strand focused on the possibilities of solidarity and drew out the consequences of his antifoundationalism for a liberal democratic polity, supplementing his reading of Dewey with a pragmatic reading of John Rawls’s influential theory of justice. This pragmatic

strand informed his view of the public sphere and of liberal hope. The contingency of the self and the contingency of community formed the core of his brand of liberal democracy.

The foundation had been laid in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, where Rorty had argued that the Cartesian tradition conflated ancient concerns about reason, personhood, and moral agency with the specifically modern problem of consciousness (PMN 35). One result of disentangling these issues and recognizing that the Cartesian conflation was contingent, Rorty claimed, was that we can come to see that questions of our uniqueness, autonomy, and selfhood swing entirely free of issues about the nature of mind. We can come to see that the self need not be grounded in a conception of the mental; there was in fact no essence of selfhood, mental or otherwise. Rather, our uniqueness and autonomy lie in recognizing the contingency of the self and thus the fact there can be no single, privileged description of human beings capable of capturing the whole truth about ourselves. Rorty read Nietzsche as putting to rest any attempt to discover a common human nature, focusing us instead on the project of self-creation or self-elaboration in the face of the contingency of selfhood. And he read Freud as putting to rest the temptation to treat Nietzsche as an alternative way of working out the Kantian project of authentic human being, interpreting Nietzsche as discovering the truth about the self.28 Rorty put it this way in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*:

> It has often seemed necessary to choose between Kant and Nietzsche, to make up one's mind – at least to that extent – about the point of being human. But Freud gives us a way of looking at human beings which helps us evade the choice … Freud himself eschewed the very idea of a paradigm human being. He does not see humanity as a natural kind with an intrinsic nature, an intrinsic set of powers … By breaking with both Kant's residual Platonism and Nietzsche's inverted Platonism, he lets us see both … as exemplifying two out of many forms of adaptation, two out of many strategies for coping with the contingencies of one's upbringing, of coming to terms with a blind impress.29

There was no privileged way of becoming authentic. The upshot of Rorty's descriptive pluralism was that Nietzsche's Übermensch, for example, or Foucault's aesthetics of existence, or Charles Taylor's dialogical self, and so forth, are merely

among the many possibilities open to us for describing ourselves.\textsuperscript{30} The very idea that we should become authentic was also contingent and optional. All that was necessary were social and political institutions that created an environment of tolerance so that we could engage in the project of self-description, self-enlargement, self-elaboration, or self-creation if we wish to do so. Projects of self-description were private concerns and Rorty notoriously wished to wall off such private enthusiasms from public matters and the requirements of community.\textsuperscript{31}

So far as our sense of being part of community – as being in solidarity with other human beings – was concerned, Rorty also claimed there was no foundation in human nature or elsewhere to ground a social self or social commitment. In Consequences of Pragmatism, he had claimed that “our identification with our community – our society, our political traditions, our intellectual heritage – is heightened when we see this community as ours rather than nature’s, shaped rather than found, one among many which men have made.”\textsuperscript{32} Community did not require an objective foundation, but only a moral commitment to solidarity with other human beings.\textsuperscript{33} Toward the end of Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Rorty said that:

solidarity is not thought of as recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation. (CIS 192)

Borrowing from Judith Shklar’s definition of the liberal, recognition of the pain and humiliation of others, not a discovery of our common human nature, was the core of liberalism. The liberal is someone who believes that cruelty is the worst thing we can do to fellow human beings.

Rorty’s brand of liberalism does not require philosophical justification, he argued. Rather, it required moral imagination, tolerance, and an expanding sense of solidarity with fellow sufferers. This was the conclusion he drew from the evolution of political liberalism in Rawls’s work. In the first formulation of


\textsuperscript{31} Charles Guignon and I have been critical of this aspect of his work. See our “Biting the Bullet: Rorty on Public and Private Morality,” in Reading Rorty, Malachowski (ed.), 339–64; and our “Introduction” in Richard Rorty, Guignon and Hiley (eds), 21–38.

\textsuperscript{32} Richard Rorty, “Pragmatism, Relativism, Irrationalism,” in Consequences of Pragmatism, 166.

justice as fairness, Rawls had attempted to ground his conception of justice in the nature of the self and what rational and mutually self-interested individuals would necessarily choose as the basic institutions of society if they did not know concretely their place in it. This essentially Kantian metaphysical project was one source of significant criticism of Rawls's view early on. However, Rawls subsequently was to argue that “justice as fairness” should be understood as a political rather than a metaphysical account of justice. Rorty's gloss on the significance of this shift was that Rawls had made philosophical conceptions of human nature, moral agency, and the nature of the self irrelevant to liberal democratic politics. Liberalism did not require a foundation. Democracy was prior to philosophy.

Liberal democracy, for Rorty, required toleration without epistemological pretense, it required a desire to reduce humiliation and expand solidarity, and fostered social hope rather than metaphysical grounding. Rorty also rejected the emancipatory rhetoric too often attached to defenses of democracy, that is, that within democratic society individuals will be finally free to realize their true nature. He did not believe that solidarity, Enlightenment optimism, and hope for social progress required an emancipatory justification any more than it required a metaphysical justification. In an exchange with Jean-François Lyotard – a response to the challenge Lyotard posed about whether, when we drop meta-narratives, we can still appeal to an ideal of the universal history of humanity – Rorty said that the:

pragmatist utopia is … not one in which human nature has been unshackled, but one in which everybody has a chance to suggest ways in which we might cobble together a world (or Galactic) society, and in which all such suggestions have been thrashed out in free and open encounters … we want narratives of increasing cosmopolitanism, though not narratives of emancipation. For we think there was nothing to emancipate … There is no human nature which was once or still is in chains. Rather, our species has – ever since it developed language – been making up a nature for itself.

35. See Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
This nature has been developed through ever larger, richer, more muddled, and more painful syntheses of opposing values.  

Take care of freedom and progress will take care of itself, to paraphrase the title of a recent collection of Rorty’s interviews.  

While Rorty eschewed any attempt to have an overarching narrative that might unite basic beliefs about self-creation with basis beliefs about liberal society, these public and private aspects were brought together for Rorty, albeit in a fundamentally bifurcated way, in the figure of the liberal ironist. An ironist is:

the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires – someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the ideal that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance. (CIS xv)  

An ironist recognizes the groundlessness of her final vocabulary. An ironist was liberal when among those ungrounded beliefs and desires was the “hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease” (ibid.).  

It was within this framework that Rorty read European political philosophy. In these terms, Rorty claimed, for example, that Foucault was an ironist without being a liberal and Habermas was a liberal without being an ironist.  

He thought that Foucault’s genealogies of modern social institutions had powerfully shown the distinctive nature of modern constraints on self-elaboration when compared with premodern institutions. However, Foucault was unwilling to concede that these constraints were a price worth paying for their contribution to reducing pain and humiliations. Rorty was willing to pay the price, to “bite the bullet” as Charles Guignon and I have argued elsewhere. Furthermore, while Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power raised challenging questions about the very coherence of the idea of freedom from power, Foucault nonetheless imagined an epistemic transformation in which new configurations of power might be less dangerous and more commodious for self-creation. Rorty, however, thought that liberalism already contains these resources:

39. See Rorty, Take Care of Freedom and Truth Will Take Care of Itself.  
41. Guignon and Hiley, “Biting the Bullet.”
I think that contemporary liberal society already contains the institutions for its own improvement – an improvement which can mitigate the dangers Foucault sees. Indeed, my hunch is that Western social and political thought may have had the last conceptual revolution it needs. J. S. Mill’s suggestion that governments devote themselves to optimizing the balance between leaving people’s private lives alone and preventing suffering seems to me pretty much the last word. (CIS 63)

On Rorty’s reading, Habermas was appropriately liberal but insufficiently ironic. He wanted to ground the liberal commitment to domination-free democratic decision-making in the nature of rational and intersubjective communication itself. Rorty’s ironist would not take this liberal expression of basic hope for domination-free communication (in Rorty’s terms, this particular final, although contingent, vocabulary) as grounded or needing a ground. Liberalism did not require a metaphysician, even a quasi-metaphysician. In contrasting the liberal ironist and the liberal metaphysician, Rorty said that the:

liberal metaphysician wants our wish to be kind to be bolstered by an argument, one which entails a self-redescription which will highlight a common human essence, an essence which is something more than our shared ability to suffer humiliation. The liberal ironist just wants our chances of being kind, of avoiding the humiliation of others, to be expanded by redescriptions. (CIS 91)

His difference with Habermas was not over the value of liberal democratic institutions such as education, free press, equality of opportunity, political participation, and the like. Unlike Habermas, Rorty thought that we could simply be pragmatist about these things, recognizing that they are based on social hope, not on knockdown arguments. Or using his more recent terminology, the arguments are matters of cultural politics, not foundational philosophical arguments. If Foucault and Habermas would just give up on attempts to integrate private and public life, then ironist Foucault could join “we liberals” and liberal Habermas could join “we ironists.” On Rorty’s readings, Foucault was drained of his excessive Nietzscheanism and Habermas was weaned from his residual Kantianism.

Rorty interpreted Derrida as a pragmatist as well. In a series of articles about Derrida beginning in the early 1980s, Rorty enlisted Derrida in the war against foundationalism, complimented him for being Heidegger’s strongest reader,

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42. See Rorty, “Introduction,” Philosophy as Cultural Politics.
praised him for blurring the boundary between philosophy and literature, and defended him against interpreters who would turn him into a transcendental philosopher. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Derrida was his paradigmatic private ironist. However, Rorty claimed that his irony had nothing to offer politics, liberal or otherwise.

It will not come as a surprise that Derrida appreciated the compliment but he repudiated Rorty’s interpretations. Simon Critchley has also done an especially good job of examining Rorty’s reading of Derrida and of responding to Rorty’s claim that Derrida’s writing had no public utility. Derrida rejected Rorty’s view that there was a distinguishable “early” and “late” aspect to his work. He rejected the idea that he was blurring philosophy and literature. And he especially rejected Rorty’s public/private distinction that pigeonholed Derrida as a private ironist. Instead, he claimed that the texts Rorty most admired and used to characterize Derrida as a private ironist – *Glas* and *La Carte postale* – were intended not as works of private irony, but rather “are performative problematizations of the public/private distinction.” As interesting as it would be to pursue the difference between Rorty and Derrida on public and private life, it is a disclaimer that Derrida made while introducing this response to Rorty that I want to note since it will introduce my concluding remarks on Rorty.

Derrida acknowledged in passing that he did not fully comprehend the context of deconstruction in the United States and how that figured in Rorty’s thinking about Derrida’s work. I believe, however, that the American context was always paramount for Rorty, in his reading of Derrida and contemporary European philosophers generally. Despite his interest in European philosophy, Rorty was fundamentally an American philosopher, as American as his hero and model, John Dewey. Not only did Rorty’s critique of traditional philosophy draw on Dewey’s antifoundationalism, but his critique of analytic philosophy was also aimed at its professionalizing of philosophy at the expense of the role in American culture that figures like Dewey played. His attraction to European philosophy was moderated by what was distinctively American in his concerns and how different the American problematic was from the European.


Just as he worried about the effect of analytic philosophy on the professionalization and marginalization of philosophy in the United States, he worried about the way European philosophy had been digested in American universities and especially among the academic/cultural left in America. This was especially clear in Achieving Our Country,\textsuperscript{47} where Rorty defended the idea of America common to Walt Whitman, Dewey, and the progressive leftist of the early twentieth century and where he castigated the academic left in America for abandoning the reformist activism and social hope of the progressive era leftists of the first half of the twentieth century. According to Rorty, the academic left had become spectatorial and cynical cosmopolitans who distrusted the idea of America, and of patriotism and social hope. As interested as he was in Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and other European philosophers of the last half of the twentieth century, Rorty thought that their influence on the academic left in the last decades of the century had resulted in disengaging the Left from active politics, replacing political activism with “theoretical hallucinations” (AC 94). Against the spectatorial left, Rorty argued that the critiques of metaphysics, modernity, and Enlightenment rationalism that one finds in Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault are perfectly compatible with “old fashioned reformist liberals” like Dewey (AC 96) since the significance of their critiques was for our private lives, our private projects of self-elaboration. They should not serve as guides to political conduct and deliberation. They should be kept separate from our public lives.

Against the academic left, Rorty sought to revive Whitman’s idea of America and democracy and to reinvigorate the progressive liberalism of Dewey:

For both Whitman and Dewey, the terms “America” and “democracy” are shorthand for a new conception of what it is to be human – a conception which has no room for obedience to a nonhuman authority, and in which nothing save freely achieved consensus among human beings has any authority at all. \hfill (AC 18)

Rorty began Achieving our Country this way:

[N]ational pride is to countries what self-respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement. Too much national pride can produce bellicosity and imperialism, just as excessive self-respect can produce arrogance. But just as too little self-respect

makes it difficult for a person to display moral courage, so insufficient national pride makes energetic and effective debate about national policy unlikely. Emotional involvement with one’s country – feelings of intense shame and glowing pride aroused by various parts of its history, and by various present-day national policies – is necessary if political deliberation is to be imaginative and productive. Such deliberation will probably not occur unless pride outweighs shame.

Conservatives in the United States attacked Rorty for dwelling too much on shameful US policies in this book and in his prolific political commentary and opinion pieces in the liberal press. International critics of US policy and cosmopolitan-inclined political theorists have attacked his nationalist sentiments. In the very important debate now taking place over the future of the nation-state in a global world and the viability of national identity with its unhappy track record, it would be easy to place Rorty in the nationalist rather than the cosmopolitan side of this debate. But I believe it is more appropriate to think of Rorty as a cosmopolitan patriot in the sense Jonathan Hansen gives it, a position that attempts to reconcile Whitman’s ideal of America with the global spread of liberal principles that undergird it – a cosmopolitan outlook based on hope for expanding solidarity and the global reduction of suffering rather than universalistic theories about human nature.

MAJOR WORKS


48. For a detailed bibliography, see www.phillwebb.net/history/Twentieth/Pragmatism/Rorty/Rorty.htm (accessed June 2010).

49. See, for example, Martha Nussbaum, For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996).

Rorty among the Continentals


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<td>1689 Locke, <em>A Letter Concerning Toleration</em></td>
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<td>(–1690) Locke, <em>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Two Treatises of Civil Government</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
<td>CULTURAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1695 Bayle, <em>Dictionnaire historique et critique</em>, vol. I</td>
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<td>1714 Leibniz, <em>Monadologie</em></td>
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<td>1739 Hume, <em>A Treatise of Human Nature</em></td>
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<td>1742 Handel, <em>Messiah</em></td>
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<td>1748 Hume, <em>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em></td>
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<td>1751 Diderot and D'Alembert, <em>Encyclopédie</em>, vols 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>1755 Rousseau, <em>Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes</em></td>
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<td>1759 Voltaire, <em>Candide</em></td>
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<td>1762 Rousseau, <em>Du contrat social and Émile ou de l'éducation</em></td>
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<td>1774 Goethe, <em>Sorrows of Young Werther</em></td>
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<td>1776 Death of Hume</td>
<td>Adam Smith, <em>Wealth of Nations</em></td>
<td>American Declaration of Independence</td>
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<td>1781 Kant, <em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1783 Kant, <em>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</em></td>
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<td>1784 Kant, &quot;Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?&quot;</td>
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<td>1785 Kant, <em>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</em></td>
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<td>1787 Goethe, <em>Sorrows of Young Werther</em></td>
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<td>1788 Birth of Arthur Schopenhauer</td>
<td>Gibbon, <em>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</em></td>
<td>US Constitution</td>
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<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1789 Death of d’Holbach</td>
<td>Adoption of <em>La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen</em></td>
<td>French Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic</td>
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<td>1790 Kant, <em>Kritik der Urteilskraft</em></td>
<td>Edmund Burke, <em>Reflections on the Revolution in France</em></td>
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<td>1791 Tom Paine, <em>The Rights of Man</em></td>
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<td>1792 Mozart, <em>The Magic Flute</em></td>
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<td>Mary Wollstonecraft, <em>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</em></td>
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<td>1794 Creation of the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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<td>Death of Robespierre</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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<td>1795</td>
<td>Schiller, Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen</td>
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<td>1797</td>
<td>Schelling, Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft</td>
<td>Hölderlin, Hyperion Vol. One</td>
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<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Birth of Auguste Comte</td>
<td>Thomas Malthus, Essay on the Principle of Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Fichte, Die Bestimmung des Menschen Schelling, System des transcendentalen Idealismus</td>
<td>Beethoven's First Symphony</td>
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<td>1804</td>
<td>Death of Kant</td>
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<td>1805</td>
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<td>Publication of Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau</td>
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<td>1806</td>
<td>Birth of John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Goethe, Faust, Part One Reinstitution of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university</td>
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<td>1807</td>
<td>Hegel, Die Phänomenologie des Geistes</td>
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<td>1812</td>
<td>(~1816) Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik</td>
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<td>1815</td>
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<td>Jane Austen, Emma</td>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>Hegel, Encyclopedia</td>
<td>Ricardo, Principles of Political Economy</td>
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<td>1818</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Marx</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Schleiermacher, Hermeneutik Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</td>
<td>Byron, Don Juan</td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</td>
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<td>1823</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>(~1842) Auguste Comte, Cours de philosophie positive in six volumes</td>
<td>Stendhal, The Red and the Black</td>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, The Hunchback of Notre Dame</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Clausewitz, Vom Kriege</td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey</td>
<td>Pushkin, Eugene Onegin</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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<td>1835</td>
<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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<td>1844</td>
<td>Marx writes <em>Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts</em></td>
<td>Alexandre Dumas, <em>The Count of Monte Cristo</em></td>
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<td>1846</td>
<td>Kierkegaard, <em>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</em></td>
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<td>1847</td>
<td>Boole, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>On the Conservation of Force</em></td>
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<td>1848</td>
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<td>Publication of the <em>Communist Manifesto</em></td>
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<td>1852</td>
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<td>1853</td>
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<td>H. D. Thoreau, <em>Walden</em></td>
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<td>1854</td>
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<td>Walt Whitman, <em>Leaves of Grass</em></td>
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<td>1856</td>
<td>Birth of Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>1861</td>
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<td>Johann Jakob Bachofen, <em>Das Mutterrecht</em></td>
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<td>1862</td>
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<td>Victor Hugo, <em>Les Misérables</em></td>
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<td>1863</td>
<td>Mill, <em>Utilitarianism</em> Édouard Manet, <em>Olympia</em></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year(s)</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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| 1865    | −1869 Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*  
         | Premiere of Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* | The surrender of General Robert E. Lee signals the conclusion of the American Civil War |
| 1866    | Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* | The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War |
| 1867    | Marx, *Das Kapital, Vol. I* | Birth of Émile Chartier (*Alain*)  
         | Birth of W. E. B. Du Bois  
         | Creation of the École des Hautes Études (EPHE)  
         | | |
| 1868    | Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*  
         | Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* | Completion of the Suez Canal |
         | (−1870) Jules Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*  
         | (−1876) Wagner, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* | (−1871) Franco-Prussian War  
         | Establishment of the Third Republic  
         | Paris Commune  
         | Unification of Germany: Prussian King William I becomes emperor of Germany and Otto von Bismarck becomes Chancellor |
| 1870    | Lachelier, *Du fondement de l’induction* | Darwin, *The Descent of Man*  
         | Eliot, *Middlemarch* | |
| 1871    | Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* | End of German Occupation following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War |
| 1872    | | |
| 1873    | Death of Mill | (−1877) Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* | End of German Occupation following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War |
| 1874    | Birth of Max Scheler  
         | Émile Boutroux, *La Contingence des lois de la nature*  
         | Brentano, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* | First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Berthe Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, and Sisley) |
| 1877    | Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River | Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River |
| 1878    | | King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo |
| 1879    | Frege, *Begriffsschrift* | Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*  
<pre><code>     | Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHILosophical EVENTS</th>
<th>CULTuRAL EVENTS</th>
<th>POLITIcal EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Thomas Edison exhibits his incandescent light bulb</td>
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<td>Death of Marx</td>
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<td>Dilthey, <em>Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften</em></td>
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<td>(~1885) Nietzsche, <em>Also Sprach Zarathustra</em></td>
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<td>1884 Birth of Gaston Bachelard</td>
<td>Mark Twain, <em>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</em></td>
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<td>Frege, <em>Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik</em></td>
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<td>1886 Nietzsche, <em>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</em></td>
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<td>1887 Nietzsche, <em>Zur Genealogie der Moral</em></td>
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<td>1888 Birth of Jean Wahl</td>
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<td>1889 Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein</td>
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<td>Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
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<td>1890 William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
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<td>1892 Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung”</td>
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<td>1893 Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>1894 Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of projected motion pictures</td>
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<td>Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Athens hosts the first Olympic Games of the modern era</td>
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<td>1897 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1898 Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
<td>Zola, article “J’accuse” in defense of Dreyfus</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>Start of the Second Boer War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900 Birth of Hans-Georg Gadamer</td>
<td>Freud, <em>Interpretation of Dreams</em></td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Death of Nietzsche and Félix Ravaission (–1901) Husserl, <em>Logische Untersuchungen</em></td>
<td>Planck formulates quantum theory</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavailles</td>
<td>André Gide, <em>The Immoralist</em></td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavailles</td>
<td>W. E. B. Du Bois, <em>The Souls of Black Folk</em></td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>(–1905) Weber, <em>Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus</em></td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d'Avignon</em></td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Hyppolite Bergson, <em>L'Evolution créatrice</em></td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. O. Quine</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article on Husserl: “Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d’une Logique pure” in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<td>1914</td>
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<td>First performance of Stravinsky’s <em>Rite of Spring</em></td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Publication of Saussure’s <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Death of Durkheim</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Birth of Louis Althusser Death of Georg Cantor and Lachelier</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Ratification of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution extends suffrage to women</td>
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<td>PHILosophical Events</td>
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<td>1923 Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded</td>
<td>Kahil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<td>1924 Birth of Jean-François Lyotard Sartre, Raymond Aron, Paul Nizan, Georges Canguilhem, and Daniel Lagache enter the Ecole Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>André Breton, <em>Le Manifeste du surréalisme</em> Thomas Mann, <em>The Magic Mountain</em></td>
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<td>1925 Birth of Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze, and Frantz Fanon</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>The Trial</em> First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<td>1926 Birth of Michel Foucault Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl’s phenomenology: <em>Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</em></td>
<td>The film <em>Metropolis</em> by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin The Bauhaus school building, designed by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
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<td>1927 Heidegger, <em>Sein und Zeit</em> Marcel, <em>Journal métaphysique</em></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, <em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1929 Birth of Jürgen Habermas Heidegger, <em>Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik</em> and <em>Was ist Metaphysik?</em> Husserl, <em>Formale und transzendentale Logik</em> and &quot;Phenomenology&quot; in <em>Encyclopaedia Britannica</em> Wahl, <em>Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel</em> Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway, <em>A Farewell to Arms</em> Erich Maria Remarque, <em>All Quiet on the Western Front</em></td>
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<td>1930 (–1942) Robert Musil, <em>The Man Without Qualities</em></td>
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## CHRONOLOGY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>Penguin publishes its first paperback.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous.</td>
<td>Picasso, <em>Guernica</em>.</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>(–1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em>. Founding of <em>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</em>. Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium.</td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em>. John Steinbeck, <em>The Grapes of Wrath</em>.</td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Death of Benjamin</td>
<td>Richard Wright, <em>Native Son</em></td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and US enters Second World War</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1941   | Death of Bergson
Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*                                           | Death of James Joyce
Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*                                              | Germany invades the Soviet Union                                                |
| 1942   | Birth of Étienne Balibar
Camus, *L’Étranger* and *Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l’absurde*
Merleau-Ponty, *La Structure du comportement*
Lévi-Strauss meets Roman Jakobson at the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York | Herman Hesse, *The Glass bead Game*
Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*                                                       |                                                                                  |
| 1943   | Death of Simone Weil
Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*
Sartre, *L’Être et le néant*                                                        | Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*
Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*                                               | Breton Woods Conference and establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) |
| 1944   |
| 1945   | Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*                                      | George Orwell, *Animal Farm*
Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of *Les Temps modernes* | End of the Second World War in Germany (May); atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of war in Japan (September) |
| 1946   | Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la “Phénoménologie de l’esprit” de Hegel*
Bataille founds the journal *Critique*                                              | Beginning of the French Indochina War                                           |
| 1947   | Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*
Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*
Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus”                                              | Camus, *The Plague*
Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank*
Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*                                                       | Creation of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (–1951) Marshall Plan |
Debut of *The Ed Sullivan Show*                                                     | The United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights              |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
<th>CULTURAL EVENTS</th>
<th>POLITICAL EVENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948 Althusser appointed <em>agrégé-répétiteur</em> (“caïman”) at the École Normale Supérieure, a position he holds until 1980</td>
<td>Arthur Miller, <em>Death of a Salesman</em></td>
<td>Foundation of NATO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949 Beauvoir, <em>Le Deuxième sexe</em></td>
<td>Heidegger's <em>Existence and Being</em> is translated</td>
<td>Orwell, <em>1984</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss, <em>Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté</em></td>
<td>Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort found the revolutionary group and journal <em>Socialisme ou Barbarie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl’s <em>Ideas I</em></td>
<td>J. D. Salinger, <em>The Catcher in the Rye</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the Korean War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”</td>
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<td>Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Ceasefire agreement (July 27) ends the Korean War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953 Wittgenstein, <em>Philosophical Investigations</em> (posthumous)</td>
<td>Lacan, together with Daniel Lagache and François Dolto, founds the Société française de psychanalyse</td>
<td>Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20)</td>
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<td>Lacan begins his public seminars</td>
<td>Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule</td>
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<td>Scheler, <em>The Nature of Sympathy</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td>The French colonies of Morocco and Tunisia gain independence</td>
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<td>Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956 Sartre’s <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>1957 Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em></td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em></td>
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CHRONOLOGY

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<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1957 Founding of <em>Philosophy Today</em></td>
<td>Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
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<td>The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
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William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*  
Elie Wiesel, *Night*  
The Sorbonne’s “Faculté des lettres” officially renamed the “Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines”  
(−1960) The first feature films by directors associated with the French “New Wave” cinema, including, in 1959, *Les Quatre Cent Coups (The 400 Blows)* by François Truffaut (1932–84) and, in 1960, *A bout de souffle (Breathless)* by Jean-Luc Godard (1930– ) | Charles de Gaulle is elected president after a new constitution establishes the Fifth Republic |
| 1959 Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France | Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum*  
Gillo Pentecorvo, *The Battle of Algiers* | |
| 1960 Death of Camus  
Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*  
Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*  
Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*  
First issue of the journal *Tel Quel* is published  
The birth control pill is made available to married women | |
| 1961 Death of Fanon and Merleau-Ponty  
Derrida, *Introduction to Edmund Husserl. L’Origine de la géométrie*  
Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, with a preface by Sartre  
Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*  
Heidegger, *Nietzsche*  
Alain Robbe-Grillet and Alain Resnais, *Last Year at Marienbad* | Erection of the Berlin Wall  
Bay of Pigs failed invasion of Cuba |
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<tr>
<th>PHILosophical Events</th>
<th>CULTural Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Death of Bachelard</td>
<td>Rachel Carson, <em>Silent Spring</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Nietzsche et la philosophie</em></td>
<td>Ken Kesey, <em>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thomas Kuhn, <em>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</em></td>
<td>Doris Lessing, <em>The Golden Notebook</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss, <em>La Pensée sauvage</em></td>
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<td>Heidegger, <em>Being and Time</em></td>
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<td>appears in English translation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>Phenomenology of Perception</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>appears in English translation</td>
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<td>First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois</td>
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| | | Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* | Assassination of John F. Kennedy |
| | | Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel* | |
| | | The first artificial heart is implanted | |

| 1964 | Barthes, *Eléments de sémiologie* | Saul Bellow, *Herzog* | Gulf of Tonkin Incident |
| | Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* | Lacan founds L’École Freudienne de Paris | US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin |

| 1965 | Death of Buber | Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* | Assassination of Malcolm X |
| | Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* appears in English translation | | |
| | Ricoeur, *De l’interprétation: Essai sur Freud* | | |

<p>| | Foucault, <em>Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines</em> | Johns Hopkins Symposium “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” introduces French theory to the American academic community | |
| | Lacan, <em>Écrits</em> | <em>Star Trek</em> premieres on US television | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition</em> and Spinoza et le problème de l’expression</td>
<td><strong>Beatles release the White Album</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Carlos Castaneda</strong>, <em>The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge</em>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Stanley Kubrick</strong>, <em>2001: A Space Odyssey</em></td>
<td><strong>Assassination of Martin Luther King</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Prague Spring</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Tet Offensive</strong>&lt;br&gt;Events of May ’68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habermas, <em>Erkenntnis und Interesse</em></td>
<td><strong>Kurt Vonnegut</strong>, <em>Slaughterhouse-Five</em>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Woodstock Music and Art Fair</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Neil Armstrong</strong> is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
<td><strong>Stonewall riots launch the Gay Liberation Movement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Death of Adorno and Jaspers&lt;br&gt;<strong>Deleuze, Logique du sens</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Foucault, L’Archéologie du savoir</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kurt Vonnegut</strong>, <em>Slaughterhouse-Five</em>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Woodstock Music and Art Fair</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Neil Armstrong</strong> is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><strong>Death of Carnap</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Adorno, Ästhetische Theorie</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Foucault, The Order of Things</strong> appears in English translation&lt;br&gt;<strong>Husserl, The Crisis of European Philosophy</strong> appears in English translation&lt;br&gt;<strong>Foucault elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Ricoeur begins teaching at the University of Chicago</strong></td>
<td><strong>Millett, Sexual Politics</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>First Earth Day</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Founding of Diacritics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td><strong>Lyotard, Discours, figure</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Founding of Research in Phenomenology</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reorganization of the University of Paris</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td><strong>Death of John Wild</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Bourdieu, Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Deleuze and Guattari, Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 1. L’Anti-Oedipe</strong></td>
<td><strong>Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Hunter Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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| 1972 | Derrida, *La Dissémination*, *Marges de la philosophie*, and *Positions*  
Colloquium on Nietzsche at Cerisy  
*Radical Philosophy* begins publication | Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (–1978)  
Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*  
Roe v. Wade legalizes abortion | Chilean military coup ousts and kills President Salvador Allende |
| 1973 | Death of Horkheimer  
Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* appears in English translation  
Lacan publishes the first volume of his *Séminaire* | Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying*  
Founding of Critical Inquiry  
Creation of the first doctoral program in women's studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous | Resignation of Nixon |
| 1974 | Derrida, *Glas*  
Irigaray, *Speculum: De l'autre femme*  
Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique*  
Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* | Cixous and Clément, *La Jeune née*  
The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales  
*Signs* begins publication | Death of Francisco Franco  
Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize  
Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War  
First US–USSR joint space mission |
| 1975 | Death of Arendt  
Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*  
Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*  
Foundation of GREPH, the Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique  
Derrida begins teaching in the English Department at Yale  
Foucault begins teaching at UC-Berkeley | Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*  
Foundation of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature | Death of Mao Zedong  
Uprising in Soweto |
| 1976 | Death of Bultmann and Heidegger  
Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. 1. La Volonté de savoir*  
Derrida, *Of Grammatology* appears in English translation  
Barthes is elected to the Chair of Literary Semiology at the Collège de France | The Centre Georges Pompidou, designed by architects Renzo Piano (1937–) and Richard Rogers (1933–), opens in Paris | Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel |
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Death of Lacan Habermas, <em>Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em> Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>The first cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US Debut of MTV</td>
<td>Release of American hostages in Iran</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>Death of Lacan Habermas, <em>Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em> Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>The first cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US Debut of MTV</td>
<td>François Mitterrand is elected as the first socialist president of France's Fifth Republic</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
<td>Debut of the Weather Channel</td>
<td>Confirmation of Sandra Day O'Connor, first woman Justice, to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
<td>Debut of the Weather Channel</td>
<td>Falklands War</td>
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| 1984 | Death of Foucault    | Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*  
Lloyd, *The Man of Reason*  
Irigaray, *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* | Assassination of Indira Gandhi |
|      | Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*  
First complete translation into French of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*  
Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* and *This Sex Which Is Not One* | Don Delillo, *White Noise*  
Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera* | Mikhail Gorbachev is named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
|      | 1986 | Death of Beauvoir  
Deleuze, *Foucault*  
Establishment of the Archives Husserl de Paris at the École Normale Supérieure | Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale* | Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR  
Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines |
|      | Derrida begins his appointment as Visiting Professor of French and Comparative Literature at UC-Irvine | Toni Morrison, *Beloved*  
Discovery of Paul de Man's wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America | In June Gorbachev inaugurates the perestroika (restructuring) that led to the end of the USSR  
The First Intifada begins in the Gaza Strip and West Bank |
Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland |
|      | Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*  
Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* | *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska  
Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web | Fall of the Berlin Wall  
Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing |
|      | 1990 | Death of Althusser  
Butler, *Gender Trouble* | The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases  
Beginning of the Human Genome Project, headed by James D. Watson | Nelson Mandela is released from prison  
Reunification of Germany  
Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars  
Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland |
<p>|      | 1991 | Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?</em> | | First Gulf War |</p>
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<th>Cultural Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Fredric Jameson, <em>Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</em></td>
<td>The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet</td>
<td>Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union</td>
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<td>Guattari, <em>Chaosmose</em></td>
<td>Dissolution of the Soviet Union</td>
<td>Dissolution of Czechoslovakia; Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Gay, <em>Black Atlantic</em></td>
<td>Death of Ralph Ellison and Eugène Ionesco</td>
<td>Genocide in Rwanda; End of apartheid in South Africa; Nelson Mandela is sworn in as president</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze and Levinas</td>
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<td>End of Bosnian War</td>
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<td>Cloning of Dolly the Sheep (died 2003)</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>Death of Mitterrand</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Death of Lyotard</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Iris Murdoch</td>
<td>Introduction of the Euro</td>
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<td>Antiglobalization forces disrupt the WTO meeting in Seattle</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Death of Quine</td>
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<td>The Second Intifada</td>
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<td>Negri and Hardt, <em>Empire</em></td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Death of Bourdieu and Gadamer</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Death of Blanchot and Davidson</td>
<td>Completion of the Human Genome Project</td>
<td>Beginning of Second Gulf War</td>
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<td>Beginning of conflict in Darfur</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Death of Derrida</td>
<td>Asian tsunami</td>
<td>Madrid train bombings</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Death of Ricoeur</td>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>Bombings of the London public transport system</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Death of Jean Baudrillard and Rorty</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>Death of Robbe-Grillet</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Death of Lévi-Strauss</td>
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THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
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VOLUME 7

AFTER POSTSTRUCTURALISM: TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Edited by Rosi Braidotti

The University of Chicago Press
Chicago
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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition’s complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and

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the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy's subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal Philosophy and Phenomenological Research began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild's at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s *On Bentham and Coleridge* (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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INTRODUCTION

Rosi Braidotti

I. AFTER THE WALL

If there ever was an age of historical and philosophical transition, it would have to be the 1980–95 period that is addressed in this volume. Let us play with a few significant dates to illustrate the point: In 1979, the high priest of the radical libertarian Left Herbert Marcuse dies, followed in 1980 by the cofounder of existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and by Jacques Lacan in 1981. With the death of General Tito, also in 1980, many start mourning the crisis of Western European Marxism, while a greater portion of the world youth is far more affected by the assassination of John Lennon, in New York, which also took place in the year of (dis)grace 1980. “Lennon, not Lenin!” had been a cry of revolutionary youth throughout the previous decade and it acquires a more poignant meaning at the dawn of the 1980s, as the fallout from the previous radical decades comes to a new and sharper focus.

In her seminal text The Summer of 1980, the French writer Marguerite Duras, who was also a member of the communist anti-Nazi resistance in her youth, comments extensively on the political events taking place in the Gdansk shipyard in Poland. Under the leadership of Lech Walesa (future Nobel Peace Prize winner) and the trade union Solidarity, Soviet hegemony is being challenged to the core. It is the beginning of the end for Soviet-style communism, announces Duras with barely contained joy. Paris had provided the world forum for progressive and even left-wing critiques of Soviet communism since the 1970s, and for the elaboration of alternative forms of political radicalism. This positions French philosophy as a particularly important factor in the philosophical landscape of the period under review in this volume. Two examples: Nobel Peace
Prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago*, written in secrecy in the USSR as the definitive account of Stalin’s death camps, was published in three volumes in Paris between 1973 and 1978. It provides the background for many of the poststructuralist philosophers’ critiques of the failed social experiments of Soviet socialism, as well as extra ammunition for the conservatives’ opposition to Marxism. The second significant event: Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader and political inspiration behind the Iranian Islamist revolution of 1979 was in exile in Paris in the years preceding the fall of the Shah. The 1980s is in many ways a decade dominated by the cultural and political energies emanating from Paris.

Then comes the landmark year 1989, which signals the fall of the Berlin Wall, the events of Tiananmen Square, and the opening of a new geopolitical era under the aegis of American domination. The philosophical implications of the historical defeat of communism are enormous: both theoretically and politically, the end of the Cold War marks the official rejection of Marxism as a platform for thinking and political organizing. Nineteen eighty-nine also marks the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the buildup of Islamist opposition that will consolidate Osama Bin Laden’s power base in the region. An era of perpetual warfare seems to open after 1989, both in the Balkans and in the Gulf area.

For an era that proudly announced itself as marking the “end of ideology,” the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a series of conservative ideological onslaughts, starting with the election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in the UK in 1979 and of Ronald Reagan as president in the US in 1980. The Christian-driven American Right celebrates both the end of history (Fukuyama) and the triumph of advanced capitalism as the highest point of human evolution. This conservative political ontology centered on American hegemony is unquestionably one of the offshoots of the end of the Cold War, and although it meets with robust opposition, especially in France after the election of François Mitterrand as president in 1981, it sets the tone for the fast-growing globalization project. Alain Touraine describes it as “one-way thought,” that is to say, a unilateral approach to geopolitical affairs and a monological idea of social progress. In this regard, 1989 marks simultaneously the end of communism and the birth of neo-Marxist resistance: both the resurgence of neoliberal economics and its betrayal by neoconservative Christian and, later, Muslim fundamentalists. How and to what extent these in turn result in the renegotiation of the groundings of philosophical practice in this period is a crucial point for discussion.

It is striking, as one looks back over this period, to what extent issues of cultural identity and ideological belonging, of imperial and postcolonial legacies, and of new modes of resistance come to the fore. The Berlin Wall, in fact, fell on both sides, which means that this event challenges binary identity definitions in the former West as well as in the former East, and that it restructures
discursive power relations accordingly. Post-Cold War scholarship can now begin, as Gayatri Spivak announces in *Death of a Discipline*: the “postcommunist” era in the East is matched by a global “postcolonial” era in the West, that is to say, a dual displacement of the core of formerly unitary and oppositional identities. Continental philosophy cannot avoid confrontation with these shifting relations and terms. Historical events unfold alongside each other and shift the axis of philosophical reflection across the board: the election of Benazir Bhutto as the first woman leader of an Islamic nation takes place in 1988; the liberation of Nobel Peace Prize-winning Nelson Mandela in 1990; the Maastricht Treaty is signed in 1992, the same year as the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), while the World Trade Organization (WTO) is set up in 1995.

This speed of events introduces new levels of complexity into the discussion of what counts as the basic unit of continental philosophy: Is it Europe? Which idea of Europe would that entail? And what might be its conceptual, ethnic, and territorial border? What is the legacy of the colonial and fascist past in the present discursive relations engendered by the practice of this discipline? The self-perception of the former West shifts towards a more acute awareness of its colonial and postcolonial legacy. The impetus for this revision does not originate in philosophy, but the discipline cannot fail to be affected by it. The dislocation of eurocentrism becomes a central concern and is especially important to the discussions about the new cosmopolitanism and non-Western humanism. In this volume we dedicate a chapter to the rise of cultural and ethnic studies and their impact on philosophy. This chapter should be approached as a marker of the philosophical relevance and the lasting legacy of anticolonial philosophies and postcolonial theories. These concerns are also featured elsewhere in *The History of Continental Philosophy* and should therefore be approached as transversal and recurrent concerns.

These developments affect also the world-historical and political project that is the European Union (EU). The construction of the EU, through the enlargement process, is made both possible and necessary by the postcommunist/postcolonial conjunction. This issue unfortunately still remains largely unexamined in philosophy, but *The History of Continental Philosophy* does recognize the emergence of the EU as a philosophical question and addresses it accordingly (in Volume 8). For this volume, we try to come to terms with it by devoting special attention to what one could define as philosophical area studies: we have specific chapters on German, Italian, and Czech philosophies, which try to assess whether the changing political context in continental Europe actually affects the practice and the agenda of continental philosophy.

In other words, our understanding of “continental philosophy” has broadened since philosophy extricated itself from the Cold War in 1989, in that
philosophy needs to be redefined in a transnational manner in the context of globalization, postcommunism, and postcolonialism. As a result, continental philosophy is caught, more than ever, in a dialogue with and excursions into its multiple “outsides,” both geopolitically and conceptually. This means that the contributors to this volume resist any attempt to flatten out the diversity of political traditions and histories within former Central and Eastern but also former Western Europe. We neither assume nor support any common metanarrative of postcommunist philosophy or any consensus about a post-1989 neoliberal world order, let alone the place and role of philosophy within it.

Because the contributors to this volume come from a great diversity of geopolitical locations, and because of the large number of Europe-based authors we have been able to gather, more reflection is needed in order to account for this diversity of locations. The specificity of our respective location, in the sense of a sociocultural history as well as a geopolitical position, needs to be taken into account as a factor that shapes post-1989 continental philosophy and leads to the contemporary developments that will be mapped out in this and also the last volume of *The History of Continental Philosophy*.

**II. THAT POSTMODERNISM WHICH WAS NOT ONE**

In other disciplines, notably cultural and film studies and comparative literature, the 1980s may count as the era of “high” postmodernism. Jean-François Lyotard’s seminal text *The Postmodern Condition* appears in 1979, Fredric Jameson’s equally influential *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* appears in 1991. In this period, the discipline of philosophy experiences a great deal of interdisciplinary expansion, as Judith Butler and I argue in this volume. This interdisciplinary drift – which is likely to horrify the philosophical purists – is philosophy’s way of coping with the staggering technological and cultural developments of this era.

Again, let us look at some dates: 1980 is the year that Cable News Network (CNN) begins to provide twenty-four-hour television news coverage, while the watershed debut of MTV occurs in 1981. Madonna’s first agenda-setting album is released in 1981, while Michael Jackson’s legendary *Thriller* comes out in 1982. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* debuts in 1986, while the World Wide Web becomes publicly available on the internet in 1991.

The convergence between advanced technologies in the field of communication and information on the one hand, and the bioscientific domain on the other, contributes to accelerate the social and intellectual changes. Nineteen eighty-four fails to live up to the apocalyptic, proto-totalitarian scenario dreamed up by George Orwell in the throes of the Cold War. “Big Brother” will soon become
the title of a globally successful reality television program and 1984 goes down in history as the year of publication of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, the book that launches a thousand links and provides the imaginary to code the emerging phenomenon that is the internet. Michel Foucault’s death is mourned by many that year, but the masses are more concerned about the disastrous outcome of the miners’ strike in the UK, which will mark a resolute political victory for the neoliberal forces that back Thatcher. The rise of digital culture and the demise of the old Left stand side by side as landmarks of the era and mirror images of each other. As Donna Haraway publishes her paradigm-shifting text “A Cyborg Manifesto” in 1985, J. G. Ballard’s *Crash* – first published as a novel in 1973, but issued as a film in 1996 – casts a more pensive but also more decadent shadow over the ongoing cybernetic revolution. The process of biogenetical recoding of reproduction, which opens in 1978 with the birth of the first test-tube baby, Louise Brown, culminates in 1996 with the cloning of Dolly the sheep, while the Human Genome Project is officially launched in 1990.

The posthuman element of the postmodern condition comes to the fore with increasing insistence throughout the period covered in this volume, making it redundant to wonder whether we are or ever were postmodern. This age of transition is so intense and speedy as to question the very status of what counts as human. Reflections of humanism, posthumanism and antihumanism, Western and non-Western humanism, increase within philosophy, contributing to the so-called “ethical turn,” but also overcoming it in the direction of transnational and postcolonial perspectives. Philosophy’s unresolved relationship to technology proves quite an obstacle in the discipline’s attempt to stay relevant in a technologically mediated and globalized world.

The fact that most of the material in this volume is very contemporary and concerns philosophers who are still alive and writing has also a number of important methodological implications. The first is that by virtue of the ongoing nature of many movements of thought outlined in this volume, the contributors honored their commitment to the social relevance of philosophy by working hard to engage productively with the contradictions, paradoxes, and injustices of their historical context. Furthermore, given that so much of the contemporary context has to do with complex transformations, social mutations, and technological change, they encourage philosophy to think about processes rather than concepts. This is neither a simple nor a particularly welcome task in the theoretical language and disciplinary conventions that have become the norm in philosophical practice. The fact that theoretical reason is concept-bound and fastened on essential notions makes it difficult to find adequate representations for processes, fluid in-between flows of data, experience, and information. They tend to get frozen in spatial, metaphorical modes of representation that itemize them as “problems.” As Gilles Deleuze puts it, the task of philosophy in our
times is not to know who we are, but rather what, at last, we are in the process of becoming. Methodologically speaking, transitions require cartographies that are closer to weather maps than to strict synoptic tables. The contributors to this volume had the unenviable task of trying to capture processes, not single events, and detect collectively enforced movements, not just the rise of proper-noun celebrities. This calls for inventiveness as well as rigor.

This takes us to the second methodological implication: the criteria for the selection of the main texts and authors out of the ongoing processes this volume attempts to account for. Our hope is that decisions about what texts to include from the recent past do not claim to, nor do they objectively have the power to, actually create a canon. The selection therefore reflects something other than the lasting philosophical importance of the works cited. It is rather the case that the works that are mentioned are there to help historically contextualize the overall narrative about the 1980–95 period, more than to acknowledge the appearance of canonical works. The chronology that appears at the end of the volume serves essentially the purpose to align chronologically cultural, historical, and philosophical events so that they can resonate with each other. It is an event-based timeline for the period under scrutiny, which aims at emphasizing processes of change.

Another side effect of this methodological choice is that in this volume chronological linearity is replaced by a more complex kind of temporality. There are two main reasons for this added historico-temporal complexity; first, it reflects the main hypothesis of this volume, namely, that in the 1980–95 period philosophy “explodes” outwards in a number of interdisciplinary thematic and theoretical developments that ignore the canonical periodization of the institutional practice. Second, it fulfills a genealogical purpose that, given the new interdisciplinary orientation, forces many of the authors to cover a broader temporal frame that often begins long before 1980. For instance, the essay on French and Italian Spinozism has to look back to the earlier parts of the twentieth century in order to set the context for what emerges in the 1980s. Similarly, the chapter on postcolonial theory has to extend the time frame of this volume in order to account for philosophical events that are central to it, but took root much earlier. And the essays that explore philosophical developments in the national contexts of France, Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic must also examine the genealogy of these developments in the intellectual influences and formations of the philosophers discussed.

A third methodological implication of the contemporaneity of the topics discussed here is that the speed of the social and political transformations of the period covered in this volume is itself an important factor. By the start of the third millennium, the social context has changed considerably since the days when the poststructuralist philosophers discussed in Volume 6 of The History
of Continental Philosophy first put “difference” on the theoretical and political agenda. The return of biological essentialism, under the cover of genetics, molecular biology, evolutionary theories, and the despotic authority of DNA has caused both inflation and a reification of the notion of “difference.” As the US celebrates its first black president, in Europe today contemporary racism celebrates rather than denies differences. In this reactionary discourse, however, cultural and ethnic differences are essentialized and attached to firm beliefs about national, regional, provincial, or even town-based parameters. In this context, however, difference is a term indexed on a hierarchy of values that it governs by exclusions through binary oppositions.

This political context makes it all the more important to return the post-poststructuralist and other philosophies of difference to their original progressive and even radical potential. After thirty years of postmodernist debates for, against, or undecided on the issue of the “nonunitary,” split, in-process, knotted, rhizomatic, transitional, nomadic subjects, issues of fragmentation, complexity, and multiplicity have become part of philosophical terminology and practice. The relative popularity of these notions, however, and the radical-chic appeal of the terminology, does not make for consensus about the issues at stake. It is therefore urgent to assess the implications for contemporary culture and politics of the critiques of the subject that have been developed throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Much disagreement and cross-purpose arguments have been voiced as to the ethical and political issues that the question of the subject raises in contemporary culture and politics. In other words, the “so what?” part of the discussion on philosophical subjectivity is more open than ever, while the contradictions and the paradoxes of our historical condition pile up around us. This volume accordingly gives ample space to the ethical turn, to issues of epistemology, and to the redefinition of the political. These mark major shifts of the categorical distinctions among different branches of philosophy and return to the basic questions about the values, norms, and criteria that philosophy can offer to a fast-changing world.

The volume has been organized according to a rhythmic sequence that groups the chapters in significant clusters. We open with Simon Malpas and the keynote concept of postmodernism, which is contextualized in the political context of advanced capitalism, marked by both fast social change and high levels of cultural anxiety. The unprecedented rate and type of technological developments led by advanced technologies results in critical questioning of the Enlightenment notions of the self-regulating and intrinsically liberating powers of scientific rationality, for instance in the work of Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, and Jean-François Lyotard. As advanced societies slide toward a culture of digital simulation and virtual reality, the social nexus that held together the Enlightenment project of European modernity slackens off. This requires new critical interventions on the part of philosophers.
There follows a cluster of essays that aim to outline relevant philosophical developments in the field in a number of different national contexts. In “German Philosophy after 1980: Themes Out of School,” Dieter Thomä argues that a dissolution of boundaries takes place in this period not only between continental and analytic philosophy, but also within them. He points to the alliance between Habermas and Derrida, or to Honneth reading Levinas, as clear indication that the labels of the old philosophical “schools” lose much of their relevance in the period under scrutiny in this volume and require more creativity on our part. Writing from France about the lasting legacy of that generation, Patrice Maniglier addresses “The Structuralist Legacy.” He emphasizes the importance of the theory of subjectivity that sustains the epistemological core of structuralism. By analyzing the agenda-setting journal Cahiers pour l’analyse and stressing the structuralists’ interest in the ontological nature of the dynamic unity of subjectivity, Maniglier draws illuminating connections between Althusser, Lacan, Lévi-Strauss and contemporary developments by Badiou, Balibar, and Lecourt. “Italian Philosophy Between 1980 and 1995,” by Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder, explores a historical context marked by the rigid separation of three cultural domains: the Catholic area, the secularist, and the Marxist thinkers. These domains affect and frame the reception and local developments of wider movements of thought, resulting in three main strands: the crisis of reason and subjectivity, modernity and postmodernity, and hermeneutics and “weak thought.” In his chapter on “Continental Philosophy in the Czech Republic,” Josef Fulka, Jr. adds a much needed note from the eastern side of the former Berlin Wall. By focusing on political and theoretical development in the Czech Republic and especially the thought of Jan Patočka, Fulka traces also the intense and often informal networks of philosophical exchanges that connected East to West during the Cold War. He also highlights the important role played by French philosophy as a harbinger of democracy and freedom.

It is evident that the range of essays included in this section is not exhaustive but is at best a selective choice necessitated by the limitations of size and scope of the volume. The selection could have been expanded to include similar developments both within the European Union and elsewhere in the world. The case of Spain and of Spanish philosophy comes to mind as a particularly relevant one, considering the wealth and continuity of philosophical tradition it offers in the works of, for example, Eugenio Trías Sagnier (1942– ; considered by many the most important Spanish philosopher since Ortega y Gasset), ethical philosopher Fernando Fernández-Savater Martín (1947– ; who follows in the tradition of Nietzsche and Emil Cioran), and critical and postcolonial theorist Eduardo Subirats (1947– ). Philosophical thought in Asia, notably the adaptation of phenomenology to traditions of thought in China, Korea, and, in particular, Japan should also have received more attention than we could grant.
INTRODUCTION

them here. However regrettable, such omissions are inevitable in a volume that aims not at exhaustiveness but rather at tracking the developments of the main traditions of continental German and French philosophies not only in their home countries but more especially in the diasporic mode that is central to the period covered in this volume. The central hypothesis that sustains the selection made here in fact is that continental philosophy after poststructuralism explodes outside the established institutional and disciplinary framework and goes nomadic. Tracking this diasporic move fully would require more space and resources than we could mobilize here. It might be more fitting therefore to read these essays on different national contexts as fulfilling an exemplary function. This is particularly true of the only essay that explicitly examines continental philosophical developments in Eastern Europe: the chapter on the Czech Republic should be approached as representative of the vitality of philosophy behind the Iron Curtain and of its expansion after 1989, rather than as a compre-

1. Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945), widely considered modern Japan’s first original philosopher, introduced Husserl’s work to Japan, thus beginning a long tradition of Japanese phenomenological and postphenomenological philosophy. Taking its point of departure from the thinking of Nishida, the “Kyoto School” – whose name was coined by Tosaka Jun (1900–1945) in 1932 – came into its own via Nishida’s younger colleagues and successors Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962) and Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990), who, through their original contributions, helped shape and solidify the school’s early identity by their association with contemporary European thinking of the day. Both Tanabe and Nishitani studied in Germany during the years between the First and Second World Wars (Tanabe in 1922–24, Nishitani in 1936–39). Tanabe, whose formation in Western philosophy was grounded in Kant and German idealism, had gone to Germany to explore the relation between Kant’s transcendental logic, Bergson’s vitalism, and Husserl’s phenomenology, but encountered the work of the young Heidegger, who impressed him with his “phenomenology of life.” On his return to Japan, Tanabe wrote the first article in the world on Heidegger’s thought. Nishitani, who wrote a dissertation on Schelling and Bergson, returned from Germany to Japan where he became perhaps the most influential proponent of Heideggerian philosophy and an even stronger proponent of Nietzsche, with whose thought Heidegger was actively engaged at the time. Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941) also traveled to Germany, where he studied with Husserl, Heidegger, and Rickert before traveling to Paris in 1928, where he hired, as a French tutor, a young Jean-Paul Sartre, and it has been claimed that it was Kuki who first interested Sartre in Heidegger’s philosophy (see Graham Parkes, Heidegger and Asian Philosophy [Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1990], 158). Kuki wrote the first book-length study of Heidegger (The Philosophy of Heidegger, 1933). Heidegger’s Sein und Zeit, published in 1927, appeared in Japanese translation in 1939, while an English translation did not appear until 1962 and a complete French translation not until 1985. More recently, continental philosophical themes have appeared in the work of Kojin Karatani (1941–; Transcritique: On Kant and Marx [2001], Sabu Kohso [trans.] [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003]), Akira Asada (1957–), and Kuniichi Uno (1948–). For a critical exploration of the relation between the Kyoto School and continental philosophers, see Bret W. Davis et al. (eds), Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2010).
hensive or definitive survey of the importation of continental philosophy into Eastern Europe after 1980.

The next cluster of essays addresses more directly issues in political philosophy. Amy Allen, in “Third Generation Critical Theory: Benhabib, Fraser, and Honneth,” examines the work of Habermas’s three most prolific students as they critically engage his reorientation of critical theory toward normative justifications, the pragmatics of language, and the discourse theory of morality, law, and politics. “French and Italian Spinozism,” by Simon Duffy, on the other hand, traces the development of an alternative ethics inspired by French philosophers’ innovative take on Spinoza. Spinozist materialism as the antidote to Hegelian idealism becomes one of the driving forces in poststructuralist innovations in thinking the political in the work of Étienne Balibar, Pierre Macherey, Gilles Deleuze, and Antonio Negri. This line is pursued and expanded by Lasse Thomassen in “Radical Democracy,” which is presented as an antifoundationalist approach to democratic politics. Focusing on thinkers such as William E. Connolly, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Slavoj Žižek, Thomassen explores the longer-term political implications of poststructuralism.

A cluster on new normative approaches to philosophy opens with “Cultural and Postcolonial Studies” by Iain Chambers. He highlights the innovative force of the interdisciplinary field of race and postcolonial theory, mostly in the work of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Gayatri Spivak. The innovation is both political and conceptual in that it highlights the critique of racialized power relations while rejecting black essentialism or any kind of essentialism. Chambers also bring out the wealth of philosophical texts generated by anticolonial politics and pleads for a reappraisal of their importance for a contemporary history of philosophical thought. “The ‘Ethical Turn’ in Continental Philosophy in the 1980s,” by Robert Eaglestone, takes the influential figure of Levinas as the lead in sketching the phenomenon of a return to issues of norms and values in the period covered by this volume. Both in reaction to the structural injustices of globalization, and as the effect of poststructuralist critiques, ethics emerges as the main forum for debates about contemporary subjectivity. In my own essay “Feminist Philosophy: Coming of Age,” I explore the explosion of scholarly work in this field after poststructuralism. I argue that an interdisciplinary impetus as well as radical politics drive the “intermediate” generation’s work in developing the insights of “high” poststructuralism toward new understandings of what is the matter with materialism and the materiality of the sign. Bruce Ellis Benson’s contribution, “Continental Philosophy of Religion,” analyzes the theological turn, mostly in French philosophy, with special emphasis on Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jacques Derrida, Michel Henry, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, and Paul Ricoeur. The chapter traces its definition and development, as well as the ways in which theological and religious concerns affect not only
philosophical discourse but also phenomenology’s very structure as a theologi-
cally neutral discourse. “The Performative Turn and the Emergence of Post-
Analytic Philosophy,” by José Medina, follows the lead of the linguistic turn
as a thread that runs through both analytic and continental philosophy. This
achieves a double result: it develops new perspectives at the intersection of the
great schools, but it also challenges the categorical distinctions between them.
Again interdisciplinary in approach, post-analytic thought addresses issues of
identity, knowledge, and values that reach well beyond the confines of academic
philosophy.

This is precisely the theme addressed by the essay that closes this volume:
“Out of Bounds: Philosophy in an Age of Transition,” by Judith Butler and
myself. The chapter documents the interdisciplinary explosion of the disci-
pline in the 1980–95 period and the extent to which this extracurricular vitality
challenges the traditional disciplinary constraints. The nonacademic energy of
philosophy in this period is sustained by an intense political desire to reflect the
changing historical and social conditions of a world that is rapidly becoming
globally linked, technologically mediated, and ethnically mixed. That challenge
continues and grows in quantity and quality in the following decades, decades
that are addressed in the eighth and closing volume of The History of Continental
Philosophy.
Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. ... To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal.

(Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*)

Although by no means the first instance of the term “postmodern,” this is probably one of the most immediately recognizable. The publication in 1979 of Jean-François Lyotard’s *La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* – an investigation into “the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies” commissioned by the Council of Universities of the Provincial Government of Quebec – provides a useful moment at which to locate the beginning of a very rapid spread of postmodernism as a subject of theoretical and philosophical discussion throughout a wide range of academic disciplines and, beyond them, across the media and culture of the developed world. The worldview presented in Lyotard’s book encapsulates the sense of change that was in the air at the beginning of the period covered in this volume of *The History of Continental Philosophy*, and anticipates what would become for people across the globe some of the defining experiences of the final decades of the twentieth

century. At the beginning of the 1980s, with the elections that brought Ronald Reagan’s and Margaret Thatcher’s new breeds of monetarist economics, market deregulation, and ideologies of aggressively anti-welfare-state individualism to the US and UK, Lyotard’s invocation of the transformation of knowledge from an end in its own right into just one more product to be bought and sold in an international marketplace seemed to many to capture the spirit of the time. The “great goals” of Enlightenment philosophy – truth and emancipation – appeared to be replaced by new, less apparently noble objectives as knowledge became the quintessential commodity for a postmodern consumer society: “Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold,” Lyotard declared, “it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange.”3 In this sense, postmodernism located knowledge within the newly deregulated markets that came quickly to define the experience of economic life in the 1980s.

Alongside this commodification of knowledge, the period also saw radical innovations in communications media with the rapid development of the internet, the spread of digital telephony, and the ever-increasing numbers of radio and television channels catering to more specialized tastes, all of which created a sense of more and more complex and fragmented modes of production, interaction, and exchange. The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union led some in the West to declare not just victory in the Cold War but, as the title of Francis Fukuyama’s 1992 book put it, the “end of history” itself with the triumph of a US form of “free-market democracy” and what President George Bush (senior) was to call a “New World Order.” It appeared for a time that economically, politically, socially, and culturally the global order was changing, and for many commentators the theories and arguments of those philosophies grouped beneath the banner of postmodernism best captured the opportunities and threats this new world might have to offer. Even if Lyotard’s particular responses to this change have frequently been questioned and challenged, the general sense that the world was in the process of undergoing a profound transformation rapidly developed into a key topic for debate, and the term “postmodern” became increasingly ubiquitous as the designation of this new “condition.”

There were moments in the 1980s and 1990s where it seemed that every new innovation, idea, and artifact had to be hailed or dismissed as “postmodern,” where discussions of culture were obliged to invoke the term to identify anything even remotely contemporary, and its deployment by journalists, commentators, critics, and students was practically mandatory. For better or worse, by 1995 it had become clear to many that, although the meaning of the term was

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3. Ibid., 4.
anything but certain, Western culture and society had incontrovertibly become “postmodern.” One consequence of this, and a key difficulty for any attempt to delineate precisely what the term designates, is that precise analytical definitions of the postmodern in such works as Lyotard’s quickly became difficult to discern among the myriad mass-media and popular-cultural invocations. Some thinkers, faced with such confusion, explicitly renounced the term’s association with their work: for example, both Derrida and Foucault reject the application of postmodernism as a label for their work, with Foucault going so far as to claim that he has no idea what it might mean. 4 Separating out a rigorously philosophical postmodernism from the significantly wider phenomenon that shaped many aspects of the cultural climate of Europe and North America during the 1980s and 1990s is no easy task.

This, though, is the aim here: to isolate and identify some of the key philosophical problems and arguments associated with postmodernism. Rather than attempting to encompass the countless different definitions provided by commentators from the whole range of humanities and social science disciplines, the objective is to explore postmodernism’s engagement with some of the problems and ideas it inherits from the continental philosophical tradition. For the purposes of this essay, then, the focus will fall predominantly on the work of the three most central and influential postmodern philosophers of the period: Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Lyotard. 5 The aim is to outline the key tenets of their definitions of the postmodern, to produce a brief account of the philosophical contexts in which their work might be located, and to explore their influence on the broader thought and culture of the period.

Beginning with Jameson, the chapter will outline his arguments about the disruption of modern identity through the pastiche and schizophrenia generated in contemporary consumer society, and explore his critique of the idea of a loss of critical distance in postmodernist culture. The chapter will then introduce some of Baudrillard’s attempts to reorient philosophy, including the moves from a representational to a simulation-focused epistemology, from a Marxist production-orientated analysis of society to one driven by a thinking of consumption, from ethics to seduction and – in what is perhaps his most controversial work on such topics as the Gulf War and international terrorism – from


*5. For a discussion of Lyotard’s philosophy more generally, see the essay by James Williams in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*. 
oppositional critique to the ironic detachment of “skeptical intelligence.” Moving on to Lyotard’s more robustly pro-postmodern formulations, it will then discuss his analyses of the breakdown of modernity’s master narratives, his rethinking of Kantian reflective judgment, and his transformation of the category of the sublime, in order to facilitate explorations of the unrepresentable, the differend, and the event.

I. THE DEATH OF THE SUBJECT IN LATE CAPITALISM

According to Jameson, a key aspect of postmodernism is “the ‘death’ of the subject itself – the end of the bourgeois monad or ego or individual.” The Cartesian subject, the keystone of modern philosophy, politics, and social science, loses its purchase in a postmodern world, and with it go modernist conceptions of aesthetic form, representation, critique, and collective politics. For Jameson, the disruption of such categories is the most profound and troubling aspect of the move to postmodernism. The causes and consequences of the death of the subject are central to his influential definition of postmodernism as “the cultural logic of late capitalism” in his important essay “Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” first published in the journal New Left Review in 1984, and expanded into a book with the same title in 1991. In these texts, Jameson develops an analysis of postmodernism that presents it as the cultural consequence of a transformation of capitalist economics in the second half of the twentieth century and seeks a means by which radical political critique might be able to continue in the contemporary world. He defines “late capitalism” as a “world capitalist system fundamentally distinct from the older imperialism” in which the globalization of stock-market speculation, the movement of industrial production to developing countries by multinational business, increasing automation and computerization, and the disruption and dispersal of the proletariat of classical Marxism give rise to new forms of identity, experience, and culture that can be called “postmodern.” The result of this,

8. Ibid., 3.
according to Jameson, is that “every position on postmodernism in culture … is also at one and the same time, and necessarily, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today.” This is crucial: for Jameson, the innovation and experimentation of contemporary artistic and cultural production can be grasped only as an expression of the transformed conditions of modern society, politics, and economics.

On the basis of this account of postmodernism as the superstructural expression of the development of global capitalism, Jameson presents a historically materialist-inflected analysis of contemporary culture in terms of the commodification of aesthetic experience:

Aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to aeroplanes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation.¹⁰

This focus on the aesthetics of production and the consumption of aesthetic affect is crucial to his analysis of contemporary experience, identity, and politics. In a series of discussions of art, poetry, architecture, cinema, and television, Jameson traces the movement from what he identifies as the modernist idea of cultural practice as a vehicle that contests and parodically undermines bourgeois assumptions about the world to what he sees as the significantly less challenging postmodern notion of cultural production as having become just another aspect of commodity exchange and thereby lacking a critical edge. Modernist parody, he argues, has degenerated into little more than “blank pastiche” as art mixes and matches elements and fragments of everyday life without any sense of critical engagement or challenge, and in doing so has lost touch with the materiality of existence and community.

More generally, what is at stake in the commodification of aesthetic production is what Jameson sees as an increasing aestheticization of day-to-day identity: the key focus of production and consumption in late capitalism is the generation and marketing of images, lifestyles, and modes of being. The Western consumer purchases identities in the shape of everything from fashionable brands whose advertisements hold out the promise of spontaneous personal fulfillment as one joins the “smart set” to empty signifiers of identity such as trendy ringtones for mobile telephones that are designed less to inform

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us that we have a call than to tell those around us how cool we are and which cultural clique we have bought our way into. “Postmodernism,” Jameson asserts, “is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process.”11 Commodities are no longer simply objects; they are brands, identities, ways of forging personalities and communities in a world that, he claims, has lost touch with traditional senses of being in common.

Jameson illustrates this process by contrasting two works of art: Vincent Van Gogh’s *A Pair of Boots* – which also formed the focus of Martin Heidegger’s seminal essay “The Origin of the Work of Art”12 and from which Jameson draws ideas – with Andy Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes*. Unlike the former, which presents “the whole object world of agricultural misery,” the latter, he argues, “no longer speaks to us with any of the immediacy of Van Gogh” nor even provides “a minimal place for the viewer” in a work that simply embraces the “commodity fetishism” rather than offering any form of critique.13 Shorn of context and history, Warhol’s shoes are presented immediately as a random collection of desirable commodities without the depth of community or history.

This postmodern consumption of images has, in its turn, a profound effect on identity. Commodified and aestheticized by the ubiquitous and all-encompassing fashion and marketing industries, the world “comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, and intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity,”14 which Jameson identifies with schizophrenia. Caught up in the infinite transformation and interchangeability of fashions and commodities, which are all the postmodern subject has to ground her or his sense of identity, the rapid alternations between anxiety and euphoria disable any potential for objective analysis or understanding of self or world. The consequences of contemporary culture’s schizophrenic intensity are a destruction of subjective identity, a loss of a sense of history, and a disruption of the ability to engage with the real:

Cultural production is thereby driven back inside a mental space which is no longer that of the old monadic subject but rather that of some degraded collective “objective spirit”: it can no longer gaze directly on some putative real world, at some reconstruction of a

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past history which was once present; rather, as in Plato’s cave, it must trace our mental images of that past upon its confining walls.15

Enclosed in the illusory world of the postmodern commodity, in the degraded objectivity of infinite financial exchange, the subject loses all sense of a real, all access to history and any ability to form or maintain firm distinctions between self, other, and world.

The loss of critical distance in the schizophrenic depthlessness of postmodern culture, Jameson argues, appears to disable modern forms of political critique and collective action. If an artistic or philosophical challenge to late capitalism is to be mounted and modern forms of political resistance and organization are to be re-enabled in the contemporary world, radical critique must begin with the rediscovery of the forms of identity and agency that stood at the core of the modern subject: “the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual can map and remap along the moments of mobile alternative trajectories.”16 In other words, Jameson calls for a process of critique that allows the subject to reorient herself or himself through a process of “cognitive mapping” that generates a “situational representation” from the mass of images and commodities that make up the experience of everyday life in order to make apparent the “vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society’s structures as a whole.”17 A coherent political response to the postmodern superstructure of our late-capitalist world must, according to Jameson, begin with a reorientation of experience in order to ground the subject in a manner that allows the revivification of modern political categories. Whether postmodern culture is able to provide the resources for this, he argues, remains an open question.

II. SIMULATION, HYPERREALITY, AND THE “END OF HISTORY”

Just as it does for Jameson, the problem of a loss of critical distance plays a crucial role in the work of Baudrillard:18 it is “the perfect crime” of postmodern

15. Ibid., 25.
16. Ibid., 51.
17. Ibid.
18. Jean Baudrillard (July 29, 1929–March 6, 2007; born in Rheims, France; died in Paris) received a PhD in sociology, and the habilitation, from the University of Paris X–Nanterre (1966, 1972). His influences include Bataille, Debord, Freud, Lefebvre, Marx, Mauss, McLuhan, and Nietzsche, and he held appointments at the University of Paris X–Nanterre (1966–86), and
culture, “the murder of reality.” If the former’s analysis of the postmodern superstructure of late capitalism focuses on the problematic of subjective orientation, Baudrillard’s diagnosis of the challenges of the postmodern world presents contemporary culture as a perverse “hyperreal” literalization of G. W. F. Hegel’s assertion about the relation between the real and the rational in the Preface to *The Philosophy of Right* (1820):

> There is no longer any critical and speculative distance between the real and the rational. There is no longer really even any projection of models in the real … but an in-the-field, here-and-now transfiguration of the real into model. A fantastic short-circuit: the real is hyperrealized. Neither realized nor idealized: but hyperrealized. The hyperreal is the abolition of the real not by violent distinction, but by its assumption, elevation to the strength of the model.

For Baudrillard, postmodernism marks the point at which the real has been entirely replaced and “transfigured” by rationalized models with the result that any possibility of a “critical and speculative distance” between them has collapsed. If, as Hegel argues, the movement of history can be understood in terms of a progressive transformation of rationality’s grasp of reality by means of ideas, practices, and institutions that develop dialectically to overcome particular forms of impasse thrown up by the contradictions inherent in this movement, Baudrillard presents the postmodern as a moment at which this process has been bypassed in a “fantastic short-circuit” generated by the immediacy of a technological hyperreality in which the rational/actual “distinction” of modernity is simply abolished “by its assumption,” “elevation,” and “transfiguration” into the postmodern “model.” Modern history, on this reading, has run its course, and the orientation it once offered to speculative dialectical philosophy has disappeared. The consequences of Baudrillard’s discussion of the “end of history,” however, are quite different from those presented in the readings of Hegel that see his work as aimed at the realization of universal freedom as well as from the so-called “good news” about the final triumph of North American free-market democracy over its various political alternatives that is announced in Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*. Instead, according to Baudrillard, this postmodern end of history marks the absolute annihilation of critical distance and the disruption rather than completion of modern political

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thought: we can no longer use reason to map the real because, owing to the precision, complexity, and ubiquity of contemporary modelling systems, any resistance or difference that allowed the latter to remain distinct has vanished. What Baudrillard means by this is that with the advent of new sciences and technologies, the models that can be produced to understand the world have become more real, more sophisticated, and more accurate than reality itself. He depicts this process by evoking a telling inversion of the image of the “perfect” map from Jorge Luis Borges’s short story “On Exactitude in Science”:21

The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory … it is the map that engenders the territory and if we were to revive the fable today, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map. … The desert of the real itself.22

The breaking down of the distinction between rationality and actuality, and the insistence that in contemporary culture the map precedes the territory, marks a move Baudrillard makes from a philosophy founded on questions of representation to one that focuses on the concept of simulation. Simulation, which Baudrillard presents as the quintessence of postmodern culture, refuses to raise those questions of originality and referentiality that are central to representationalist philosophies. For him, images and objects function only as placeholders in a structural system in which all values are exchangeable: the postmodern subject exists within the framework of an “infinite code” to which no one has the key. Baudrillard develops this idea of the infinite code of images from a reading of the work of the Situationist theorist Guy Debord, who argued in his 1967 book The Society of the Spectacle that the “whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once lived has become mere representation” so that spectacle “epitomizes the prevailing model of social life,” the “very heart of society’s real unreality.”23 Working through the logic of Debord’s arguments, Baudrillard removes from them any vestiges of representationalist philosophy to focus rigorously on postmodern simulation. Contemporary culture, he asserts, is not the producer of simulations, but their product: in postmodern simulation, meaning “implodes” as any last instance of a distinction between rational and

22. Baudrillard, Simulations, 1.
actual is abolished and the world moves from the critical distance inherent in representational reality to the immediacy of the hyperreal.

“Hyperreality” is not, of course, simply “unreality.” Baudrillard uses the term to identify a culture in which the fantastical creations of media, film, and computer technologies are more real, and interact more fundamentally with experience and desire, than the hitherto dominant “realities” of nature or spiritual life. The real, he argues in *Simulations*, is now “produced from miniaturized units, from matrices, memory banks and command models … It is a hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatorial models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.”24 In an often-cited passage about Disneyland, Baudrillard produces a clear example of how simulation operates to generate hyperreality:

> Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the “real” country, all of the “real” America, which *is* Disneyland …. Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real …25

Disneyland is not a fantastic space that makes the mundane reality of everyday American life more bearable, but is rather a means of masking the fantastical nature of that day-to-day existence: it is, he claims, “a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real.”26 The function of Disneyland is to appear fantastical so as to conceal the loss of everyday reality in postmodern simulation, to prevent the American public from recognizing the “fact that the real is no longer real.”

As well as disguising the disconnection of representation and reality, Disneyland is a useful illustration of a key economic and political aspect of Baudrillard’s postmodernism: the “deterrence”-effect of the seductive power of consumer culture. Like Jameson, Baudrillard’s discussions of the postmodern focus explicitly on the structures of global capitalism. In *The Mirror of Production*, Baudrillard asserts that, today, “capitalism crosses the entire network of natural, social, sexual and cultural forces, all languages and codes.”27 It is ubiquitous, he argues, not simply present in the circulation of money and commodities in the financial marketplaces, but everywhere, infecting every aspect of experience:

25. Ibid., 25.
26. Ibid.
The circulation, purchase, sale, appropriation of differentiated goods and signs/objects today constitute our language, our code, the code by which the entire society communicates and converses. Such is the structure of consumption, its language, by comparison with which individual needs and pleasures are merely speech effects.\textsuperscript{28}

In *The Consumer Society*, Baudrillard equates the commodity with the sign and argues that as they collapse into one another, they generate the language or code that shapes postmodern identity. The postmodern consumer, he argues, “sets in place a whole array of sham objects, of characteristic signs of happiness, and then waits … for happiness to alight.”\textsuperscript{29} This passivity is the result of the “seduction” of the commodity: the unfulfillable desire to find happiness among the “array of sham objects” that make up modern life is produced by contemporar y capitalism as the organizing force of experience and leads to the most central aspect of Baudrillard’s postmodernity – the ubiquity of the messages produced by advertising in the communications media and the subsequent annihilation of reality, agency, and the possibility of critique.

The postmodern mass media present a “dizzying whirl of reality” that is not a reflection or representation of actuality, but rather the production of a simulated world in which “we live, sheltered by signs, in the denial of the real.”\textsuperscript{30} It is in terms of this account of the seductive apathy generated in a media-produced world of hyperreal simulation that Baudrillard’s work has become most notorious. In a series of articles published in 1991, he argued that the Gulf War “will not,” “is not,” and “did not” take place. The central thrust of these polemical pieces is the argument that in an age of mass-media simulation and the commodification of the image, any coverage of the war is readable only in terms of promotion: “The media promote the war, the war promotes the media, and advertising competes with the war … It allows us to turn the world and the violence of the world into a consumable substance.”\textsuperscript{31} In the ubiquity, immediacy, and self-referentiality of the blanket media coverage of the twenty-four-hour news channels, access to any “real war” behind the self-promotion, speculation, and manufactured dissension of the “fake and presumptive warriors, generals, experts and television presenters” that fill the screens is impossible. In the face of this infinite spiral of promotion, Baudrillard argues, the Western subject as a consumer of media images becomes incapable of making rational judgments about what is “really taking place”: “uncertainty


\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 34.

invades our screens like a real oil slick, in the image of that blind sea bird stranded on a beach in the Gulf, which will remain the symbol-image of what we all are in front of our screens, in front of this sticky and unintelligible event.\textsuperscript{32}

In the light of this, and on the basis of what he sees as the impossibility of breaking through the infinite code of simulation, Baudrillard despairs of any genuine engagement with the actuality of the war and calls instead for what he terms a “skeptical intelligence”: “If we do not have practical intelligence about the war (and none among us has), at least let us have a skeptical intelligence towards it, without renouncing the pathetic feeling of absurdity.”\textsuperscript{33} What this skeptical intelligence might amount to as a mode of critical engagement with the contemporary world is something critics of Baudrillard have found difficult to pin down. To his detractors, Baudrillard’s postmodernism offers nothing on which to base a politics of collective action and little more than sardonic detachment as means of resistance to contemporary culture. His work is attacked as a fashionable nihilism that is incapable of producing any call to action by such thinkers as Christopher Norris, who responds explicitly to the politics of Baudrillard’s philosophy in \textit{Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War}. Less negatively, Baudrillard has been presented as a diagnostician of the conflicts and tensions of today’s world: a thinker whose arguments allow other postmodern theorists and political and social philosophers to identify crucial elements and effects of postmodernity even if he refuses to offer his own alternatives to the status quo.\textsuperscript{34} His work is provocative, and this provocation is itself the point. In the most positive light, then, critics argue that the explicit irony of Baudrillard’s skeptical writings generate a space in which the apparently totalizing seductive forces of contemporary mass-media simulation and capitalist commodification are shown to be finite, fragmentary, and anything but transparent, and therefore fit subjects for criticism.

\textbf{III. REFLECTION, SUBLIMITY, AND THE DIFFEREND}

If Jameson’s analysis of postmodern culture results in a call for new modes of cognitive mapping as a means to renew modern political organization, and Baudrillard’s explorations of hyperreality appear to reject oppositional politics in its entirety in favor of a detached mode of ironic skepticism, Lyotard’s\textsuperscript{35} work

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 32.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 58.
\item \textsuperscript{34} See, for example, Paul Patton, “Introduction,” in \textit{The Gulf War Did Not Take Place}, or Rex Butler, \textit{Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real} (London: Sage, 1999).
\item \textsuperscript{35} Jean-François Lyotard (August 10, 1924–April 21, 1998; born in Versailles, France; died in Paris) was educated at the Lycée Buffon, Lycée Louis-le-Grand, and received his \textit{agrégation de}}
sets out to generate a resolutely postmodern political philosophy that seeks to engage with, critique, and disrupt the totalizing power structures of the contemporary world. The call issued in the well-known closing passage from his influential 1982 essay “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?” to “wage a war on totality,” to “be witnesses to the unpresentable,” and to “activate the differences [différends]”\(^{36}\) is central to this work and forms the basis of his postmodern philosophy.

It is important not to read the account of the contemporary commodification of knowledge in *The Postmodern Condition* as a summation of Lyotard’s entire engagement with postmodernism. Although his analyses of commodification in that book appear bleak and incapable of offering a coherent alternative to the status quo, the account there is a diagnosis of a condition rather than the active critique of totalizing and totalitarian systems of thought that much of his other work is concerned to develop. While it refuses to discard many of the arguments developed there, the focus of Lyotard’s work changes to present the postmodern less as a historical condition and more as a mode of critical intervention in the continuing development of modernity. Like Baudrillard, Lyotard is careful to distance his critique from the systematic philosophies of modernity that he discovers in the work of thinkers such as Hegel and Marx, and instead seeks to identify and activate the moments where such modern systems appear to fall into contradiction, and it is this idea of the postmodern as a disruptive force that offers the best way into his work.

Although beginning his career as a Marxist philosopher, activist, and member of the radical group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*\(^{37}\) in the 1950s and 1960s, his 1974 book *Libidinal Economy* marks a violent rejection of systematic political organization. In what he was later to call his “evil book,”\(^{38}\) Lyotard attacks Marxism as a political philosophy head on, challenging its pretension to systematically diagnose, oppose, and resolve the evils of capitalism. In a particularly notorious

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37. *Socialisme ou Barbarie* is discussed in more detail in the essay on French Marxism by William L. McBride in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5*.

passage, he launches his critique of Marxist thought by splitting the figure of Karl Marx into two characters, each of whom represents a different relation to capitalism found in Marx’s texts: the first is the Moses-like figure of “Old Man Marx,” who scientifically and systematically describes the ills of capitalism and provides sets of laws to determine its overthrow, and the second is the erotically fixated “Little Girl Marx,” who is seduced by it and enters into a love affair with capitalism’s perverse body, enjoying its violent destructive power. In this way, Lyotard argues that Marxism exists in a paradoxical relationship with capitalism as it simultaneously condemns it and is captivated by it: Old Man Marx is the systematizer, the producer of Marxism’s grand narrative that presses everything into its mold, whereas Little Girl Marx points toward what he identifies as the jouissance of capitalist culture: the necessary excess of speculative value that arises from commodity exchange as the engine to perpetuate desire and consumption in a manner that exceeds rational definition and constantly haunts Marx’s systematic thought with desire and seduction.

Lyotard’s conversion of Marx into a “strange bisexual assemblage” was not simply done to offend his ex-colleagues in Socialisme ou Barbarie (although it certainly achieved this). Rather, it highlights the ways in which capitalism “exceeds the capacity of theoretical discourse” to explain its effects. Owing to its love–hate relationship with capitalism, Libidinal Economy argues, Marxism’s analyses remain complicit with the latter’s conception of social change as a grand narrative of development, and in the end both are able to depict the people caught up in capitalism only as objects of this development, as “cattle who couldn’t enter the future except backwards under a hail of blows.”

If Lyotard makes his final break with some of the key premises of modern political philosophy in Libidinal Economy, it is during his discussions of postmodernism in the 1980s and 1990s that he begins to formulate alternative bases for critique, most explicitly through a rereading of Immanuel Kant’s analyses of reflective judgment and aesthetics in the Critique of Judgment. The question of aesthetics is crucial for Lyotard’s analysis of the postmodern, just as it is for Jameson and Baudrillard. Unlike them, however, in “Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?” Lyotard is careful to present postmodern aesthetics as a disruptive element within a continuing modernity rather than a new mode of representation that simply replaces the modern. In this essay, he defines and distinguishes between three forms of presentation: realism, modernism, and

40. Ibid., 96.
41. Ibid., 98.
postmodernism. These are not historical categories that succeed one another in time; rather, all exist simultaneously and are manifest in many different cultures and periods. In fact, throughout his work, Lyotard is careful always to demonstrate that modernism and postmodernism are irreducible to straightforward historical categories: so, for example, he identifies aspects of the work of thinkers as historically diverse as Aristotle, Augustine, Montaigne, and Kant as explicitly postmodern, and quite explicitly defines the thinking behind some recent developments in digital technology and culture as modernist or even realist. Grasping what realism, modernism, and postmodernism are and how they are related will, then, take us right to the heart of Lyotard’s postmodern philosophy.

Defining realism as the mainstream style of presentation in a culture, Lyotard sees its task as to “stabilize the referent, to arrange it according to a point of view which endows it with a recognizable meaning, to reproduce the syntax and vocabulary which enable the addressee to decipher images and sequences quickly” so that the viewers, auditors, or readers can “preserve [their] consciousnesses from doubt.” In other words, the aim of realism is to depict the world according to conventions with which the addressee is already familiar so that it can quickly and unproblematically be understood and consumed. Realism is not simply a reflection of a pregiven reality, but is, as Lyotard defines it in *Postmodern Fables*, “the art of making reality, of knowing reality and knowing how to make reality.” Like Baudrillard’s hyperreality, realism is the presentation of the world as a comprehensible, mappable, and functional totality.

In contrast to this realism, Lyotard sets modernism and postmodernism, both of which he sees as potentially disruptive forms whose task is to “present the fact that the unpresentable exists. To make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can neither be seen nor made visible: this is what is at stake.” Instead of realistically presenting a world that is immediately recognizable, modern and postmodern presentations disrupt recognition by alluding to what a particular culture represses or excludes from its normal means of communication. They are, in other words, deliberately difficult and disturbing: direct challenges to accepted realist practices of presentation and understanding. Lyotard, explicitly invoking Kant’s aesthetics, calls the effect of

43. This noncontemporary sense of postmodernism is, for example, the basis of Lyotard’s discussion in his last (unfinished) book, *The Confession of Augustine*. His analysis of the “realism” of new technologies is most explicit in the essay “Can Thought go on without a Body?” in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (trans.) (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), 8–23.
44. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 74.
this sort of presentation “sublime.” In contrast to the beautiful, which is based on a feeling of harmony and attraction between the subject and the world, the sublime is a mixed feeling of pleasure and pain: simultaneous attraction and repulsion, awe and terror. De-emphasizing the traditional sense of a possible transcendence inherent in sublime presentation, Lyotard focuses on its capacity to “develop a conflict” between conception and presentation, and thereby upset the apparent seamlessness of a realist worldview.47 This notion of the sublime as a disturbance of everyday sense-making activity is central to Lyotard’s postmodern philosophy, whether he is discussing art and literature, history, technology, politics, or philosophy.

He differentiates between the modern and the postmodern sublime by arguing that in the former the unpresentable is “put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure,” while the latter “puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself.”48 In other words, modernism presents the fact that there is within the culture in which it exists something that eludes presentation, but does so in a form that remains familiar and assimilable. In contrast to this, postmodernism confronts the reader or viewer with a presentation that is challenging in terms of both form and content; it sets out deliberately to unsettle, seeking to generate “new presentations, not in order to enjoy them, but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable.”49 The postmodern sublime disturbs, disrupts, and challenges the subject to respond without providing the recognizable forms that make it possible to determine in advance what mode that response should take.

For Lyotard, then, modernism and postmodernism are modes of presentation that work to disrupt the realist conventions and expectations of a culture, and change as that culture is transformed and readers and spectators become used to, and no longer shocked by, their contents and methods. So, while for nineteenth-century European culture the quattrocento-style representational painting and triple-decker realist novel might have been the norm, the rapidly moving images of today’s MTV music video and the self-referential parody of the viral advertising campaign are equally realist in Lyotard’s sense of the term, as they are familiar, quickly decodable, and unproblematically assimilated by contemporary capitalism. In contrast to this, the modern and (especially) the postmodern are explicitly critical. For Lyotard, the role of postmodern presentation is to perform an immanent critique of the day-to-day structures of this realism; it operates within the realist context of a given culture to shatter its norms and challenge its

47. Ibid., 77.
48. Ibid., 81.
49. Ibid.
assumptions, not with a new set of criteria drawn from outside of that culture, but rather by showing the contradictions the culture contains, what it represses, refuses to recognize, or makes unpresentable.

While “Answering the Question” focuses its discussion predominantly on visual art, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, which many see as Lyotard’s most important book, develops this model much further to outline a postmodern mode of ethical and political engagement as well as discussing culture, history, and philosophy. Although employing a slightly different lexicon, the distinction between a realist mode of politics and a model that seeks to testify to the existence of the unpresentable and mobilize sublime feeling and reflective judgment remains central to the book.

Lyotard defines a differend as “the unstable state of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be.”\(^{50}\) A differend thus occurs as a feeling, a moment or event that agitates and dislocates experience as it is irreducible to the categories and conventions of the community – specifically, it happens as the presentation that there is something unpresentable. It is thus an interruption of the seamlessness of realism, a break in the flow of language, a moment where the “right words” will not come. And, for Lyotard, this lack of propriety is tied explicitly to the question of justice – in another definition, he presents a differend as:

>a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both of the arguments. One side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule).\(^{51}\)

In this sense, a differend appears as an apparently intractable dispute: it marks a point of suffering where an injustice cannot find a space to articulate itself, where an injury is silenced or a mode of testimony rejected. Lyotard offers a series of examples in the book, ranging from the claims of Holocaust deniers to the idea of the unpublished masterpiece of literature, but in each case the focus falls on the question of how the occurrence of a wrong provokes ethical questions and how the victim of that wrong might be helped to find means of self-presentation.


\(^{51}\) *Ibid.*, xi.
Differends are thus the point of departure for Lyotard’s exploration of the politics and philosophy of language in *The Differend*. He argues that their existence places an obligation on thought to attempt to “find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed by the feeling [of injustice], unless one wants the differend to be smothered right away in a litigation and for the alarm sounded by the feeling to have been useless.”

While the role of realism is, precisely, to “smother” any differend that occurs in order to “preserve consciousnesses from doubt,” Lyotard argues that the ethical response to the feeling of the unrepresentable differend must be to work actively to transform the context in which it occurs by seeking “new rules for forming and linking phrases” so as to “bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them.”

A differend is, in other words, an event. And for Lyotard, the thinking of the event in a manner that is open to its singularity and difference lies at the heart of the postmodern. In an article on the abstract expressionist painter Barnett Newman, Lyotard argues that the event is:

> what dismantles consciousness, what deposes consciousness, it is what consciousness cannot formulate, even what consciousness forgets in order to constitute itself. What we do not manage to formulate is that something happens …. An event, an occurrence – what Martin Heidegger called *ein Ereignis* – is infinitely simple, but this simplicity can only be approached through a state of privation. That which we call thought must be disarmed.

This disarming of thought, the breaking open of the closed system of realism that would silence the event by assimilation into the grand narrative of a systematic philosophy, is the basis for Lyotard’s construction of a postmodern politics. In a manner that differs from both Jameson and Baudrillard, he explicitly rejects the idea that the problems and categories of philosophical modernity have been or should be left behind, but seeks to mobilize events, to “activate the differends,” in order to disrupt the closed systems of thought and presentation that shape our continuing modernity.

In keeping with this model, at the end of the 1980s Lyotard came to differentiate his work from the then ubiquitous popular-cultural definitions of postmodernism that celebrated the freedoms offered by new forms of communications

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technology. In an article that takes the phrase as its title, he does this by describing what is at stake in his work as “rewriting modernity”:

Rewriting clearly has nothing to do with what is called postmodernity or postmodernism on the market of contemporary ideologies … Postmodernity is not a new age, but the rewriting of some of the features claimed by modernity, and first of all modernity’s claim to ground its legitimacy on the project of liberating humanity as a whole through science and technology … Rewriting means resisting the writing of that supposed [technological] postmodernity.56

In other words, the technological acceleration that is driven by contemporary capitalism, which Jameson and Baudrillard both identify as the essence of postmodernity, is for Lyotard the very realism that the postmodern rewriting of modernity sets out to disrupt. By paying attention to the sublime feeling produced by the unpresentable event of a differend, modernity’s legitimizing claims can, he asserts, be questioned, challenged and opened to critique. This is what Lyotard sees as the central stake of a “war on totality.”

This chapter has focused on three central accounts of the postmodern: Jameson’s analysis of it as the “cultural logic of late capitalism”; Baudrillard’s presentation of it as the culture that arises as a result of a movement from representation to simulation, seduction, and hyperreality; and Lyotard’s discussion of a postmodern resistance within a continuing modernity that emerges from the events and differends that disturb and dislocate modern institutions by opening them up to their own unpresentable alterity. That these three versions of the postmodern are impossible to draw together to form a coherent definition is part of the point: throughout the 1980s and 1990s, postmodernism’s challenge lay as much in its disruption of identity and definition as it did in any form of coherent philosophical or political alternative. Although there is no coherent postmodern philosophical or political program, its continuing interest lies in the development of a capacity to interrogate and challenge the everyday sense-making processes of the contemporary world.

German philosophy after 1980: themes out of school

Dieter Thomä

1. The Discontent with Continental Philosophy

German philosophy is regarded by many as the epitome of “continental philosophy.” This claim would gain credibility if French philosophy, the other main contender for this title, could be traced back to German origins as well, be it to the so-called three “H’s” – Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger – or to their counterparts Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. (Vincent Descombes explored these two genealogies as early as 1979.) Yet instead of indulging in any such philosophical imperialism, we should rather raise the question of whether the label “continental philosophy” suits recent German philosophy at all. Moreover, we should be aware of the conceptual problems that go along with this label. Addressing these problems will eventually provide us with a kind of “entry code” to the philosophical labyrinth that we are about to explore.

First, we should be aware of the fact that the term “continental” does not render any substantial information on how philosophers proceed and which problems they tackle. As the label “continental” is so vague, it tends to fuel the suspicion that a philosophy of this kind is in want of a clear focus. If we are to take “continental philosophy” seriously, we need to identify a set of questions that deserve to be called “philosophical,” with no strings attached.

Second, we should not expect to discover some kind of common denominator, a unified self-image that German philosophers share by virtue of their

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belonging to “continental” thought. Given the multitude of voices in recent German philosophy (and the controversies between and among them), the search for such a self-image is futile. In order to do justice to recent philosophical debates in Germany, we should take into account the plurality of partly incompatible traditions on which they are based.

We are thirdly invited to appreciate the attempts of German philosophers to build bridges to the “analytic” camp. The building blocks for bridges of this kind were laid when the cold war between analytic and continental philosophy was still raging: From the late 1970s on, authors from different camps published books that generously combined discussions of philosophers with wildly different affiliations. In his *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination* (1979), Ernst Tugendhat referred to Heidegger on the one hand, Hector-Neri Castañeda and W. V. O. Quine on the other. In recent years, analytic philosophers have become more and more interested in the work of so-called continental thinkers and vice versa. As the label “continental” fades, its counterpart, the “analytic,” is on the brink of being put out of service as well, even though some representatives of these two camps confidently stick to what may be called their philosophical “identity politics.”

In order to come to grips with the discontent with “continental philosophy,” we need to engage in the three arguments described above. (i) We should identify the key issues addressed in recent debates in Germany and situate these debates in the philosophical framework at large (the “bigger picture”). Recent German philosophy should not be portrayed as being in a state of less than splendid isolation. (ii) Yet we are also obliged to reconstruct the specific philosophical traditions at work in major contributions from German philosophers in the past decades. This will prevent us from imposing an artificially unified research agenda; it will “teach us differences” (as Shakespeare would put it). (iii) We will also have to take into consideration how German philosophers seek to overcome the constraints set by these traditions and how they consciously and conscientiously combine insights from seemingly unrelated theoretical contexts. In the following, I will slightly alter the sequence of these questions: I will remind the reader of the major schools setting the scene for late-twentieth-century German philosophy (section II), and then identify four key issues (section III) that can be used for mapping the philosophical landscape of the day (sections IV–VII).

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II. GERMAN PHILOSOPHY AFTER THE POSTWAR PERIOD

The year 1989 is to be regarded as the “closing bell,” putting an end to the postwar period in German history: German reunification made disappear what had been the indirect, yet most obvious and obtrusive, consequence of the political and moral collapse of Germany in the Nazi period – the existence of two “Germanys.” If we were to answer the question of when the postwar period in German philosophy came to a close, however, we would not want to identify one single emblematic event, nor would we choose a date as late as 1989. In the field of philosophy, the end of the postwar era can be linked to the death of the leading figures or founding fathers of the three most influential philosophical schools in Germany after the Second World War: Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the leading figures of the Frankfurt School, died in 1969 and 1973 respectively; Heidegger, whose influence in postwar Germany was mainly mediated through Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics, died in 1976; and the so-called “Ritter School” lost its central figure with the death of Joachim Ritter in 1974. This last name on the list may come as a surprise, as Ritter is not regarded as a major philosophical figure equal in rank to Adorno or Heidegger. But it is safe to say that his institutional influence exceeded that of the Frankfurt School; in fact, a recent debate circled around the question of whether Ritter’s neo-Aristotelian approach and his theory of political and cultural institutions actually represented the philosophical core identity of the so-called “old,” that is pre-1989, Federal Republic of Germany.

It is important to note that the epochalization suggested above does not refer to a new beginning or breakthrough, but rather indicates that an era has come to an end. I do not mean to imply that the schools mentioned above disappeared from the scene for good in the 1970s; Habermas and other younger members of the Frankfurt School published some of their main works after that date, Gadamer had a lasting and even growing influence until his death in 2002, and so on. Yet it is safe to say that those schools have lost most of their identificatory, defining force in German philosophy since the mid-1970s. This loss could

*3. Adorno, Horkheimer, and other figures associated with the Frankfurt School are discussed in several essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.

4. Born in 1903, Joachim Ritter studied with Ernst Cassirer, to whom he submitted his thesis on Nicolas of Cusa in 1927. From 1946 until his retirement in 1968, he was Professor of Philosophy at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster. Among his most important works are Metaphysik und Politik; Subjektivität; and Hegel and the French Revolution. Ritter was the initiator and main editor of the comprehensive Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, whose twelve volumes appeared between 1971 and 2005.

also be regarded as a win of a kind: “Schools” tend to become scholastic, which does not coalesce particularly well with philosophical creativity. It should also be acknowledged that some of the main representatives of those schools were actively involved in the self-abolition of philosophical factions themselves. That this is particularly true for the Frankfurt School becomes clear when we think of Habermas eventually joining forces with Derrida, or of Honneth reading Levinas.\(^6\) Here and elsewhere, we can observe a dissolution of boundaries.

If we want to understand how the philosophical debates have picked up new momentum in the more recent past, we need to briefly reflect on the legacy set by those three schools mentioned above. Their trajectories provide the framework for the more individual itineraries that have moved into uncharted territory in the last quarter of the twentieth century and up to the present. When going through these different legacies, we aim to switch back and forth between the focus on “schools” on the one hand, and the focus on “topics” on the other. Instead of merely reconstructing different scholarly traditions in a historical manner, we seek to establish patterns of themes in which we can locate German philosophy as it emerges after the end of the postwar period.

III. VARIETIES OF A THEORY OF MODERNITY

If there is such a thing as a common denominator shared by the Heideggerians, critical theorists, and the circle around Ritter, it is the search for a theory of modernity.

**Heidegger**

In Heidegger, this search is framed in his project of rewriting the “history of metaphysics.” Cartesian subjectivity, Hegelian reason, Nietzschean will to power, and modern technology in general are described as variants of a dualist model that eventually leads back to Plato. In modern times, this dualism has become the standard device for dealing with the world and with ourselves: we have come to totally dominate nature and to turn ourselves into “rational animals.” Heidegger’s “destruction” of this dualism was first formulated in *Being and Time* (1927) in his attempt to redescribe human existence as “Being-in-the-world,”

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and later became part of his project of “overcoming metaphysics.” Although Heidegger’s unique terminology tends to make him immune to external criticisms and makes it difficult to contextualize his approach, it is still legitimate to highlight certain topics that make his work appear to be a natural part of the philosophical debates of the day (be they analytic or continental). Two such themes deserve particular attention.

(i) *Being and Time*, as well as Heidegger’s later texts on the “history of metaphysics,” can be regarded as contributions to the debates on the concept of a *person* and to the theory of the *subject*. In his earlier work, he deals with the structure of “self-relation” and with issues of authenticity in a more constructive sense; his later work is dedicated to the “destruction” of the metaphysical “subject.” Hans Blumenberg’s account of self-preservation in the modern age, Dieter Henrich’s work on subjectivity and selfhood, and Tugendhat’s discussion of self-consciousness and self-relation have all been developed in critical reference to Heidegger, as will be seen in the extended discussion below. But it also should be said at the outset that the debates on the “subject” and the “person” are by no means limited to a Heideggerian framework.

(ii) Throughout his writings, Heidegger grapples with the problem of *language*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger gives an outline of nonpropositional language, and discusses its reduction to idle talk on the one hand and its powers of “disclosure” on the other. Language becomes a battleground for the encounter between those who objectify the world, propagate a “worldview,” and forget about the secret of “Being,” and those who stress the insurmountable difference between what is and what is said. In this crisis of representation and referentiality, poetry and art in general gain particular relevance. It is obvious how and why discussions of Heidegger’s early conception of language have drawn comparisons to Wittgenstein’s theory of language games and life forms, or how and why Heidegger’s later writings served as an inspiration for the deconstructivist critique of logocentrism.8

*The Frankfurt School*

It is safe to say that what Heidegger and the Frankfurt School had in common was their interest in the theory of modernity. In spite of Adorno’s fierce critique

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of Heidegger’s “jargon of authenticity” and Heidegger’s unrelenting ignorance of critical theory,9 there are striking similarities between Heidegger’s and Adorno’s accounts of the subject’s striving for domination. This does not mean, however, that these accounts were compatible. The distinctive features of critical theory come to the fore when we once again turn to the “subject” and, second, to “society.”

(i) Whereas Heidegger seeks to eventually overcome subjectivity as such and to outbid history by the “destiny of Being,” the Frankfurt School describes the subject as being fully and inevitably immersed in the dynamics of history. They describe the dialectics of Enlightenment and the crisis of modernity as emerging from the internal logic of subjective empowerment and alienation. In this perspective, any “great escapes” to another way of thinking (or being) are deemed to be illusory or even ideological. The Hegelian legacy that comes to the fore here is still visible in more recent contributions of critical theorists to the fields of moral philosophy and aesthetics.10 It is this Hegelian perspective that also enables critical theorists to engage in a fruitful dialogue with the contextualist or holistic approaches put forward by Charles Taylor or Robert Brandom.11

(ii) If the subject cannot escape from history, it cannot escape from society either. Critical theorists turn their attention to societal aspects of the functioning and formation of the individual. Some have stressed the oppressive nature of modern societies, while others have highlighted the constitutive role of intersubjectivity, interaction, reciprocity, and recognition for individual self-determination. In more recent years, this second group has become more and more influential, and this group has left its marks in the field of moral philosophy as well as in the theory of the subject.12 The sharp critique of the modern “subject” that played a central role in the early classic Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944) has been superseded by less bleak theories of self-determination and by a reappraisal of social relations. Within critical theory and also on its margins, important contributions to the theory

12. See the essay by Amy Allen in this volume.
of intersubjectivity and sociality have been published in recent years (see section VI).

The Ritter School

When the members of the so-called “Ritter School” talk about modernity, they choose a Hegelian starting-point that is clearly distinguished from the approach chosen by the Frankfurt School. Instead of focusing on the dynamics of modern societies as they emerge from internal contradictions, they settle for Hegel’s insight into the inevitability of “diremption” (Entzweiung) in modern societies. Following this account, the differentiation of social spheres has led to a liberation of the individual that bears new risks and gives way to dissatisfaction and discontent. This theory of modernity is not so much concerned with an attempt to reconcile the individual and the universal or to sharply analyze the alienating effects of overpowering institutions, as with the malaise of the individual and its lack of orientation.

In a certain respect, Ritter has a more positive reading of modernity than the members of the Frankfurt School. Instead of tracing down the alienating effects of capitalism, he acknowledges the liberating effects of modern diremption. In another respect, however, Ritter is driven by a discontent with liberation. He claims that the individual will not find an answer to the old Socratic question of “how to live” without relying on institutions that compensate for the shortcomings of subjective orientation. As the Ritter School questions the historical malleability of human beings, it is called on to identify patterns of human life and of the “good life.” This is why the Ritter School takes a step back from Hegel to Aristotle and moves on to questions of anthropology. As we will see in section VII, the reappraisal of classical “philosophical anthropology” (Arnold Gehlen, Helmut Plessner, etc.) meanwhile goes far beyond the Ritter School itself.

Let me briefly recall the key concepts that have emerged in this short discussion of major philosophical schools in postwar Germany: our list consists of subject, language, society, and anthropology. In the following, I will leave the perspective of “schools” aside and focus on a number of philosophers whose contributions can be organized along the lines of these key concepts. But it should be made clear at the outset that if, in what follows, a certain philosopher, for example, is discussed under the label of “anthropology,” this is not meant to imply that he is a member of the Ritter School, or that the Heideggerians are the only philosophical school concerned with “language.”

In the following, I will briefly discuss some contributions to the theory of the subject and to the concept of a person made by philosophers from extremely different backgrounds.

As early as 1955, Henrich\textsuperscript{14} made clear that the theory of the subject – the topic that would be central to virtually all of his writings – would lead him back to classical German philosophy, primarily Kant and Fichte, and force him to engage critically with Heidegger's critique of the subject. In his 1955 review of Heidegger's \textit{Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics},\textsuperscript{15} he combines a defense of Kant with an attack on Heidegger, in which he anticipates his later claim that the subject is anything but a stronghold of “unrestrained power.” Instead of settling for a critique of such a subject, as Heidegger and Adorno had, Henrich explores the primordial structure of self-awareness as a form of “being-a-self” (\textit{Selbstsein}) or of “conscious life” (\textit{bewusstes Leben}).\textsuperscript{16} The primacy of subjectivity is also defended against a scientific reductionism advocated by some representatives of the life sciences and against a linguistic reductionism that takes the subject to be an epiphenomenon generated by propositional, pronominal language or by autobiographical self-construction.\textsuperscript{17} Henrich defends the immediacy or unmediatedness of self-awareness against the popular model of self-reflection that has always been charged with the problem that the object appearing in the mirror needs to be artificially and belatedly identified with the subject looking into the mirror. Following Henrich, the immediacy of self-awareness is to be distinguished from more elaborate forms of self-knowledge, as it is inextricably bound to consciousness of any kind.

Henrich’s reading of subjectivity as immediate self-awareness has attracted objections from different camps, which, in turn, have prompted Henrich and his disciples to further refine their position and to raise counter-arguments. Two characteristics of these controversies are particularly interesting. First, they often cross the boundaries between analytic and continental philosophy; and second, they establish connections between the problem of subjectivity on the one hand,

\textsuperscript{14} Dieter Henrich (1927– ) studied philosophy at the University of Heidelberg with Gadamer. He has taught at the Free University of Berlin (1960–65), University of Heidelberg (1965–81) and University of Munich (1981– ).


\textsuperscript{17} Dieter Henrich, \textit{Bewußtes Leben} (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999), 40, 43, 54–6.
and language and society on the other. The leading representative of a linguistic theory of subjectivity is Tugendhat, while Habermas is the leading theorist who focuses on the link between self and society.

Henrich claims that self-awareness or self-acquaintance is independent from references to objects or other persons. Self-awareness does not coincide with self-knowledge, as the latter is already based on a distinction between a knowl-edgeable person and the content of her knowledge. Self-awareness is regarded as being prior to language and society: if you talk about yourself, you already have to be familiar with yourself; if you are recognized by others, you need to be “you” in order to experience it. When Henrich and his disciples, first and foremost Manfred Frank,18 discuss the immediacy of self-acquaintance, they painstakingly avoid any allusions to relatedness.19 The fact that you are acquainted “with” yourself must still be clearly distinguishable from, say, being friendly “with” a neighbor. Henrich and Frank argue that you cannot think of yourself as not being acquainted with yourself.20 Any linguistic or societal account of subjectivity based on human relatedness seems to be “running late.” Any self-relation is to be founded on something that antecedes relation.

Tugendhat21 actually sides with Henrich’s critique of self-reflection and with his claim that it is impossible to think of myself as not being me.22 Yet instead of explaining this phenomenon by going back to the immediacy of consciousness, he hints at the tautological character of propositions of the type “I know that I do x.” It goes without saying that these two “I’s” are identical: there is nothing mysterious about it. Following Tugendhat, self-relation is based on self-attributions: on a permanent process of describing me as doing x or being y. He also highlights the normative implications of such a process of self-attribution, as beyond their epistemic status they also allow for self-evaluations, that is, for appreciating or deprecating certain attitudes. This practical “taking stance” is part and parcel of a person’s becoming herself or forming a character.23 Tugendhat’s model of practical self-relation is indebted to Aristotle and Heidegger; it is worth mentioning that his reference to “care” and to “being

18. Manfred Frank (1945– ) studied philosophy at the University of Heidelberg with Gadamer, Karl Löwith, Tugendhat, and Henrich. He has taught at the University of Dusseldorf (1971–82), University of Geneva (1982–87), and University of Tübingen (1987– ).
21. Ernst Tugendhat (1930– ) studied philosophy at Stanford University and at the University of Freiburg with Heidegger. He has taught at the University of Heidelberg (1966–75), the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg (1975–80), and the Free University of Berlin (1980– ).
22. Ernst Tugendhat, Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstbestimmung (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979), 68.
23. Ibid., 182, 189.
related to oneself” puts the early Heidegger into play again, whereas Henrich is intent on dismissing Heidegger’s later critique of subjective power. In his reply to Tugendhat and defense of Henrich’s position, Frank claims that such an external, linguistic approach to self-consciousness barely grasps the individual experience of biographical coherence and continuity. It is still unclear, though, why and how such a temporal process should be more accessible to those who rely on Henrich’s abstract notion of consciousness and self-awareness.

It is important to note that Tugendhat, a student of Heidegger’s and an analytically trained philosopher, has recently complemented his linguistic reflections on personal identity with considerations on mysticism. Even though Tugendhat does not refer to Henrich in his 2003 book Egozentrität und Mystik, the implicit alternatives that are at stake between them are fairly evident, and their importance is considerable. In his most recent work, Denken und Selbstsein (Thinking and being-a-self; 2007), Henrich goes back to his old idea that the self can rely on an “internal foundation of its own possibility”; he now takes this foundational subject as a building block for a comprehensive model of epistemology and ethics that centers around a subject that, as Henrich puts it, “reaches out [to] the whole of a world.”

Tugendhat takes issue with such a centralized subject in his latest writings. As he has objected to the primacy of self-awareness from very early on and has always thought of the subject as referring to something or being involved in something, he now discusses mysticism as an attempt to overcome self-centeredness and to make peace with the world.

Whereas Tugendhat wants to prove that Henrich’s position is untenable, Habermas does not seem to see any need for such strong judgments. But, like Tugendhat, he shies away from Henrich’s “metaphysical” assumptions on a primordial subject. Given his record as a philosopher of communicative action, it does not come as a surprise that Habermas is at odds with Henrich’s claim that subjectivity is prior to intersubjectivity. Habermas criticizes the “extra-mundane” status of Henrich’s subject.

24. Frank, Die Unhintergehbarkeit von Individualität, 100.
32. Habermas, Nachmetaphysisches Denken, 272.
traditional Kantian approach based on the autonomy of the subject, while Habermas takes the social dimension of moral justification into account.

Henrich’s and Frank’s theory of immediate self-acquaintance and Tugendhat’s concept of self-relation are based on different theoretical premises, but they both argue for what may be called a “thin” conception of the subject. In Henrich’s case, the idealist core of the subject is the autonomy of the spirit; in Tugendhat’s case, the self is identical with itself by being responsible for its practical instantiations. Neither Henrich nor Tugendhat are particularly concerned with what has become a major topic in the contemporary debates on the subject or the person. This topic is aptly characterized by the Nietzschean question of “how one becomes what one is.” By going beyond the formal analysis of self-acquaintance or self-relation, those contributing to this debate seek to describe the process of shaping qualitative identity, fostering commitments, and so on. This debate has drawn increasing attention in the light of recent controversies on the freedom of the will triggered by the neurosciences. Those who do not defend freedom by tracing it back to an intangible human spirit redescribe it as the capacity to know what you want and what you are. The concept of a person or a subject thus leads to a theory of self-formation. In an exemplary manner, this in turn is put into practice in the recent work of a former student of Henrich’s who, in his earlier career, was one of the main mediators of analytic philosophy in Germany: Peter Bieri.

In his 2001 book Das Handwerk der Freiheit (The craft of freedom), Bieri relies heavily on Harry Frankfurt’s concepts of “care” and “commitment.” These concepts obviously resonate with Heidegger’s (and Foucault’s) notion of “care,” yet instead of exploring such correspondences between the analytic and the continental tradition, Bieri seeks to overcome his analytic past by engaging in a groundbreaking meditation on the freedom of the will. Bieri’s answer to the question of “how we become who we are” culminates in a notion of freedom that is associated with internal consistency and relies on a process of “self-appropriation.” Bieri argues for a “thick” conception of subjectivity that circles

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34. For further discussion of Habermas’s moral philosophy, see the essay by Christopher F. Zurn in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.

35. This is, of course, the subtitle of Nietzsche’s final work, Ecce Homo.

36. Peter Bieri (ed.), Analytische Philosophie des Geistes (Königstein: Hain, 1981) and Analytische Philosophie der Erkenntnis (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1987). Bieri (1944–) studied philosophy at the University of Heidelberg with Henrich and Tugendhat. He has taught philosophy at the University of Bielefeld (1983–90), the University of Marburg (1990–93), and the Free University of Berlin (1993–2007).

around the question of how a person learns to know herself. The social sphere, however, is as secondary in his approach as it is in Henrich’s.

Two other points should be mentioned before closing this section on the theory of the subject. First, Blumenberg also argues for a “thick” conception of subjectivity, but insofar as his account is as much indebted to the debate on philosophical anthropology as it is to the discourse on the subject, Blumenberg’s position will be discussed in section VII. Second, although the critique of the subject put forward by early critical theory primarily focused on the subjective domination of external and internal nature, more recent contributions from members of the Frankfurt School have become increasingly interested in the process of self-formation in a social context. Some of these contributions will be discussed in section VI.

V. LANGUAGE: PERSPECTIVISM, INTERPRETATIONISM, AND AESTHETICIZATION

In Gadamer’s hermeneutics, Heidegger’s theory of language and understanding is transformed into a methodology of the humanities or Geisteswissenschaften in general. Language appears as a fabric of meanings, as a kingdom of ideas. This approach misses out on the internal connection between discourse and power that plays a central role, for example in Foucault’s adaptation of Heidegger and Nietzsche. That analytic philosophy became particularly appealing to young German philosophers in the 1980s and 1990s was, to a certain extent, owing to the fact that Gadamer had turned most of “philosophy” into “history of philosophy.” Overcoming an old-fashioned historicism of this kind was also instrumental for rediscovering and reappropriating the best of so-called continental philosophy itself.

An important preparatory step on the way to this reappropriation was taken by Wolfgang Müller-Lauter in his interpretation of Nietzsche’s theory of the will. This interpretation was directed against Heidegger’s influential Nietzsche lectures from the 1930s and 1940s and brings to the fore that Nietzsche talks about a plurality of the will as embodied in individuals. Müller-Lauter’s anti-metaphysical reading of Nietzsche also leads to a reappraisal of perspectivism:

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39. Wolfgang Müller-Lauter (1924–2001) studied philosophy at the Free University of Berlin with Wilhelm Weischedel. After having taught for many years at the Kirchlichen Hochschule in Berlin, he was professor emeritus at Humboldt University, Berlin from 1993 until his death.
the plurality of the will corresponds to a plurality of interpretations. Whereas a hermeneutical account focuses on meanings and their unstable reference to reality, a perspectivist reading turns to the conflict between interpretations and their respective claims to truth. It could be said that truth, in Nietzsche himself, appears to be reduced to a matter of power, but perspectivism in a broader sense also leads to a recontextualization and reappraisal of language in cultural, ethical, and even epistemological respects.

By intentionally using the rare, almost awkward plural form of “the wills to power,” Günter Abel stresses the inherent plurality of Nietzsche’s perspectivism and draws a line from Nietzsche to Nelson Goodman’s “ways of world-making.” In Abel’s book Interpretationswelten (Worlds of interpretations), Nietzschean perspectivism, while rarely mentioned, is virtually omnipresent, hidden behind discussions of analytic controversies on realism and linguistic indeterminacy. His main interest lying in the context of epistemology, Abel seeks to respond to the relativist threat of perspectivism by introducing clearly distinguished levels of interpretations that go along with different validity claims.

With or without reference to Nietzsche, a number of other philosophers suggest that the philosophy of language should embrace cultural and symbolic patterns of human self-understanding. Nietzsche is very much present in contributions by Josef Simon (1930–) and Werner Stegmaier (1946–), who remain critical of universalistic claims founded in ahistorical reason and defend the ethical potential of perspectivism. The leading phenomenological school in Germany – the group around Bernhard Waldenfels – does not pay particular attention to Nietzsche’s antidualist concept of the “body,” but comes to similar conclusions by going back to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of the “flesh” and his theory of “signs.” The reinsertion of language in the context of life-worlds allows Waldenfels to widen the perspective and leads him from a hermeneutical account of the clash of interpretations to the task of approaching and acknowledging the “other,” the “stranger,” or the “alien”: this task is central to what he calls “responsive phenomenology.”

41. Günter Abel (1947–) studied philosophy at the University of Marburg. He has taught philosophy at the Berlin Institute of Technology since 1987.
44. Bernhard Waldenfels (1934–) studied philosophy at the University of Bonn and the University of Munich. He has taught at the universities in Munich (1968–76) and Bochum (1976–).
It is in line with Nietzschean perspectivism or the phenomenology of “life-worlds” that philosophy goes beyond the analysis of propositional language and takes the expressive and aesthetic qualities of language into account. The debate on aesthetics in recent German philosophy mainly circles around the question of whether artworks are defined by their trans- or antipolitical potential, or whether they contribute to the refinement of judgment and to the conversation of mankind, albeit in an indirect manner. Whereas Karl Heinz Bohrer (1932–) defends artistic transgression beyond any social or ethical concerns, Wolfgang Welsch (1946–) combines a broad phenomenological account of Aristotelian *aisthesis* with an analysis of the cultural and social impact of postmodern aestheticization.

In contributions from more recent critical theory, the account of the aesthetic revolves around an ambivalence that is central to the work of Adorno, who sees the work of art as a reminder of another possible world, yet warns against the collapse of aesthetic autonomy, which would be the price paid for turning life into a work of art. Whereas Martin Seel (1954–) explores potential convergences between aesthetics and the theory of the good life, Christoph Menke (1958–) insists on the rift between art and reality. He also uses Adorno’s concept of the “nonidentical” as a springboard for building bridges to deconstructivist theories of language and politics.

VI. SOCIETY: RECOGNITION, SELF-TRANSCENDENCE, SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Social philosophy has long been the domain of critical theory in Germany. As another chapter in this volume extensively discusses the more recent developments in this field, let me here complement the discussion of Honneth, Fraser, and Benhabib by hinting at the fact that critical theory has recently moved in two fairly different directions and, consequently, has entered fairly different philosophical debates.

When it comes to the normative grounds of social cooperation, Habermas’s theory of communicative action and discourse ethics obviously has a lot in

common with liberal theories of justice and contractual theories: the anticipation of possible objections or disagreements inherent to rational discourse is, like Rawls’s concept of the “veil of ignorance,” indebted to the ideal of impartiality. With or against Habermas, a number of moral and political philosophers (Ursula Wolf, Wolfgang Kersting, Otfried Höffe, and others) have been involved in debates on sources of normativity and on justice and human rights; it would be a task of its own to put these debates in relation to the international debate on these matters, and I cannot address this here.49

Yet the task of social philosophy is not confined to a primarily normative approach, and the subject’s social behavior is of interest philosophically even if it does not comply with the standards of universalized norms. This is where critical theory has taken a different turn. With Axel Honneth’s refined theory of recognition, we learn to distinguish between different social spheres – reaching from the political sphere to civil society, or from the workplace to the family – and to relate them to different self-images and forms of self-esteem.50 The formal distinction between different social roles gives rise to a more complex description of the subject or the social actor. Such an account is directed against minimalist accounts of the person as an agent maximizing benefits as well as against functionalist social theories that make the subject emerge from behavioral patterns and structural settings.

A younger generation of social philosophers and social theorists has grown suspicious of an unfettered defense of autonomy and seeks to reconstruct the social embeddedness of individuals by carefully analyzing the intertwining of autonomy and self-abandonment (Seel51) or the dialectics between “self-determination” and “self-transcendence” (Hans Joas52). In a poignant synthesis of German social philosophy, communitarianism, and American pragmatism, Joas, in The Genesis of Values, argues that the involvement of a person in symbolic orders or social imaginaries is not just an obstacle to autonomy, but plays a constitutive role in the process of self-constitution, in the “genesis of


51. Martin Seel, Versuch über die Form des Glücks (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995).

values,” or in what Charles Sanders Peirce called “the fixation of belief.” This new approach has much in common with what may be called a social turn within phenomenology: Waldenfels (see section V), Hans Jonas (see section VII), Michael Theunissen, Rainer Marten (1928–), and others venture to think with and against Heidegger’s “being-with” and seek to understand the relation to the Other without relying on either individualistic premises or on an all-embracing social framework.

The emphasis on the agent, a main feature of Habermas’s Kantian transformation of early critical theory, paves the way to a reconsideration of the complex internal structure of the subject, but it also attracts criticisms from social theorists who dismiss any strong notion of agency and autonomy and turn to social structures instead. In the famous controversy on “theory of society or social technology,” Niklas Luhmann’s “systems theory” established itself, at least in Germany, as the main contender to Habermas’s social philosophy. From the late 1980s on, Luhmann published a series of volumes that were dedicated to the analysis of different social spheres: the economy, education, art, politics, religion, and so on. In his groundbreaking work *Social Systems*, Luhmann describes “self-referential systems” and the “co-evolution” of societal structures on the one hand, psychological structures of individuals on the other. Following Luhmann, the identity of individuals is emerging from an “autopoietical” process of social differentiation and is directly linked to socially generated meaning. Luhmann borrows this concept of meaning from Husserl’s phenomenology, yet he does not allow for an account of subjective intentionality or for an analysis of individual agency from within.

A discontent with the subject in a totally different context comes to the fore in the work of Peter Sloterdijk. In his account of modern societies, he neither analyzes the premises of individual agency and commitment (as do Habermas, Joas, and others), nor promotes disillusionment in Luhmann’s sense. It could be said that Sloterdijk is rather concerned with a reenchantment of the world, as he seeks to reorganize our modern worldview along the lines of fairly vague
metaphors such as “globe,” “bubble,” “foam,” and so on. His approach has much in common with Oswald Spengler’s “morphology” in *The Decline of the West*, which was published shortly after the First World War. As a member of the “New Age” generation who spent two years with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in India, and as a representative of what he calls the “Heideggerian Left,” Sloterdijk criticizes the self-confidence of the “active subject.” His attempt to recreate a new shelter for the modern individual remains highly ambivalent though, as his discontent or weariness with the present age makes him susceptible to the temptation of overcoming the “human” and making use of modern genetics for creating or rearing a new mankind.

VII. ANTHROPOLOGY: THE THEORY OF COMPENSATION,
NEO-ARISTOTELIANISM, METAPHOROLOGY

The dissatisfaction with the master-narrative of individual emancipation has led not only to postmodernism, but also to a reappraisal of premodern traditions. As mentioned above (see section II), the Ritter School was centrally concerned with modern diremption in a Hegelian sense, yet instead of enrolling in a project of modernity that would eventually lead to the liberalization of lifestyles and to the self-organization of citizenry, the Ritter School said “farewell” to theories of progress and to the Hegelian tradition of *Geschichtsphilosophie*. According to Ritter and his disciples Robert Spaemann and Odo Marquard, modern diremption cannot be healed or sublated in some kind of higher reconciliation. We can bear the burden of modernity only by relying on institutions that compensate for a blatant loss of orientation. Central to their account is the theory of “compensation” that they borrow from one of the main representatives

64. Robert Spaemann (1927– ) studied philosophy at the University of Münster with Ritter. He has taught at the universities in Stuttgart (1962–68), Heidelberg (1969–72), and Munich (1972–92).
65. Odo Marquard (1928–1993) studied philosophy at the University of Münster with Ritter and at the University of Freiburg with Max Müller. He has taught at the University of Giessen (1965–93).
of philosophical anthropology in Germany, Arnold Gehlen. This theory is guided by the idea that the shortcomings of individual self-regulation are to be compensated for by cultural, social, and political institutions. This account has an anthropological twist as it is based on the assumption that such compensation meets certain invariable, unalterable needs of human being as such.

The second generation of the Ritter School does not speak with one voice. For example, Marquard defends compensation in the light of a more negative, skeptical account of modern life, and his skepticism regarding social experiments leads him to a defense of traditions and to an affirmation of the status quo. Spaemann’s praise of institutions, in turn, is based on a more positive account of human existence and personal integrity. In a compelling critique of Luhmann’s sociological functionalism, Spaemann turns away from the notion of the modern individual as a “man without qualities.” The fact that Spaemann discussed Luhmann’s work in such detail stands as an impressive example of an intellectual exchange among German philosophers and social theorists that transcends methodological and ideological borders. Spaemann seeks to retrieve the “qualities” of the modern man by interpreting the human being as a “person” whose integrity deserves protection and entails moral obligations. Following Spaemann, a person leading a life that aims at the “good life” cannot help but refer to and rely on values. A person does not generate them, but cannot do without them or even “owes” herself to them. Spaemann argues that a Nietzschean reevaluation of values runs against the human condition, as does a Kantian or Habermasian rational justification of values. Spaemann does not deny human freedom, but redefines it based on primordial commitments and convictions. In his critique of Frankfurt, Spaemann suggests that freedom consists in revising volitions rather than in determining them. When we compare Spaemann’s Aristotelian Catholicism to, for example, Martha Nussbaum’s “Aristotelian social

67. Arnold Gehlen (1904–76) taught at universities in Leipzig, Königsberg, Vienna, Speyer, and Aachen. He was one of the founders of “philosophical anthropology.” His major work Der Mensch: Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt (Man: His Nature and Place in the World) appeared in 1940 and, in a “de-Nazified” version, in 1950.
71. Ibid., 233.
democracy, “it becomes evident that Spaemann’s anthropological account puts much more weight on substantial preconditions of the “good life” than does Nussbaum. In his view of education, for instance, he puts values first and allows for critical reconsiderations of any kind only after a set of firm convictions has already been established.

It is safe to say that the issue of intergenerational relations presents a particular challenge to liberal moral philosophy. Spaemann detects this challenge in his claim that the ideal of autonomous decision-making cannot be applied to children and may even not be an ideal suitable to the human life form at all. Intergenerational relations could be regarded as a kind of showcase for the new fusion of anthropology and ethics in general. On display are the limits of emancipation as well as alternative justifications for moral duties. Thus Jonas discovers a primal scene of morality in the anthropological bond between parent and child. In his work on *The Imperative of Responsibility*, he seeks to overcome the “is–ought” problem by claiming that the parental “being with the child” is insolubly linked to the immediate moral demand for protecting it, caring for it, and so on. In an ethical re-reading of Heidegger’s “being-with,” Jonas urges us to rely on this primordial source of morality and to extend it to a responsibility for a livable future on earth in general. Substantialist anthropologies of this kind are always prone to generalizing certain findings: in this case, the bond between parents and children. It is hard to make the case that this bond is not subject to historical change and cultural differences. Yet there is also a type of anthropology that evades criticisms from the side of historical relativists. For example, an anthropological account does not necessarily aim at substantial claims on the assets of human nature, but could also be concerned with structural descriptions of human behavior: Plessner’s notion of the “eccentric positionality” of the person that accounts for individual embodiment as well as for reflective self-distancing may serve as an example in this respect. Plessner, who is much more cautious with references to biological findings than Gehlen, has also been a major inspiration for Hans-Peter Krüger’s (1954–) innovative contributions to this area of research.

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74. Hans Jonas (1903–93) studied at the University of Freiburg and the University of Marburg with Heidegger and Bultmann. He emigrated to England in 1933, joined the British Army during the Second World War and also fought in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. He later taught at the New School of Social Research in New York (1955–76).

While Spaemann’s and Jonas’s philosophical anthropology is pitched to the liberal consensus in recent moral philosophy, Blumenberg’s\(^76\) anthropology is pitched to the consensus that describes the modern age as a success story of full-fledged emancipation. Blumenberg’s anthropological reflections go back to the beginning of the modern age, that is to the age of “secularization” and “self-assertion.”\(^77\) His reading of the modern subject is not based on a theory of self-acquaintance (as is Henrich’s), but goes back to the concern with self-preservation that plays a central role in early modern philosophy. Compared to this tradition, however, Blumenberg’s concept of self-preservation has its own distinctive features.

Blumenberg does not address self-preservation as it appears on the horizon of the individual and its interests (e.g. in Hobbes); instead, he asks the question of how self-preservation could be put on the modern agenda in the first place. He sees it as an outcome of a dramatic resurgence of human finitude, of earthly existence. According to Blumenberg, the modern age is humane in the specific sense that it is willing to finally acknowledge and to take charge of the finite existence of human beings. The “legitimacy” of the modern age in general and of technological progress in particular does not consist in Promethean emancipation,\(^78\) but lies in the willingness to take the concerns of finite existence seriously. Blumenberg shares this interest in temporality with Theunissen,\(^79\) who complements current theories of the good life by exploring various forms of pathologies linked to temporal experiences and by hinting at life forms that make temporality bearable or livable, guided by the question “Können wir in der Zeit glücklich sein?” (Is it possible to be happy under the reign of time?).\(^80\)

With the focus on individual frailty, Blumenberg marks the greatest possible difference from the critique of the modern subject put forward by Heidegger on the one hand and Horkheimer/Adorno on the other hand (see above, section

\(^76\) Hans Blumenberg (1920–96) studied philosophy in Frankfurt, but later became a victim of racial persecution and had to hide from the Nazis. After the Second World War he continued his studies at the University of Hamburg and the University of Kiel with Ludwig Landgrebe. He taught at the universities in Hamburg (1958–60), Giessen (1960–65), Bochum (1965–70), and Münster (1970–85).


\(^78\) Cf. the comments on technology and against emancipation in Hans Blumenberg, *Wirklichkeiten, in denen wir leben* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 47, 49.

\(^79\) Michael Theunissen (1932– ) studied philosophy at the University of Bonn and the University of Freiburg with Max Müller. He has taught at the universities in Berne (1967–71), Heidelberg (1971–80), and Berlin (1980–98).

II). Given the contingency and frailty of human existence, self-preservation is concerned not only with bodily needs, but with individual vulnerability as such. A major challenge to the concern with individual self-preservation is the collapse of a cosmological order (or the “disembedding” of the individual, as it has been called in a totally different context81). Under modern conditions, the individual becomes more and more aware of the dramatic rift between its lifespan and the world as a whole.82 The individual’s place in the world is insecure; it is left alone with its sense of belonging.

Even though Blumenberg did not belong to the Ritter School, he was at least as impressed by Gehlen’s theory of compensatory institutions83 as were Marquard and others. Yet in his theory of compensation, Blumenberg proves to be aware of the limited reach of social institutions. His quest for an order that may provide orientation leads him to language, which itself is deemed to be fragile. We are not capable of scientifically reorganizing our world, hence we take refuge in metaphors that serve us as guidelines. As these metaphors are irreducible to any objective reality, they can only be “absolute metaphors.”84 This does not mean that they are useless, however. According to Blumenberg, human self-understanding cannot engage with “reality” in any direct, unmediated manner and relies on words lacking unequivocal referentiality.85 When he uses the term “anthropology,” he does not mean to refer to biological findings, but hints at the fact that the conditio humana is the condition of an “animal symbolicum,” referring at this point directly to Ernst Cassirer’s theory of symbolic forms.86 Thus the debate on anthropology reaches out to the philosophical debate on language. If “being human” means relying on something that “is not,” that is metaphors, we are invited to adopt a paradoxical self-image that leads from being to non-being and vice versa. It is striking to see how these considerations based on Blumenberg’s metaphorology come close to debates that are familiar to theorists of deconstruction. Whoever wants to attack complacent self-identity finds the best possible witness in Michel de Montaigne, who is quoted by Blumenberg with the marvelous phrase: “The worst place we can take is in ourselves.”87

83. Blumenberg, Wirklichkeiten, in denen wir leben, 115.
87. Blumenberg, Wirklichkeiten, in denen wir leben, 135.
VIII. CONCLUSION

Given the vast array of topics and traditions that we have encountered on our path through the labyrinth of recent German philosophy, any attempt to summarize these “themes out of school” would be futile. Let me instead conclude with three short remarks.

1. It goes without saying that this account of some recent developments in German philosophy is by no means exhaustive. This short overview could at best serve as an invitation to the reader to further engage in these debates and to explore what has been left aside or mentioned in passing only. Among the significant thinkers who, because of space constraints, have not been discussed are Rüdiger Bubner, Volker Gerhardt, Friedrich Kambartel, and Hermann Lübbe.88

2. It should have become clear that the most striking and promising contributions often seek to cross boundaries: be it that they cross the line between different scholarly traditions and think “outside the box,” or that they seek to overcome any narrow account of the subject, language, society, or anthropology. It should be regarded as a philosophical achievement of a kind if, at the end of the day, these topical distinctions appear to be insufficient.

3. If the reader came to the conclusion that the label “continental” does not really fit the philosophical work that has been presented here, I would not disagree.

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It may seem strange to publish an essay entitled “The Structuralist Legacy” in a volume devoted to 1980s and 1990s French philosophy. After all, was structuralism not dominant for only a brief period of time in the 1960s (and maybe only from 1966 to 1968)? And was it not both rapidly disavowed by its own leaders (some of them giving way to “post-structuralism”), and also questioned on the level of its very identity, both as it hesitates between philosophy and the human sciences, and as it is progressively evolved into many arguably incompatible individual projects, such as those of Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Foucault, Althusser, Deleuze, or Derrida? Equally, from a scientific perspective, has it not been superseded by cognitivism as the new transversal paradigm for the social sciences? While this may be the common view, the conviction underlying this essay is that structuralism has been the fundamental matrix of twentieth-century postwar French philosophy, running right up until the end of the century – a matrix realized in a diverging constellation of answers to philosophical problems raised by the introduction of structural methods into the social sciences. But it needs to be said from the beginning that we will not understand structuralism here as a determinate set of affirmative propositions bearing a lumbering, dogmatic identity, but rather as a movement that presents a problematic unity. This unity derives from methodological reforms in the various empirical sciences that made them realize, each in their own way, that they could not establish themselves

1. In 1966, both Foucault’s Les Mots et les choses and Lacan’s Écrits were published, and were huge best-sellers.
without passing through philosophical reflections on the very strange ontological nature of new entities that had been introduced into the scientific domain, such as the purely differential and positional entities that Ferdinand de Saussure called signs.

I would like to argue here that some of the most important works of 1980s and 1990s French philosophy (those of Alain Badiou, Étienne Balibar, Dominique Lecourt, Jacques-Alain Miller, Jean-Claude Milner, Michel Pêcheux, and Jean Petitot) originate in the idea – first put forward by both Lacan and Althusser in misleadingly similar terms just before 1968 – that far from dismissing the notion of subjectivity, structuralism offers the scientific and philosophical framework to give an accurate account of the emergence of subjects in the world. Most of these philosophers began their intellectual career as contributors to a little-known journal, the *Cahiers pour l’analyse*, which seems retrospectively to have staged the problematic of the next decades. Created by students of Althusser who attended Lacan’s seminar when it was relocated to the École Normale Supérieure, the *Cahiers pour l’analyse* aimed to inquire into the epistemological status of psychoanalysis in the context of structuralism.3

Structuralism, thus understood, appears as an attempt to overcome Kant’s dilemma: either science is possible, but we cannot understand how any subject can appear in the very world that can be made an object of science (since the transcendental structure of this world leaves no room for a genuinely self-determined entity); or there are subjects in the world, but we have to accept that something in reality resists scientific objectification. In contradistinction to Kant, structuralism aimed to make science and subjectivity compatible. However, this scientifically objectified world in which subjectivity could appear was not nature, but rather culture, understood as a set of symbolic systems (as in Lévi-Strauss’s definition).4 Here, the term symbolic refers not so much to a certain function (that of communication), as to a certain type of being, the being of differential and positional entities whose identities depend on their oppositional relations and structural positions within a system. In other words, structuralism offered a chance to make objective science and subjective experience compatible because it offered, through the concept of the sign, a new tran-

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3. Ten issues of the journal appeared between 1966 and 1969. They are now all available online thanks to the AHRC funded project at Middlesex University “Concept and Form: The *Cahiers pour l’analyse* and Contemporary French Thought,” www.web.mdx.ac.uk/crmep/cahiers (accessed August 2010). I am grateful to Peter Hallward, Ray Brassier, and Christian Kerslake for having provided me with their English translations of the texts.

4. See the definition of culture by Lévi-Strauss: “Any culture can be considered as a combination of symbolic systems headed by language, the matrimonial rules, the economic relations, art, science, religion” (*Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, Felicity Baker [trans.] [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987], 16).
scendental “ontology.” Structuralism claimed that given what a cultural system is in general, it is possible, perhaps even necessary, for subjects to arise within it. Thus, the guiding question became transcendental: What must the ontology of culture, that is, the ontology of signs, be, so that subjects can appear and operate within our world? In what follows, I would like to show that the relation between structure as an ontological concept and subjectivity as an effect has been the vexing question of one of the most significant parts of post-1968 French philosophy, and that it remains a fertile issue today.

I. FROM STRUCTURALISM TO HYPERSTRUCTURALISM: ONTOLOGY OF STRUCTURE AND SUBJECTIVITY AS AN EFFECT

The idea that structuralism, far from dismissing the notion of subjectivity, on the contrary allowed us to understand it in a truly Freudian sense, was at the core of Lacan’s teaching in the 1960s.5 Freud’s second topography – dividing the psyche into the agencies of ego, id, and superego – was, according to Lacan, nothing but “a reworking of the analytic experience in accordance with a dialectic best defined as what structuralism has since allowed us to elaborate logically: namely, the subject – the subject caught up in a constituting division.”6 Lacan finds in “a very particular mode of the subject” – a mode in which “the subject is, at it were, internally excluded from its object” – “the crucially important mark of structuralism.”7 To explain this sentence would require much more space than this essay allows,8 but it is nonetheless necessary to briefly answer two preliminary questions, since both psychoanalysis and structuralism are commonly deemed to have utterly dismissed the notion of subjectivity in the account of our life.

Following French Marxist philosopher Georges Politzer’s 1928 breakthrough work *Critique des fondements de la psychologie*, Lacan was convinced that psychoanalysis could not function without a notion of truth. Furthermore, this truth could not be an objective and substantial one (as if behind the illusions of the ego reigned the positive and deterministic forces of the unconscious), but needed to be a truly subjective one. There are good arguments for such a claim. As Sartre put it, why would I feel concerned by those wishes that appear through the cure to be at the origin of my symptoms and dreams if they were nothing but

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5. Lacan is the focus of an essay by Ed Pluth in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*
rough facts, simple data of the world, or if I refer to them in an intersubjective way or as “other”?9 What reason do I have to consider them as “mine”? Why should I assume these wishes more than, say, the ones of the analyst? And if I do not assume them, can the cure still be efficient?

But if the subject is not a thing, nor is it a transparent, self-determined, and self-constituted capacity of action, as Kant suggested. To put it rather metaphorically, we could say that the subject is never contemporary or coincident with its own engendering (as it is for Kant, since it is strictly coextensive with the rationality of moral law). Instead, the subject is always behind itself, it finds itself as having-always-already-decided, constituting itself through this very delay even though this primary being-already-here does not enable it to record itself as a fact. To designate the paradoxical nature of the subject, Lacan famously coined the term “split subject,” characterized as follows: “I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking.”10 This does not mean, though, that I am somewhere else, but rather that I am nothing other than this very displacement. We may add that Lacan suggested that such a truth, which does not lie in the correspondence between a sign and a fact, can be found in figures, in the sense of rhetorical figures, where a sign functions not by referring to a thing, but as a displacement from one sign to another. The truth of a proposition such as “I want to kill my father” would be of the same kind as “We are such stuff as dreams are made on and our little life is rounded by a sleep.”

Now, this definition of the subject may strike us as rather unoriginal. After all, a very long tradition running at least from Hegel to Sartre, passing via Kierkegaard and Heidegger, also defined the subject as a relation to oneself given by the impossibility of coinciding with oneself, whether this takes the form of an impossible being that is what it is not and is not what it is, or of one for whom identity and difference are identical, of one that is at the same time a given and a task, or of one that is eventually an ecstatic term that cannot stand (in) itself.

What is original, though, is the claim that this paradoxical element, far from being originary and only accessible through a philosophical a priori approach, is “best elaborated” by a scientific approach such as structuralism. So, already a second preliminary question arises: In what sense does structuralism have anything to say about subjectivity? Has Saussure not argued that meaning is

not found in subjective intentions, but in signs’ respective oppositions? Did Lévi-Strauss not accept the characterization of his philosophical position as a “Kantianism without a transcendental subject”? Did Althusser not defend a Spinozist “process without subject”?

The best argument to show that structuralism needed a theory of subjectivity was given by Jacques-Alain Miller, at the time only twenty years old, who would later become the editor of the Cahiers pour l’analyse and eventually Lacan’s son-in-law and legatee. This argument was given in “Action de la structure,” an article that, I will argue, formulates the basic program of his generation. If structuralism does not provide a theory of subjectivity, he writes, its extension to all the domains of cultural sciences, and especially to anthropology, is invalid: “as long as the alteration brought about by the exclusion of the speaking subject is not annulled, the structures proper to linguistics are of no value beyond their region of origin.”

Why so? First, while linguistics may study the abstract objects that Saussure called langues, anthropology studies man in his living totality, including the complete range of his actions (speaking, working, etc.), as Lévi-Strauss himself acknowledged, reminding his readers that the true meaning of Mauss’s notion of “total social fact” is precisely to “reintegrate subjectivity in objectivity.” But second, if structuralism is unable to explain the emergence of a subject as one of its effects (this very subject who considers himself or herself to be, at least in principle, the origin of all meanings), it will have to leave the explanation of the real functioning of structures to the most classic philosophical anthropology. For, even if we accept that a linguistic performance is nothing but the actualization of a possibility predetermined in the linguistic system, how can we account for this particular possibility being actualized rather than another one? Must it not be because of a subject who “chooses” it? Everything that structuralism was deemed to undermine – subjectivity, context, reference, practice – will then come back at another level, the level of use or speech, as Ricoeur’s work convincingly shows.

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11. For a discussion of Saussure’s linguistic theory, see the essay by Thomas F. Broden in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
13. Jacques-Alain Miller, “Action de la structure,” in Un début dans la vie (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 61. This text was written in September 1964 and signed also by Jean-Claude Milner and Yves Duroux, in order to introduce a “cartel” (defined by its interest in “discourse theory”) and then join Lacan’s new school; it was published four years later in volume 9 of the Cahiers pour l’analyse; for details see Miller, Un début dans la vie, 57.
“Action de la structure” therefore argues that structuralism needs to give way to a perfectly general concept of structure (which therefore belongs to what he calls a logic, a theory of the form of a symbolic system in general, which he will call the “logic of the signifier”), one that will also explain or formalize the implication of a subjective effect in the workings of every symbolic system. These two aspects – a strictly conceptual approach to structuralism and a causal theory of subjectivity – define what Jean-Claude Milner will later call “hyperstructuralism.”

But a last preliminary concern arises: Can structuralism actually function at such a general level? Is there any such thing as a general logic of structure? Is it not the task of each discipline, concerned with its particular domain of culture (be it language, fashion, kinship, ritual, or myths), to offer a specific account of the actual subjective effect of its symbolic structures? Is it not well known that all general concepts of structure are either too precise to encompass the variety of usage of structural terms in the various disciplines it has been imported into, or too broad to be truly significant?

The best argument in favor of such a “logical” approach to the relation between structure and subjectivity is to be found not in Miller’s 1964 “Action de la structure,” but in Milner’s later book Le Périple structural (2002), which is both one of the few serious historical interpretations of this period in French and a major sign of the renewed interest in structuralism in contemporary French philosophy. Milner’s argument, coming from a linguist, has the advantage of being grounded in a profound understanding of the philosophical issues raised by structural linguistics. He remarks that it is inaccurate to say that structural linguistics discovered a structural dimension in language; one should rather say that it has defined linguistic reality by this structural dimension. For, belonging to a system is not a property of signs; it is that which constitutes them in their existence and essence: “structural linguistics constitutes itself precisely by aiming at disregarding in language everything that would be specific to language and

would thus obscure the structural level as such.”¹⁷ Therefore structuralism is the extension of a linguistic model to all cultural phenomena only because it is first a reduction of language to structure as such. We can go even further and argue that the extension of the concept of the sign to various cultural phenomena is not grounded on the assumption of a common function (for instance, that of communicating, as Roman Jakobson argued), but on a common problematic mode of existence. If variants of myths can rightfully be called signs, it is not because they serve to communicate, but because they share the same ontological characteristics that Saussure first isolated in language: differentiality, duality, codetermination, and so on.¹⁸ There must, therefore, be a general theory of structure that sustains each application of structure to a particular domain. If it appears that such a general theory is in fact impossible, this would be a decisive argument against structuralism. In short, structuralism must be hyperstructuralist.

This remark is also important because it clarifies, retrospectively, the nature of the “logic” Miller pointed toward in “Action de la structure”: this “logic,” in truth, turns out to be an ontology. The Cahiers pour l’analyse therefore represents the moment when structuralism realizes its own ontological dimension. This gives us a more vivid image of its main hypothesis: it is because we are sensitive to the strange entities that Saussure called signs that we are constituted as subjects. Of course, this means that there needs to be some sort of cognitive function that underlies the constitution of these objects; however, this could very well be a blind, automatic, data-processing function – the symbolic function. Subjectivity itself, far from being the origin of discourse or the function that precedes and supports the signs we produce, is something that occurs in an already given domain of objects, the domain of language or discourse.¹⁹ To the familiar structuralist motto “It speaks [ça parle],” we should add that the way it speaks implies that “I speak.”

However, Miller used another argument in “Action de la structure” in favor of a purely conceptual or logical approach. He invokes Georges Canguilhem’s

¹⁷. Milner, Le Périple structural, 144. See also what Milner calls “minimalisme de l’objet”: “One will know a linguistic system only by constraining oneself to consider in it nothing but the minimal properties that constitute it as a system, that can be analyzed into minimal elements” (L’Œuvre claire, 97).

¹⁸. See Milner about Saussure: “Taken in its extension, the program could apply to any species of reality, if it is admitted (strong structuralist assumption) that any reality can be considered only from the point of view of its systemic relations. Pushed to its extreme point, it led to a new type of ontology. One understands that it ended up affecting all parts of the culture, from psychoanalysis to philosophy” (Le Périple structural, 38). For a detailed argument, see my La Vie énigmatique des signes: Saussure et la naissance du structuralisme (Paris: Léo Scheer, 2006).

¹⁹. Foucault will give a powerful expression to these structuralist themes in particular in The Discourse on Language.
definition of concepts\(^2\) (which will figure in the epigraph of every issue of the *Cahiers pour l’analyse*) as a tool for exporting ideas and methods from one theoretical domain to another. For Canguilhem, Bachelard had argued that science was worked through by a “dialectic” that recognizes the same problematic structure in two apparently dissimilar domains of knowledge; for example, the dialectic between the theory of electricity and the theory of movement gives way to modern physics.\(^3\) In the same way, according to Miller, the theory of structure was deemed to uncover the deep identity of apparently dissimilar theoretical domains; for example, Marxism and psychoanalysis, or, rather, the respective reinterpretations of each of them offered by Althusser and Lacan. Just as Lacan argued that the unconscious is not a positive substance behind consciousness, Althusser argued that the “real” causal forces in history do not constitute another substantial level of determination behind those that we believe to be efficacious, but are on the contrary to be looked for at the surface of these different levels and in the way they relate to each other in a “complex articulated whole.”\(^4\) The cause, therefore, is not a thing, but the structure itself. From this it is arguable that Althusser and Lacan’s works are connected through their belief that a certain concept of structure has genuine causal power without defining another level of reality. This leads to the theory of “structural causality,” in which structure is not another being behind appearances but is rather the “absent cause”: a cause that exists only through its interpretations/effects.

The nature of the problem can now be reformulated: we have to find the concept of a cause that operates through the very way it triggers chains of operations where it *does not* “seem” to operate, or rather – since we must obviously avoid intentional concepts – that is absent from the very operations it guides. Hence the concept of a “causality of the lack” (*causalité du manque*), where the absence of the cause is the principle of its efficaciously. If we can successfully argue that in each and every symbolic system there is one term that is included by the very manner in which it is excluded, that is, by a possibility that at the same time is its own impossibility, then we would have shown that symbolic systems cannot constitute themselves without implying a subject in the Freudian sense. How so? Because we have seen that the authentic definition of the subject

\(^2\) “[T]o work on a concept is to vary its extension and comprehension, to generalize it by incorporating exceptional traits, exporting it beyond its original region, taking it for a model or inversely seeking a model for it, in brief, to progressively confer the function of a form by regulated transformations” (Georges Canguilhem, “Dialectique et philosophie du non chez Gaston Bachelard,” in *Etudes d’histoire et de philosophie des sciences* [Paris: Vrin, 1970], 206).


\(^4\) Althusser is the focus of an essay by Warren Montag in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*. 
is not as a positive entity, but rather as a term that exists only in the form of a being displaced, as the impossibility of coinciding with itself.

II. SUTURE AND THE LOGIC OF THE SIGNIFIER: JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER

The construction of this “logic of the signifier” has known many different stages. The first attempt was in a very influential text by Jacques-Alain Miller published in the first issue of the Cahiers pour l’analyse: “La Suture.”

“Suture” is the name Miller gives to the relation whereby causality operates via what is lacking. The argument, though, seems surprising. Miller does not start from signs in Saussure’s sense, but rather from Frege’s tentative reduction of arithmetic to logic in his Foundations of Arithmetic, as if to show that in logic itself one can find a trace of subjectivity, that is, of a term that has no substantial identity but only a displacing function. Miller isolates three steps in Frege’s reasoning. First, number is defined as the concept of an identity to a concept; for instance, “children of Agamemnon and Cassandra” refers to Pelops and Teledamus, but the concept “identical to the concept ‘children of Agamemnon and Cassandra’” refers to 2, Pelops and Teledamos having been deprived of all their qualities and reduced to pure marks. Second, Frege invokes the concept of an object that is “non-identical to itself.” Its extension is null, but the extension of the concept “identical to the concept of ‘non-identical to itself’” is not empty: it is precisely zero. Zero is an object, although it does not subsume any object. Third, we remark that the concept of “the sequence of all the numbers up to 3” subsumes four terms: 3, 2, 1, and 0. Therefore, zero introduces an imbalance in the relation between numbers and objects: there are always more numbers than objects. What appears as an absence on the side of things functions as an excess on the side of names. This very imbalance is enough to engender the entire series of natural numbers, as if it was because we can represent nothing by something that everything can be put in a serial univocal order. The lack that zero subsumes does not exist, but it is efficacious: it operates, and operates even more because it does not exist as such. Zero is nothing but the displacement that it imposes on every other term in the series.

Of course, Miller sees in zero the trace of the subject:

The impossible object, which the discourse of logic summons as the not-identical with itself and then rejects as the pure negative,

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23. “La Suture” was published before “Action de la structure,” but written after it, as “Action de la structure” was first presented at Lacan’s seminar on February 24, 1965.
which it summons and rejects wanting to know nothing of it, we name this object, in so far as it functions as the excess which operates in the series of numbers, the subject. Its exclusion from the discourse which internally it intimates is suture. If we now determine the trait as the signifier and ascribe to the number the position of signified, the relation of the lack to the trait should be considered as the logic of the signifier.24

Miller’s idea seems to be that because traditional forms of logic cannot account for zero, this would require another logic, one that is not concerned with concepts and objects, but rather with lacks and marks, or rather with signifier and subject, with signifiers that signify (literally) nothing, but, precisely because of this, are signified in turn by another signifier, illustrating Lacan’s definition of the signifier as that which signifies the subject (the impossible or contradictory term) for another signifier.

Miller’s construction is also in line with Lacan’s notorious phrase: “The subject of the unconscious is the subject of science.”25 But its status is unclear. Is it just an example of the way “suture” (causa in absentia) works? Is it a way of clarifying the nature of the operation through which the subject exists in every structural domain by appealing to an analogy? But this interpretation would fall prey to a sort of vicious circle since the “logic of the signifier” would be made clear by appealing to what it grounds. We must rather read this text as an attempt to make a stronger point: that even the most formal and apparently unequivocal form of thinking relies on our access to the symbolic, that is, on our capacity to apprehend the strange entities that structuralists called signifiers. These do not function through reference, but thanks to the ability of one of them to hold the place of nothing and to trigger an autonomous series where each sign is built on another one by means of the imbalance between the positivity of signs and the nothing that they mark. This is a way of saying that behind formal logic itself one should look for the most fundamental logic, as in the first pages of Lévi-Strauss’s The Savage Mind, where symbolic thought is presented as the precondition of every thought; this assumes that we define signs by a relation between not concepts and objects, but lacks and marks. However, it is fair to say that this “logic” cannot yet be found in “La Suture.”

To find it, we have to turn to Miller’s 1975 text “Matrice.” We will reconstruct somewhat freely its argument in order to show its relation to the ontology of signs. According to Saussure, signs are positional entities: they have no other

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reference than their own position. But what is a position other than what is left when everything of the mark itself is erased – hence nothing? Therefore, a positional entity is an entity that contains, as part of itself, its own absence. The very concept of a positional entity thus implies a splitting of the object between itself and itself-plus-its-own-absence.26 This provides the matrix for the iteration Term → Lack → Term (= Term + Nothing) → Lack …. It is still possible to distinguish among these terms (T', T", …), but only by considering two series: the series of the terms and the series of their absences. These series are not parallel, but lagged (décalés) and relate to one another thanks to this very lag (décalage). It is also possible to consider them as the iteration of only one impossible or split entity, an entity that is all of them without being able to be any of them, an impossible object that is distant from itself and can thus be rightly called the subject.

A similar and somewhat simpler argument has been offered by Milner in Le Périple structural, arguing on the basis of the differential nature of signs. First, says Milner, we must remember that signs are relational entities. This implies that they have no properties unless there is another term. For instance, the phoneme /p/ can be said to be “voiceless,” because there exists a term from which it is distinct (in English) according to this feature, /b/. Rigorously, /p/ does not have any property, since it is impossible to separate it from them: there is no substance to which we attribute these properties since it is defined by its distinctive features as a purely differential term.27 Second, there is one property that is common to all the terms of any symbolic system: their being differential. But there needs to be a term to which all of them refer in this regard (since there are no properties without terms). Now, this term must also relate to itself as being distinct from itself. The conclusion follows that this term is the impossible or paradoxical term that exists only by absenting itself from every occurrence – the subject, in accordance with the tradition that defines it by this noncoincidence to itself: “Allowing that any structural term as such is non-identical to oneself, the subject is the term of the chain which supports the ‘not-identical to oneself’ of any term of the chain.”28

Many objections could be made to this argument, but here let me simply draw attention to its reliance on two disputable presuppositions. The first one is that the very idea of a “logic of the signifier” implies that this logic must be valid for every symbolic process, and therefore both for scientific and nonscientific discourses alike. The problem here is that this claim could be accused of erasing

26. While Miller’s reconstruction of Saussure bears some resemblance to Derrida’s account of the trace, I would suggest that while Derrida’s concept of trace implies a notion of time, with a reference to Husserl and Heidegger, such a notion of time is absent in Miller’s account.
28. Ibid., 165.
the distinction between science and ideology under a homogeneous theory of symbolic processes. The second objection is that these analyses make sense (if they do) only on condition that the structuralist approach to cultural phenomena as signs (and therefore as differential entities) is empirically grounded. But this very approach has been challenged by Noam Chomsky’s generative grammar. These objections will give way to alternative forms of “hyperstructuralism,” which construe differently both the concept of structure and the concept of the subject.

III. FROM FORMAL PRODUCTIVITY TO THE MATHEMATICS OF BEING: BADIOU AGAINST THE LOGIC OF THE SIGNIFIER

The first objection was advanced by one of the most important contemporary French philosophers, Badiou, in one of his first articles, “Marque et manque: À propos du zéro,” published precisely in Cahiers pour l’analyse.29 I will even argue that Badiou’s entire philosophical undertaking is rooted in the issues discussed here. Jacques-Alain Miller’s application of the “logic of the signifier” to formal logic relies on Frege’s unquestioned claim that the constitution of arithmetic requires an appeal to a purely conceptual impossibility (the “non-identical with itself”), to some unthinkable. But in “Marque et manque,” Badiou attempts to prove that logic does not need to appeal to this operation that Miller called “suture,” and logic is therefore liberated from the constraints of semiotic thinking. In line with Althusser’s Spinozist inspiration in the 1960s, Badiou defends the claim that science, as opposed to ideology, is a process without a subject, a process entirely contained in the immanent productivity of its formal apparatus, and that, in direct contradistinction to Lacan, “there is no subject of science.”

The heart of the objection is quite simple: Frege’s construction relies on a definition of meaning as referring to an object. But this is not, according to Badiou, the way logical symbols work. In accordance with the most formalist understanding of logic, Badiou emphasizes that logical symbols should be regarded as letters that define operations on other letters, and that they do not refer to anything other than what has been previously introduced as a letter (or a sequence of letters) through purely constructive procedures that have nothing to do with “suture.”30 Likewise, zero refers to something that has been previously

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29. For a detained discussion of Alain Badiou, see the essay by Bruno Bosteels in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
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defined at another level or layer of the formal theory. For it is a characteristic of every formal system that it is stratified: new systems can be built by introducing new rules and symbols in the former one. Badiou provides in his article the formal demonstration that it is possible to deduce zero without making any appeal whatsoever to the Unthinkable, but instead by playing on these different layers, zero being introduced at one level, excluded at another one, and reintroduced in the last one. A lack, in a formal system, is always the lack of a mark: there is no mark of the lack as such.

From this we can conclude that there is at least one language in which we do not need to speak of a subject (as an impossible object marked by a “placeholder”). This language is logic itself, the language of “science,” and the core of all mathematical thinking. Therefore, Lacan was wrong to say that “the subject of the unconscious is the subject of science.” Science has no subject, and this is what defines it in opposition to “ideology” or symbolic thought, which are characterized precisely by the way they hide their own productive processes.31

This early text is all the more interesting because Badiou’s mature work appears as a sort of rigorous redaction of this first position. In Being and Event, Badiou endorses a clear “hyperstructuralist” perspective. First, he explicitly renounces the logicist understanding of mathematics that underpinned his critique of Miller’s argument.32 Second, he defends the claim that the subject, far from being a function of ideology, is a function of truth,33 and even more strikingly, he endorses Miller’s question about the compatibility of such a theory of the subject with ontology.34 Third, this ontology appears to be a general theory of structure, and of a structure that leaves room for the emergence of a subject, closely echoing Miller’s attempt to “formalize” Lacan’s concepts. In short, it seems that in his later work, Badiou endorses the hyperstructuralist program, although redefining both the concept of structure and the notion of subject. While I cannot here do justice to Badiou’s highly articulated construction, it may be enough to say that the gist of the attempt to prove the compatibility between a structural ontology and a theory of the subject relies on the discrepancy between structure (here defined as a way of turning a pure multiplicity

31. “The suture thus is not a concept of the signifier in general, but the property characteristic of the signifying order that comes to bar a subject. By name, ideology. There is always a subject of ideology, and this is the mark by which it is recognizable” (ibid., 162).
32. “I had been caught in the grip of a logicist thesis which holds that the necessity of logico-mathematical statements is formal due to their complete eradication of any effect of sense” (Alain Badiou, Being and Event, Oliver Feltham [trans.] [London: Continuum, 2005], 5).
33. See ibid., meditation 35.
34. “But that the process-subject be compatible with what is pronounceable – or pronounced – of being, there is a serious difficulty for you, one, moreover, that I pointed out in the question posed directly to Lacan by Jacques-Alain Miller in 1964: ‘What is your ontology?’ Our wily master responded by an allusion to Non-Being, which was well judged, but brief” (ibid., 4).
– which as such contains nothing but multiplicities, thereby making it impossible to count – into a multiplicity of units, i.e., of elements belonging to it, that can be distinguished and counted\textsuperscript{35}, and what Badiou calls metastructure. This metastructure replicates the operation of structure on its own effects, no longer counting elements, but subsets, and thus re-presenting the units that were previously presented by the structure. Now, it is well known that there are always more subsets of elements of a set than there are elements in a set. Badiou makes use of an important theorem by Paul Cohen (published in 1963), which proved that for infinite sets this difference cannot even be measured, to situate what in Being (i.e. multiples or sets) allows for the appearance of a subject. For, in these infinite sets, there are subsets that can be proved to exist even though they cannot be constructed from inside the language of the original situation: they are said to be “indiscernible.” Badiou’s claim is that truths are such subsets that we cannot grant existence to on the basis of what we already know, but that can be “forced” to realization. Now, the subject is nothing other than the operation through which a set is reorganized according to the hypothesis of the existence of such an indiscernible subset. Subjects are not entities but rather operations through which the consequences of a truth unfold in a world in which, prior to the truth’s unfolding, they cannot be grounded.\textsuperscript{36} But it is clear that the condition of possibility of the emergence of a subject in the world is the essential tearing up of any structure. Therefore, for Badiou as for Miller or Milner, it is the structural construal of Being that accounts for the possibility of subjectivity.

Even so, Being and Event can be seen as still marked by the decisions taken in his early article, and if there is one thing that characterizes Badiou’s original answer to the Lacanian question, it is its enduring skepticism toward the very program of the “logic of the signifier.” First, in the same way that he does not believe in a deeper logic than formal logic, Badiou does not accept the idea of a specific ontology of signs.\textsuperscript{37} He claims that ontology is a perfectly general, nonspe-

\textsuperscript{35} “This is the most general definition of a structure; it is what prescribes, for a presented multiple, the regime of its count-as-one” (ibid., 24).

\textsuperscript{36} For a more detailed and remarkable analysis of Badiou’s theory of subjectivity, see Peter Hallward, Badiou: A Subject to Truth (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); and for an excellent account of Badiou’s early controversy with Miller’s “logic of the signifier” and more generally of the entire philosophical context that is discussed here, see Bruno Bosteels, “Alain Badiou’s Theory of the Subject: Part I. The Recommencement of Dialectical Materialism,” Pli 12 (2001).

\textsuperscript{37} The only moment in which Badiou seemed to have taken seriously the idea of a specific “logic” or ontology is Théorie du Sujet. But Badiou will disavow this attempt in the introduction of Being and Event, as a pointless pursuit of a dialectics of nature (see L’Être et l’événement [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1988], 10). But it could be argued that the very idea of a “great logic,” which is at the core of his last major book, Logics of Worlds, nuances the picture here sketched and complicates Badiou’s stand toward the legacy of a specifically semiotic ontology (see Patrice
pecific theory of what is, inasmuch as it is, and inasmuch as it is nothing in particular. This single ontology is as valid for nature as it is for culture, and Badiou does not wish to distinguish between them. In the same way that formal logic does not require any “other” logic to provide a symptomatic analysis of the former (as Miller pretended to do with Frege), Badiou holds that mathematics constitutes a qualitatively distinctive regime of signs that is entirely self-sufficient and cannot gain anything by being understood from the point of view of a general capacity for speaking or the symbolic function (in other words: there is no semiotic of mathematics). Particularly decisive is the fact that, for Badiou, the subject is not a condition coextensive to the constitution of a structure, but is rather something that arises from the introduction of a transgressive element within the structure: the event, defined as a set that belongs to itself. In contrast with Miller and Milner, who thought that every structure required a paradoxical element, for Badiou structured sets can perfectly well exist without implying any paradoxical element. The question is not “What must Being be in order that subjects necessarily arise?” but rather “What must Being be so that subjects may arise?” It is, in other words, a question of compatibility, not of emergence.38 This point is very important because it implies that, for Badiou, it is not enough to be able to speak to become a subject; becoming a subject requires access to truth, not merely to signifiers, and this access is by definition rare. Subjectivity is not a given dimension of our lives and, in opposition to Lacan, who he claims “supposed there were ‘always’ some truths and some subjects,”39 Badiou holds that many speaking beings can perfectly well live their entire lives without becoming subjects.

IV. A THEORY OF IDEOLOGY: LECOURT, BALIBAR, PÊCHEUX

This impressive attempt to provide a theory of the subject from a different form of hyperstructural perspective, one that does not make any appeal to the “logic of the signifier,” is nonetheless confronted by two lines of objections, defining two new topical positions on the map of late twentieth-century French philosophy we are trying to draw. The first one remains on the epistemological terrain that motivated Badiou’s first objection. For in both his early articles and his late books, Badiou relies heavily on the main thesis of what has been called the

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38. Meditation 15 of Being and Event criticizes Hegel for offering a “generative ontology,” one that tries to make the One emerge from the multiple.

French epistemological tradition (which was being reinterpreted at that time by Althusser): the thesis that science is not about finding truths, as if such truths were out there waiting for an adequate intelligence to bring them to light, but about creating them. This creation does not imply any form of relativism; on the contrary, it grounds their universality (since they cannot be reduced to their own conditions of occurrence). Bachelard’s concept of “epistemological break” was intended precisely to argue that science is not a continuous process of ever accumulating correct opinions about the world, but rather a discontinuous series of complete reframings of the very structure of thought, as if truths always created their own subjective conditions. Truth is always revolutionary, changing at the same time both what can be held as objective and the subjective capabilities of thought.

But this sharp distinction between science and nonscience has been put in question within the Bachelardian tradition itself by several of Althusser’s students. They claim that this distinction is a typical way of ideologizing science, one that hypostasizes (not to say totemizes) it by taking it away from the history of human beings. It thus remains always in danger of losing Bachelard’s main breakthrough: that there is no such thing as science in general, only effects of historical disruption.

Dominique Lecourt, whose later work in philosophy and history of science would prove to be very attentive to the images that guide our concept of science and their political implications, pointed out very early in his career that “it is clear what is designated, but not thought, by Bachelard: the necessity, in order to build the concept of a history of science, to refer it to a theory of ideologies and to their history.” This translation into the vocabulary of ideology aimed to overcome the main disadvantage of Bachelard’s concept of imagination: its absolutely nonhistorical character. Imagination, for Bachelard, is the

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*40. For a discussion of this tradition, see the essay by Pierre Cassou-Noguès in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4.
41. This idea would lead to the program of a historicization of transcendental philosophy that Foucault makes fully explicit in The Archaeology of Knowledge. About Foucault, see Béatrice Han, Foucault’s Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical, Edward Pile (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); and about this peculiar link between truth and history, which is characteristic of the French epistemological tradition, see Enrico Castelli Gattinara, Les Inquiétudes de la raison: Épistémologie et histoire en France dans l’entre-deux-guerres (Paris: Vrin, 1998).
function that produces the evident perceptions through which we make sense of our everyday world and that constitutes obstacles to scientific knowledge. But Lecourt rightfully remarks that this concept undermines Bachelard's own breakthrough – the rejection of any general philosophy of knowledge (science, being a historical process continually tumbling over its own conditions, ruins in advance all attempt to specify them a priori) – since imagination is nothing but the timeless condition of science, with Bachelard's “poetics” as the equivalent of a transcendental theory of knowledge. Ideology, on the contrary, designates the historical apparatuses that produce these evident perceptions. Since this formulation, Lecourt has provided many practical examples of a history of science that refuses to sever itself from cultural history.

Étienne Balibar, who is best known for his contributions to political philosophy, defended the same arguments on a more conceptual basis in a series of articles about Althusser (Écrits pour Althusser) and a short book entitled Lieux et noms de la vérité. Drawing on Canguilhem's paradoxical concept of “scientific ideology,” he undertook to show, through the example of mechanism, that ideology is not only a negative condition from which we have to depart, but that it is also a positive factor that contributes to history. Even though the metaphysical (viz. “ideological”) debates about the possible interpretations (substantialist or positivist) of the concepts of force, absolute space, and time, function as “epistemological obstacles” in light of Einstein's revolutionary transformation of physics, they also make explicit the internal contradictions of Newton's classical mechanics, thus preparing its crisis: “[Mechanism’s] role of epistemological obstacle is not turned solely toward the past. On the contrary, it dialectically contributes to carry science toward its future, thus towards its crisis.”

Therefore the relation of “science” and “ideology,” far from being one of only asymmetrical breaking-up, is more dialectical: the reideologization of science contributes to its history. This means that truths can never break so completely from the general history of mankind that they could be said to be “eternal” (in the sense that they would create their own conditions of intelligibility): they cannot function outside their own ideological context. As a consequence, the history of science can neither be separated from cultural history nor reduced to it. Truths are local processes, and even though they cannot be reduced to mere symptoms of a worldview or to social contradictions, they must nonetheless be defined by what they do to the symbolic or ideological systems they contribute

*44. Balibar's work in political philosophy is discussed in this volume in the essay on Spinozism by Simon Duffy, and in the essay by Rosi Braidotti in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
46. Étienne Balibar, Lieux et noms de la vérité (La Tour-d'Aigues: Édition de l'Aube, 1994), 146.
to transforming. Saying this does not open the door to relativism, but escapes the very opposition between relativism and universalism. The entire question becomes one of the transfer of scientific events into the world they bring about in order that they maintain their revolutionary power. While Badiou wants to guarantee that truths will always have the same persisting power (once a truth, forever a truth), Balibar and Lecourt argue that, even if it is right to say that science escapes from time, it is truer to say that it never ceases tearing itself away from it. Truth is a process or, even better, an *activity*, rather than an event separating two entirely distinct regimes of thought.

This has far-reaching consequences for the problems at stake in this essay, since the concept of the subject can no longer be derived from a radical break from the ordinary circumstances of symbolic life. However, we also cannot reduce scientific discourses to any general symbolic logic, since there are ruptures: the subject of science is not the subject of the unconscious. Instead of trying to explain subjectivity within a univocal logic either of the signifier or of truth, we should rather pay attention to the variety of regimes of subjectification at work in different types of discourses, and to the different forms of subjectification at work within each regime. The theory of subjectivity is now understood as the theory of the techniques through which historically resulting forms of thought erase their own production in order to appear as obvious, intuitive, and deprived of any historical conditions. Epistemological breaks become *displacements* of already given intuitions and, therefore, processes of *desubjectivation* and *resubjectivation*. In other words, as Althusser argued in his late work, the theory of subjectivity is nothing but the theory of ideology – and vice versa.

47. “One could even say, negatively, that a general definition of the break consists of this: scientific knowledge is only thinkable insofar as it produces an effect of truth, *neither as ‘absolute,’ nor as ‘relative’*” (*ibid.*, 158, my translation).
48. The characteristic of a scientific concept, such as the concept of relativity, is that it “can be carried out in contradictory research programs which follow one another indefinitely” (*ibid.*, 155, my translation).
49. “Science escapes from ‘general time’ (the time of the world, of humanity, of universal history, in which the idea of progress, or relative truth, would like on the contrary to bring it back, as if science and history were the mirror of each other)” (*ibid.*, 161, my translation).
50. “[L]a science ne cesse jamais de s’en extraire” (*ibid.*).
51. It is fair to say that Badiou’s last book, *Logics of Worlds*, offers a powerful answer to this criticism, since it defines the eternity of truth as a capacity of being transported from the world in which it occurs to any other world it contributes to bring about. See our discussion of Badiou on this point in Maniglier and Rabouin, “A quoi bon l’ontologie?”
52. “Any science is as such, not the knowledge of a pure ‘object,’ but science of *something of the formal determinations of a subject*” (Balibar, *Lieux et noms de la vérité*, 130, my translation).
However, the most complete formulation of such a theory is not to be found in Balibar’s or Lecourt’s contributions, but in the work of another student of Althusser and contributor to the *Cahiers pour l’analyse* (under the pseudonym Thomas Herbert54), Michel Pêcheux.55 In his unfortunately little-known work, he is among the few philosophers to have tried to draw the consequences for an empirical theory of language of Lacan’s and Althusser’s questions about the relation between structure and subjectivity. In his main book, *Les Vérités de la palice*, Pêcheux sets for himself the ambitious project of producing a theory of the subject as an effect of a symbolic process, a process that is exactly coextensive with the production of *meaning*. This is the theory of a mechanism that produces *as a result* something that does not seem to be produced at all, a thing that functions as a *cause of itself*.56

Pêcheux first criticizes the idea that meaning could possibly be an immanent property of linguistic signs belonging to the linguistic *system* itself. He argues that meaning is always ascribed from a position within an enunciative context; the meaning of the same words can vary according to the position taken by the speaker. There is no meaning, therefore, without somebody being constituted as a subject of discourse. The first part of his book is devoted to proving that referentialist theories of meaning (Frege and Russell in particular) necessarily imply an appeal to an enunciative context, expressed through words such as “this,” “here,” and “now,” which obviously only makes sense along with “I.”

However, instead of considering the situation where “I see this thing, here and now” is the real originary source of meaning, Pêcheux argues for a truly materialist theory of both meaning and subjectivity. He appeals to Althusser’s theory of interpellation, according to which the subject is produced, but produced as that which does not need to be produced, as that which is “always-already there.” Althusser illustrated the concept of interpellation with the famous little dialogue: “Hey, you there!” “Yes, here I am!” In this, the “I” does not precede the answer, but is rather constituted by recognizing itself in the one that is addressed. This

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55. Michel Pêcheux (1938–83) sought to contribute to a general theory of ideology in the line of Althusser, and he imagined very early that real discursive machines, that is computers, could contribute to discourse analysis (Michel Pêcheux, *Analyse automatique du discours* [Paris: Dunod, 1969]). His originality is to have pulled together a Marxist theory of ideology and a computer-simulated theory of discourse.

56. “[I]t treats of the *subject as process* (of representation) inside the *non-subject constituted by the network of signifier, in Lacan’s sense: the subject is ‘caught’ in this network – ‘common nouns’ and ‘proper names,’ ‘shifting’ effects, syntactic constructions, etc. – such that he results as a ‘cause of himself,’ in Spinoza’s sense of the phrase” (Michel Pêcheux, *Language, Semantics and Ideology*, Harbans Nagpal [trans.] [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982], 108, my translation).
recognition, therefore, is not simple; it functions through a retroactive effect via which the subject appears to have always-already been here to answer the appeal. Pêcheux then tries to uncover the linguistic conditions for such a paradoxical self-erasing process. This can be summarized in a few theses. First, language is not homogeneous but is constituted by a multiplicity of heterogeneous discursive formations, where the meaning of each term is defined through paraphrases and reformulations (such as “Kepler” = “the one who discovered the elliptical form of planetary orbits”). Second, the syntactic mechanisms of language make it possible to inscribe, in one and the same discursive process, terms that belong to each other, that is, terms that evoke things as having been said elsewhere. He calls this insertion the “preconstruct effect.” Therefore, speaking is not only about actualizing possibilities defined within a discursive formation (i.e. to choose within a paradigmatic set of options), but also about articulating discourses that are external to one another in the same syntagmatic series; we say what we say by evoking what has been said and therefore what does not need to be said again. Through this, Pêcheux suggests a new method for interpreting relative sentences in sentences such as “Whoever discovered the elliptical form of the planetary orbits died in misery,” which Frege famously claimed was not a real proposition. Instead of interpreting this sentence, as Frege did, as denoting an object (and not a thought or a truth value) and therefore judging it the illusion of a proposition, one that reveals the imperfections of natural language, Pêcheux argues we should see it as an appeal to something said elsewhere, something that does not need to be constructed as such.

The consequence is that the same term can appear both as being constructed in a discursive process and as having “always-already” been constructed. This duplication appears in paradoxes and witticisms such as “Is this the place where the Duke of Wellington spoke his famous words? – Yes, this is the place, but he never spoke those words,” or “There are no cannibals anymore in this country, we ate the last one yesterday,” or “He who saved the world by dying on the cross never existed.” In all these cases, the same term appears twice in the same discursive act: once as part of what is actually said here and now and once with some distance maintained from the enunciation. Thanks to this mechanism (and a few others), linguistic terms “duplicate and divide to act on themselves as other than themselves.”

This mechanism sustains the production of subjectivity: “it is possible to regard the effect of the preconstructed as the discursive modality of the discrepancy by which the individual is interpellated as subject … while still being ‘always-already a subject.’”

57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 107.
it identifies as that which does not need to be constituted because it is always-already there. In the expression “Here I am,” I both say something and say it as that which does not need to be said. In other words, the preconstruction mechanism allows us to think of a relation to oneself as being behind oneself (an identity requiring lag), constituted in the very way it resists every constitution, which was, as was said earlier, one of the definitions of subjectivity.59

This short sketch does not do justice to Pêcheux’s rich empirical and speculative work, and will certainly raise many objections. However, it is hopefully sufficient to indicate yet another path that the radicalization of structuralism that Milner called hyperstructuralism has taken, a path where the theory of the subject as an effect is grounded on a theory of discourse sustained by a theory of ideology, and which allows precise empirical analyses of real discourses. It will find its acknowledged development in what has since become, on the other side of the English Channel and under the influence of Ernesto Laclau, discourse theory.

V. AN ONTOLOGY OF SIGNS: JEAN PETITOT

However, there is yet another reply to Badiou’s objection to the very idea of the “logic of the signifier,” one that reactivates the problematic of an ontology of signs. For the paradox of Badiou’s solution is to have provided an ontology that cannot apply to signs in Saussure’s sense. The very definition of the identity of a mathematical set is fundamentally incompatible with Saussurean signs because set-identity depends on the contents of the set: it is extensional and internal (i.e. indifferent to what exists elsewhere). Saussure’s signs, on the other hand, have no positive identity; a sign is everything the other signs are not, it can be radically changed by a movement in them, and its identity is therefore relational and external.60 Therefore, even if we accept Badiou’s solution as a convincing ontological framework for a theory of subjectivity, in what sense can it be valid for us as agents enmeshed in semiotic networks? The kind of beings that we require a theory of constitution for is not the being of mathematical structures, but the being of languages, mythological systems, and political discourses. In the face

59. The paradox of subjectivity appears in typical mistakes that children make when they say, for example, “I have three brothers, Mike, Henry and me,” which Lacan relished quoting because it illustrates well that the subject replicates himself in what is said about him.

60. “The change which has occurred … would tell us nothing if our explanation of it centered on the form itself. Its only source is in the comparable forms … as always in morphology, movement comes from the sides” (Ferdinand de Saussure, Writings in General Linguistics, Carol Sanders and Matthew Pires [trans.] [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 129). See my La Vie énigmatique des signes, 180–85, for a detailed commentary on this idea.
of this demand, Badiou’s attempt to use the language of mathematics to speak about our “situation” may seem at best metaphorical.

Now, the positional and differential ontology in which Jacques-Alain Miller and Jean-Claude Milner argued for a theory of subjectivity as effect can make sense only if structuralists, following Saussure, are right to assume that cultural phenomena can be best scientifically objectified by methods that treat them as systems of differential and positional entities. In other words, the ontological deduction of subjectivity relies on empirical claims. However, at the very time that the idea of the “logic of the signifier” was evoked, the empirical kernel of structural linguistics was forcibly challenged by the successes of generative grammar. Milner himself was one of those who clearly saw that generative grammar ruled out the ontological claims that followed from structural linguistics. For, as Chomsky himself made clear in his critique of Saussure, it implied a substitution of the conception of “langue” as a set of codetermined elements endowed with a differential and positional identity with a conception of “langue” as a system of rules generating valid or invalid judgments of grammaticality, displacing the philosophical question to that of the status of the mental. Milner therefore holds that structuralism as a scientific research program has been superseded by generative grammar, in the sense that the latter has proved more successful than the former. While he still tries to defend the interests of hyperstructuralism from a purely philosophical standpoint, it remains a fact that the interest of structuralism lay precisely in the intricate articulation between philosophy and empirical science it represented. Therefore, the very philosophical context that we have tried to reconstruct would be definitively over if Chomsky’s objections to structuralism cannot be answered.

One author, who did not belong to the group of the Cahiers pour l’analyse, but who, as we will see, shared their interests, undertook a reply to Chomsky in favor of a reactivation of structuralism. In his 1985 book Morphogenèse du sens, Petitot unambiguously endorses the claim that beyond both poststructuralist and neorationalist critiques, structuralism is still more alive than ever: “far from becoming obsolete as the incurable instigators of fashion would like to make it believe, structuralism is on the contrary discovering the mathematical Idea conforms to its concept.” He too sees in structuralism an ontological

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61. “[T]hey return to a definition of linguistic objects by a positive matter and not only by a negative form” (Milner, Le Périple structural, 39); and see Milner, L’Amour de la langue, 61–5; For the Love of Language, 89–92.


63. See Milner, Introduction à une science du langage.

64. Jean Petitot, Morphogenesis of Meaning (Berne: Peter Lang, 2003), 19.
challenge raised by the introduction in the empirical sciences of new objects (such as phonemes). Moreover, Petitot finds, as did Miller, that this challenge bears on the notion of a positional entity, an entity that cannot be said to occupy a position but is its own position. Interestingly enough, he praises Deleuze for having formulated this question better than anyone in his famous article “How do we Recognize Structuralism?” Petitot’s originality is first to explicitly conceive of ontology as a transcendental reconstruction of our categorical apparatus (in a Kantian sense) on the basis of ever new forms of scientific positivity, and second to argue that such an ontology requires adequate mathematical models to provide the schematization of the categories without which they cannot be related to the positive phenomena produced by empirical sciences.

But Petitot is aware that no philosophical and mathematical construal of the concept of structure will make sense unless the empirical objections raised by generative grammar are answered. As Chomsky made clear in his criticism of Saussure, the debate is between a rule-based model – for which speaking is about generating an indefinite number of well-formed utterances through a hierarchy of formal rules applied to basic mental representations processed from one module (system of rules) to another one – and a taxonomic one – for which speaking is nothing other than the identification of a possibility globally defined through its contrast with other possibilities. There are two arguments in favor of the latter. The first is that generativism cannot provide an answer to the problem that motivated the original introduction of structural methods in linguistics, that is, the relation between the self-identical units of language that we actually perceive and the physical or phonetic signals we observe. For example, it is a scientific fact that it is impossible to define a phoneme via a set of positive phonetic features that would be instantiated in all and only the occurrences in which native speakers do perceive them. The signals appear to be continuous and scattered, whereas the phonemes are perceived as discontinuous and invariant units. This is the reason Saussure made the hypothesis that phonemes should not be defined by any positive features (such as phonetic properties), but rather as strictly relational and positional entities interdefined in an abstract system.

The second objection to Chomsky concerns the fact – which became more and more inescapable with the growth of generative grammar and eventually brought it to a crisis demanding its complete reconstruction65 – that the various modules (and the rules inside each module) are not applied in a simple sequential order: that it may be necessary, for instance, to have some semantic

65. This paradigm shift is known as the passage from a rule-based model to the approach called “Principles and Parameters”; see Noam Chomsky, Some Concepts and Consequences of the Theory of Government and Binding (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982).
information in order to know which syntactic rule should be applied. Far from mental representations undergoing a series of rewrites through sequentially related modules (or systems of rules), we would require a multidimensional responsive system to identify a single linguistic possibility.66 As a consequence, not only do Chomsky’s arguments against the taxonomic model seem to have been refuted by the progress of the very discipline he established, but also his inaugural dismissal of meaning in linguistics, along with his dismissal of the sign as the nature of linguistic objects,67 would need to be reconsidered.

Therefore, Petitot is able to reformulate the theoretical and philosophical program of structuralism as an open research project.68 Structuralism must not only philosophically and mathematically construe the concept of positional entities; it must also explain the passage from continuous and variable substrata to relatively substance-independent positional systems. His claim is that the mathematical formalization that structuralism requires can be found in René Thom’s catastrophe theory. It is impossible within the confines of this essay to do more than provide a suggestive account of his demonstration. Petitot’s claim relies on a rigorous analogy between the phonological categorization of phonetic spaces and the phenomena of physical transitions between material phases, such as the passage from water to ice that occurs at a precise temperature and is modeled by catastrophe theory. In the same way that, in the case of water, the parameter (temperature) is continuous but the morphological effect is discontinuous (from liquid to solid), phonemes (and semiological entities) are discreet morphological “catastrophes” on a continuous phonetic substratum. Transition phases can be geometrized by ascribing to the substratum a certain type of dynamics, far from equilibrium but without becoming chaotic, which results in abrupt changes in a small number of forms precisely theorized by catastrophe theory. A phonological system would be the result of a morphogenetic process grounded in the dynamics of phonetic substances.

But these catastrophic schemes not only capture the passage from substance to form, but also allow us to formulate what Miller called the action of the structure, since they “become the generative devices of actantial relations,”69 that is,


67. “[W]e are studying language as an instrument or a tool, attempting to describe its structure with no explicit reference to the way in which this instrument is put in use” (Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures [New York: de Gruyter, 2002], 103).


69. Petitot, Morphogenesis of Meaning, 193.
relations in which the terms do not relate to each other as alternative categories (this phonetic signal is *either* /p/ or /b/), but functional connections (expressed in relations such as: “after /p/ you cannot figure /b/”). Exactly as Miller wanted to construe the “virtual” system in such a way that it implies its actualization in symbolic “chains,” Petitot claims that catastrophic formalization allows us to understand not only why systems of discreet categories (what structuralists called “paradigms”) emerge from the substratum, but also the serial orders in which these categories actualize (what Saussure called “syntagms”). In other words, it would be possible to deduce from the very nature of the paradigmatic units the syntagmatic chains in which they are actualized. Refusing the separation between formal syntax and semantic interpretation, he draws on A. J. Greimas’s actantial model to explain what he calls “conversion”: the projection of the paradigmatic systems into syntagmatic chains. This projection shows the intrinsically *discursive* nature of symbolic systems: it is as if we cannot divide the real into alternative identities as is the basis of traditional structuralism without triggering narrative formats. Interestingly enough, subjects are no longer paradoxical entities belonging to systems only by absenting themselves from them; instead they are actants corresponding to different positions in the serial succession of symbolic terms. The ontological paradox is not on the side of the subject anymore, but on the side of *values*, that is, of these objects that, according to Lévi-Strauss, have to be exchanged and circulate in the actual working of a symbolic system. Subjectivity is an effect of the fact that symbolic objects never present themselves as real things: they are always divided into partial and complementary perspectives.

Therefore, the two main problems of structuralism – the passage from “substances” (such as phonetic substrata) to “forms” (systems of interdefined positional entities), and the passage from paradigmatic systems to syntagmatic series defining subjective positions – are both answered at once. It is apparent that after this move we are now very close to satisfying Milner’s demands for the hyperstructuralist program. But we must remark that this new solution requires, apart from a new understanding of subjectivity, a major displacement.

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70. “The contents deep semantics articulates (Life/Death, Nature/Culture, Man/Woman, Divine/Human, etc.) do not have a reference in the objective world. They are some sort of psychical drives or ideals that ‘give meaning to life,’ *a meaning that cannot be grasped as such but only experienced via its conversion into actantial structures*” (*ibid.*, 49). See also *ibid.*, 193–248.

71. “Only the circulation of such objects of value can allow them to be subjectivized; in other words, they can become part of the subject only through experiences and actions” (*ibid.*, 49). Contemporary anthropology (Marilyn Strathern, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Roy Wagner) provides solid empirical grounds for this hypothesis and a renewed form of structuralism (see Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Intensive Filiation and Demonic Alliance,” in *Deleuzian Intersections in Science, Technology, and Anthropology*, Casper Bruun Jensen and Kjetil Rødje [eds] [Oxford: Berghan Books, 2009]).
The symbolic systems appear now as *emerging* forms, and the real processes underlying these forms are not to be found at the same level on which they operate. The processes are in the specific dynamic of the substratum, and the morphological semiotic distribution simply emerges from it in the same way a Kanizsa triangle emerges from three incomplete disks. The ontology of signs would then have to be answered from an emergentist perspective. Following a suggestion made more than once by Lévi-Strauss and drawing on models of cognitive simulation other than the classic Turing Machine (such as connectionist models\(^{72}\), Petiot in his later work tries to find in the nature of the brain the physiological realization of such mechanisms. Of course, this peculiar form of “hyperstructuralism,” with its strong links to mainstream cognitivism, is no more safe from objections than the other ones discussed above. However, our discussion does prove that questions raised forty years ago about the articulation between a formal and ontological construal of the concept of structure and the theory of subjectivity as effect are still relevant in the most contemporary scientific and philosophical debates.

We therefore have good reasons to think that, beyond the main two opposing directions taken after (and against) structuralism by theoretical and philosophical thought, namely cognitivism and poststructuralism, contemporary French philosophy has been worked through, until the end of the century, by the question of a conceptual and formal (viz. ontological and mathematical) construal of the concept of structure valid for every symbolic domain, one that at the same time could offer an account of subjectivity itself as a necessary effect. But, rather than defining the “present moment” in contemporary French philosophy through a positive common feature or collective insight, the ambition of this essay was to define it (one may remark, in a truly structuralist way) as a *problem*: one that produces many alternative paths that some of the most important contemporary philosophers have pursued. In the process, four answers to the question of the theory of subjectivity articulated through a theory of structure have been distinguished: the “logic of the signifier” pretends to deduce a subject effect as a paradoxical term necessarily belonging to systems of positional and differential entities (Miller and Milner); another path refuses the specificity of the symbolic and grounds the theory of subjectivity on a set-theoretical ontology that leaves room for truth as a creation of unconstructible sets (Badiou); a third option tries to associate a theory of ideology with a theory of discourse construed as the set of mechanisms that produces the subject as *that which does not need to be produced* (Balibar, Lecourt, and Pêcheux); while the fourth suggestion argues for a morphodynamic interpretation of structuralism where

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symbolic systems emerge from a certain type of dynamic process, distributing complementary perspectives in a symbolic exchange (Petitot). Four ways are thus traced of construing the concept of structure (signifier, matheme, discourse, and morphologies), to which corresponds four concepts of the subject (as a figurative displacement, as a consequent bet, as a preconstructed term, as an actant). It would not now be difficult to distribute in this chart other important contemporary thinkers such as: Miller’s former student, Slavoj Žižek; the founding figure of the British School of discourse analysis, Ernesto Laclau; or the post-Althusserian theorist of subjectivity, Judith Butler, among many others. Therefore, we have a strong basis for thinking that, far from having been outdated by developments in cultural science or philosophy, structuralism, at least as a problematic space, is still a major though secret matrix of contemporary philosophy. Answers, of course, remain to be assessed or enriched, and, even better, to be discovered. However, such discovery requires that we are at least not oblivious to their history.

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*73. The work of Žižek, Laclau, and Butler are all addressed in essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.

74. I wish to thank Tim Secret for his excellent job editing the text in English, Alan Schrift for his helpful comments and generous editing work, Yves Duroux for having introduced me to this literature and discussing with me some of these issues, Étienne Balibar for being at the origin of this work, and, finally, Rosi Braidotti for having asked it of me and for her patience waiting for its completion.
Italian philosophy is characterized in the period immediately following the Second World War by the somewhat rigid distinction among three main cultural domains: religious (principally Catholic), laicist (laica), and Marxist.1 This distinction mirrors the political laceration within the country, split between the religious inspiration of the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the liberal, secular tradition derived from the Risorgimento2 that often includes, although laterally, the Socialist Party (PSI), with the strong constituency of the Communist Party (PCI) rigorously excluded from all government coalitions.3

The religious philosophical domain is marked in general by a strong interest in metaphysical themes having to do with foundational issues such as the problem of the absolute, the possibility of metaphysical reason, and the universality of


2. This is the period of Italian history that, through a series of independence wars, led to the political unification of most of the Italian peninsula, and eventually to the establishment of the kingdom of Italy in 1861 and to the annexation of Rome in 1870.

3. This occurred from 1948 to 1976 and then again from 1979 to 1991, while during the period 1977–79 the PCI granted external support to the government.
morality. These issues are often discussed in light of the problem of the relation between Christianity and philosophy, and between faith and reason. The great metaphysical themes led to a renewed interest in Aristotle and Aquinas in a number of neoclassical, neoscholastic, and neo-Thomist thinkers, for example: Agostino Gemelli (1878–1959), the founder in 1921 of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, the center of Italian neoscholasticism; Francesco Olgiati (1886–1962), the founder of the Centro di Studi Filosofici Cristiani di Gallarate (Gallarate Center of Christian Philosophical Studies), for whom philosophy’s starting-point is not knowledge but metaphysics; Carlo Giacon (1900–1984), a historian of scholasticism; Gustavo Bontadini (1903–90), a firm supporter of classical metaphysics; Cornelio Fabro (1911–95), who is also a scholar of existentialism and a translator of Kierkegaard; Marino Gentile (1906–91), who embraces an Aristotelian-influenced metaphysics marked by problematizing (problematicità) and historicity; and Umberto Padovani (1894–1968), for whom the philosophy of religion must justify religion.

Opposed to this array of thinkers is the variegated, less-unitary group of Christian spiritualist thinkers who, being more receptive of the neoidealist tradition of Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, accentuate the dimension of

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4. Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) was educated at the school of Francesco De Sanctis (who was the major literary critic and historian of literature in nineteenth-century Italy and was formed in the legacy of Vico), and Antonio Labriola (an Italian philosopher with strong interests in Marxism). His encounter with Hegel's philosophy confronted him with the idea of Spirit as the dialectical principle of reality born out of ever-new contradictions. Unlike Hegel, Croce neglected the role of the realm of nature (and hence the role of science) in the development of Spirit (this neglect remained as a legacy in much subsequent Italian philosophy and education), and developed instead an absolute historicism based on the idea that all reality is Spirit, but Spirit manifests itself only in history and human activities. From here derives Croce's emphasis on the cultural (especially his influential work on aesthetics) and historico-political world (Croce was a theorist and defender of liberalism during the fascist regime, and actively participated in the political life of the Italian state). His works include Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx ([1900] 2008), The Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and of the Linguistic in General ([1902] 1992), Philosophy of the Practical: Economic and Ethic ([1909] 2004), and History as the Story of Liberty ([1938] 2000). [*] For a discussion of Croce’s aesthetic theory, see the essay by Gary Shapiro in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.

Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944) taught philosophy at the universities of Palermo, Pisa, and then Rome. He was deeply influenced by Hegelian philosopher Donato Jaja (1839–1914) during his studies at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. Taking up Hegel's idealism, Gentile accentuates the position and role of consciousness as self-consciousness as ground of reality, and considers the act of thinking, that is, the “pure act,” as the principle and form of becoming. Hence, his philosophy is known as “attualismo” (actualism). Gentile was also a pedagogue and took part in several political, cultural, and educational initiatives during the fascist era (resulting in Croce’s severing of their relationship). Among his works are La riforma della dialettica hegeliana (The reform of Hegelian dialectics; 1913), The Theory of Mind as Pure Act ([1916] 2007), The Reform of Education ([1920] 2007), and Origins and Doctrine of Fascism ([1929] 2004).
self-consciousness in the Absolute. Among them, albeit on differentiated positions, are Armando Carlini (1878–1959) and Augusto Guzzo (1894–1986), both students of Gentile and dedicated to a retrieval of the motifs of interiority, spiritual life, and religious transcendence, and Michele Federico Sciacca (1908–75), who denies the sharp opposition between neo-Thomism and spiritualism characterizing the debate of the period. An original proposal that links together metaphysics and personalism is the “theological personalism” of Carlo Arata, for whom the Person – understood as first person (ego sum qui sum: I am the one who I am) – constitutes the coherent radicalization of Aquinas’s actus essendi.

The secular culture is split between a properly laicist tradition (laicismo) of liberal descent (including also some nondogmatic Catholic or Marxist thinkers) that claims the reciprocal autonomy of all human activities in the name of the values of pluralism, freedom, and tolerance, and a Marxist current inspired and revitalized in its traditionally Marxist principles by the philosophy of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), whose Quaderni dal carcere (Prison Notebooks) were published immediately after the Second World War. In general, the laicist domain, whose main centers are at the universities of Turin, Milan, and Florence, seeks a critical and nondogmatic (that is, non-Catholic and non-Marxist) employment of reason, and also moves against the idealist tradition of Croce and Gentile, even when it engages in explicitly historiographic inquiries. Moreover, this area searches for and encourages contacts with the most advanced forms of recent international philosophical trends, such as phenomenology and existentialism, but also American pragmatism. A strong interest in the sciences and scientific methodology should also be noted. Two major tendencies can be retraced within the laicist tradition. The first has a clearly theoretical attitude with neo-Enlightenment positions inspired by the appeal to reason, the struggle against metaphysics, and the rediscovery of experience. The second is marked more by a historicist attitude that leads to important historiographic activities. The leading thinkers in this laicist area are Nicola Abbagnano (1901–90) and his students Pietro Rossi, Pietro Chiodi, and Carlo Augusto Viano, and also Norberto Bobbio, Ludovico Geymonat, Enzo Paci, Giulio Preti, Mario Dal Pra, Eugenio Garin, and Paolo Rossi.

Within the Italian Marxist philosophical tradition of this period and up to the crisis of Marxism that starts in the early 1970s, two fundamental trends can be identified. The first, supported by the cultural politics of the Italian Communist Party, combines Marxism with the idealist, humanist, and historicist tradition of Crocian descent associated with the mainly bourgeois culture, and focuses on the relation between human being and society, on Marx’s humanism, and on

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*5. Gramsci is discussed in an essay by Chris Thornhill in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*
historical materialism. This line of interpretation, which affects also the reading of Gramsci’s own texts as promoted by the PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti, was predominant in Italy up to the 1960s – that is, up to the crisis that followed Khrushchev’s report on Stalin’s crimes, the Hungarian Revolution, and the parallel capitalist economic boom of the early 1960s. Representatives of this trend are, among others, Valentino Gerratana (1919–2000) and Nicola Badaloni (1925–2005). Opposed to this is the trend that focuses on the relation between human being and nature found in dialectical materialism, and therefore centers on the problem of scientific knowledge understood in terms of a nondogmatic materialism attentive to contemporary epistemological debate. A major representative of this current is Geymonat and his Milan school. Other Marxist thinkers who move outside the division delineated above and who deserve special mention because of their influence on future philosophers are Galvano Della Volpe (1895–1968) and Cesare Luporini (1909–93). Della Volpe develops a “Galileian” Marxism opposed to the Hegelian–Marxian line of interpretation, to Gramscian historicism, and to Soviet dogmatism; Della Volpe finds in Marx a historico-experimental (Galileian) logic articulated in the circle “concrete–abstract–concrete,” according to which experimental verification is needed to integrate the historico-material data from which any inquiry starts and the abstract rational hypothesis, that is, to integrate matter and rationality. Close to Louis Althusser’s position of an “epistemological break” in the development of Marx’s thought, Luporini stresses the importance of the conditioning power of structures, but also insists on the fact that structures are for Marx functional to the individuals, and not vice versa.

The cultural–ideological division mapped above contributes greatly toward shaping the longstanding Italian tradition of schools of thought, which gravitate toward single philosophical personalities or approaches and significantly complicate the map of Italian philosophy. Thus, the same philosophical figures and themes can be developed in completely different directions. Specific interpretations depend in fact on whether the interpreting scholars are situated in the neoscholastic, metaphysical tradition of the Milan Catholic Università del Sacro Cuore, which, in addition to openings to (especially German) phenomenology, develops metaphysical themes by relying on Aristotle read through Aquinas, or whether they are located in the Padua tradition that, despite its mainly Catholic legacy, bypasses scholasticism and studies Aristotle through a less religious lens, thus elaborating a different metaphysical and political approach; whether they are part of the Milan tradition of the Università Statale, in which existentialism and phenomenology are often coupled with Marxism\(^6\) and Anglo-American

pragmatism, or whether they partake of the Florentine school of thought, in which Marxism is paired with critical theory, especially as developed by the Frankfurt School, and in general with an interest in social and cultural critique, and thus in history. The historical approach of the Florentine school, which shares many elements with the approach associated with the University of Pisa with its additional focus on the history and philosophy of science, is very different, however, from the idealist–historicist attitude of the University of Naples, in which the neo-Hegelian influence of Croce and Gentile is still alive together with a purely historic-oriented tradition that goes back to Vico.\footnote{For an overview of Hegel's influence on Italian philosophy, see Angelica Nuzzo, “An Outline of Italian Hegelianism (1832–1998),” \textit{Owl of Minerva} 29(2) (1998).} Other schools of thought possessing a specific identity can be found at the University of Turin, divided into a secular, neo-Enlightenment, even neopositivist variation focused on the privileging of reason and history and a spiritualist variant open to French and German existentialism and personalism, and later accepting the results of a properly hermeneutic position; and the Venice school, in part born out of a secession from the Catholic Università del Sacro Cuore in Milan, in which metaphysics, nihilism, and religious considerations of various nature intersect.

From being almost nonexistent in the period following the Second World War, conversations among the three cultural areas of philosophy and the schools of thought that develop in parallel connection grow increasingly common from the mid-1950s up to the late 1970s, and an array of cultural and philosophical orientations more or less loosely inspired by Marxist and Christian principles flourish. During this period, interesting hybrids are produced such as the nearing of: Marxism and Christianity (in Italo Mancini [1925–93]); Christian existentialism and hermeneutics (in Luigi Pareyson [1918–91]); Marxism, existentialism, and phenomenology (in Enzo Paci [1911–76]), religious experience, hermeneutics, and nihilism (in Alberto Caracciolo [1918–90]), neopositivism and Marxism (in Geymonat and Preti), and neoscholasticism and phenomenology (in Sofia Vanni Rovighi [1908–90]).\footnote{For overviews of Italian philosophy in general up to the late 1970s, see Adriano Bausola \textit{et al.} (eds), \textit{La filosofia italiana dal dopoguerra a oggi} [Italian philosophy from the postwar to today] (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 1985); Giovanna Borradori (ed.), \textit{Recoding Metaphysics: The New Italian Philosophy} (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988); Pietro Rossi and Carlo A. Viano (eds), \textit{Filosofia italiana e filosofie straniere nel dopoguerra} [Italian philosophy and other philosophies after the war] (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1991).}

The physiognomy of the philosophical debate takes up new forms in the late 1970s, and the old ideological–cultural distinction in the three areas begins to lose its relevance. The novel panorama occurs in part because of the crisis of
Marxism, many forms of which circulate in Italy, such as Geymonat’s dialectical materialism, Preti’s pragmatism, Paci’s Husserlianism, Augusto Del Noce’s atheism, and Emanuele Severino’s nihilism. The interest in Lukács, present in the late 1950s and 1960s, is replaced in the 1970s with an interest in heterodox Marxist thinkers such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Luxemburg, Benjamin, Bloch, and Korsch, and then with French inspired Marxism as developed by Sartre, Althusser, and Foucault. The varieties of Marxism and their inspirations in fact provoke a fading of the separation between Christian thought and secular culture. The reconfiguration of the areas and terms of the philosophical debate also occurs, however, in part because of the new and somewhat sudden interest across the three traditional cultural areas for authors of the so-called “irrationalist” trend of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, namely Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein during his Vienna period (then a very different thinker from the one appropriated by the analytic tradition). Additional recent authors who exercise a deep influence on Italian philosophers of the 1980s are Ricoeur, Gadamer, and Derrida, who join thinkers such as Benjamin, Adorno, Rosenzweig, and other philosophers already present in the Italian discussion such as Hegel, Marx, Husserl, and some American pragmatists, especially Dewey but also Peirce. An increased interest in authors such as Apel and Habermas, and in German practical philosophy in general is also to be recorded in these years.

A traditional, idealist legacy mandates that in Italy the learning of the history of philosophy is a basic requirement for all licei (that is, for the non-technical high schools that constitute the preferred access to a university education), and that the high-school teacher of philosophy – which is always understood as history of philosophy – is also the history teacher. Because of this tight intersection (that finds its roots already in the Italian liberal tradition of the Risorgimento) between (history of) philosophy and history in the formation of most Italian intellectuals in addition to the Marxian emphasis on the funda-

9. An exemplary case of a Marxist intellectual whose very own itinerary of thought represents the ascent and crisis of Italian Marxism is Lucio Colletti (1924–2001), a student of Della Volpe who, in the late 1970s, after having been one of the most renowned theoreticians of the Marxist doctrine for almost twenty years, became a resolute critic of the Marxist ideology.

*10. For a discussion of some of these figures, see the essays by Chris Thornhill, John Abromeit, Deborah Cook, and William L. McBride in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.

11. This legacy was formalized in the so-called Riforma Gentile carried out by the neo-idealistic philosopher Giovanni Gentile during his tenure as Minister of Education during the fascist regime.

12. This coincidence gives to the historiographic, historicist tradition in Italy a legitimacy that goes beyond purely philological interest. In this sense, one could refer to the continuous flourishing and health of historiographic schools such as those of Abbagnano, Dal Pra, Garin, Geymonat, Giovanni Reale, Pietro Rossi, Viano, and others.
mental role of the intellectuals – an emphasis acknowledged by Marxist and leftist thinkers and accentuated by Gramsci’s theory of the “organic intellectual”\(^{13}\) – Italian philosophy is characterized by a strong civic commitment and engagement in history and public life, which in turn has affected the configuration of Italian philosophy. This influence occurs parallel to external theoretical stimuli and resonances certainly coming from the broader international philosophical debate.

The Italian philosophical scene between the years 1980 and 1995 is framed by two sets of historico-political events.\(^{14}\) The period opens with the kidnapping and subsequent murder of the leader of the Christian Democratic Party Aldo Moro, allegedly by the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse), in 1978.\(^{15}\) Gianni Vattimo’s pensiero debole (weak thought), arguably the most original and renowned expression of Italian philosophy during this time, develops “as a response to the terrorist interpretation of the Italian democratic left during the 1970s, as a recognition of the unacceptability of the Red Brigades’ violence.”\(^{16}\) Terrorism, the use of force, and the widespread killings (the so-called stragismo) of the early 1980s spur, for example, many of the reflections on violence, law, justice, rights, and the state of Bobbio, one of Italy’s leading political philosophers, scholar of

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13. See Antonio Gramsci, *Gli intellettuali e l’organizzazione della cultura* [The intellectuals and the organization of culture] (Turin: Einaudi, 1949). According to this theory, the intellectuals are both product and consciousness of a specific sociopolitical group.

14. Such events, on which a completely clear light has yet to be cast, are two attacks carried out, albeit by forces of an entirely different nature and origin, against the legitimacy of the democratically constituted political regime. Thus, they both represent a direct attack against the rationality of the political subject and its power.

15. Moro, who had been Professor of Philosophy of Law at the University of Bari, was the political leader and statesman who, as president of the DC, favored the dialogue (the so-called compromesso storico, or historical compromise) between the Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrats) and the PCI led by Enrico Berlinguer to avoid the political and institutional dangers of what some perceived as the possibility of a “Chilean crisis” (that is, a coup d’état by the conservative forces) in Italy. The Red Brigades is the name of a terrorist organization founded on radical Marxist–Leninist principles. It became operative in Italy in the early 1970s with the intention of destroying the state and replacing it with a popular democracy. The murder of Moro occurred just before the parliamentary vote that marked, for the first time since 1947, the entry of the Communist Party (PCI) in the ruling majority. Moro’s murder, which also brought to a climax the strategia della tensione (stress strategy) enacted by terrorist groups during the so-called anni di piombo (years of lead; with a clear reference to the heavy atmosphere characterizing all aspects of Italian life but also to the material of which bullets are made), raised major issues, also of a philosophical nature, by radically calling into question the use of force and violence, on all sides, in the political life of a democratic state. While fascinating, the complexities of this political period of turmoil, which among other events sees the presence of terrorist activities of opposite extremes, are too complex to be taken up here.

rights, and activist, who is for several days in 1992 a presidential candidate for the Italian Republic.17

In the context of the social, political, and institutional turmoil and instability leading to and following the murder of Moro, mention should also be made of Antonio (Toni) Negri, a Padua philosopher and Professor of Theory of the State.18 Negri was the founder with Mario Tronti19 of various journals of Marxist

17. Norberto Bobbio (1909–2004) was a student of jurist Gioele Solari and of philosopher Annibale Pastore (1868–1956) in Turin. Inspired by Hobbes and Kelsen, he reread the history of philosophy (Kant, Locke, Hegel, Marx) in their light. Defender of a procedural concept of democracy, that is, a democracy based on the minimal principle of consensus and thus opposed to any authoritarian imposition of truth, Bobbio argued against the confusion of ethics and right. With Abbagnano, Geymonat, and other philosophers of the Turin school he shared a form of neo-Enlightenment geared toward a retrieval of the legacy of eighteenth-century rationalism to promote a concept of philosophy closer to science and to the Anglo-Saxon line of reflection on the philosophy of language. A strenuous defender of the republic, Bobbio represented the secular, liberal, anti-fascist but also anti-Marxist-orthodoxy soul of the Italian republic, and deeply engaged in the public debate, especially when of an ethical nature.

18. Antonio Negri (1933– ) was educated at the University of Padua under the guidance of Umberto Padovani. Negri was Professor of Theory of the State, a peculiarly Italian field of studies concerned with juridical and constitutional law, at the same university from 1967 to 1979, during which time he was also a visiting lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. Negri was arrested in 1979 with, among other charges, the accusation (dropped after a few months) of being the ideologue of the Red Brigades and the moral mastermind of the Moro kidnapping. He was ultimately convicted in a long, complex, controversial, and highly politicized case for the “constitution of armed group and subversive association” (a verdict confirmed in 1988). Negri escaped part of the punishment through an equally controversial fourteen-year exile in France. He expiated the remainder of the sentence after his voluntary return to Italy in 1997. During his sojourn in France (1983–97), he taught at the University of Paris VIII–St. Denis, Collège International de Philosophie, and at the Collège de France. Among his works are Stato e politica (State and politics; 1970), Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse ([1979] 1991), and, with Michael Hardt, Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form (1994 [1995]), and the important trilogy Empire (2000), Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire (2004), and Commonwealth (2009).

19. Mario Tronti (1931– ) was Professor of Moral Philosophy and then of Political Philosophy at the University of Siena. A militant in the PCI in the 1950s and then a supporter of Berlinguer, he was one of the major theoreticians of operaismo (workers’ movement), a political position that challenges the traditional workers’ organizations such as the party and the trade unions in favor of the direct connection with the working class, and considers the factories as the site of the class struggle. Under the influence of Marxist philosopher Della Volpe and in an anti-Gramscian interpretation, he elaborated a philosophical position geared toward reopening the revolutionary chance of Marxism in Western societies as attested in his fundamental 1966 work Operai e capitale (Workers and capital), a very influential book for the subsequent period of youth contestation and political mobilizing. Abandoning the position of operaismo (he broke with Negri in 1967–68), Tronti focused on the notion of the “autonomy of the political” based on an original mixing of Marx and Carl Schmitt. He is the author of Hegel politico (The political Hegel; 1975), Sull’autonomia del politico (On the autonomy of the political; 1977), and La politica al tramonto (Politics at its decline; 1998).
inspiration (albeit deeply critical of the reformist turn taken by the PCI through its theorization of a “national way,” that is, “an Italian way to socialism”) such as Quaderni Rossi (Red notebooks) in 1961 and Classe operaia (Workers’ Class) in 1964; he was also an exponent of the extraparliamentary revolutionary organization Potere operaio (Workers’ Power), which included in its ranks some of Negri’s students and also the younger Rome philosopher Paolo Virno. After its dissolution in 1973, Potere operaio evolved into Autonomia operaia (Workers’ Autonomy), a movement whose connections with the Red Brigades are too complicated and still unclear to be taken up here. Both the journals and the political organizations of which Negri was part, in opposition to the organized moments of workers’ affirmation such as trade unions and parties, exalted the centrality of the workers’ class and its spontaneity, and the role of factories as privileged places of the class struggle.

The latter years of the period 1980–95 in Italy are marked, more than by the fall of the Berlin Wall, by the series of events that follow the car bombing at Capaci, near Palermo, orchestrated by the Mafia, in which the anti-Mafia high commissioner and judge Giovanni Falcone was killed on May 23, 1992. This

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20. Paolo Virno (1952– ) graduated in philosophy from the University of Rome “La Sapienza” in 1977 with a dissertation on the concept of work and the theory of consciousness in Adorno. A member of Potere operaio and later of the journal Metropoli, he was placed in preventive custody, accused of belonging to the Red Brigades (although his participation was never proved), and convicted for “subversive activities and constitution of armed groups,” a conviction eventually overturned in 1987. During his years in prison, he developed a materialistic conception of language centered on the notion of thought as work and on the historical and linguistic feature of all political categories. The Spinozist concept of “multitude” lies at the core of his most recent reflections. He has published Convenzione e materialismo (Convention and materialism; 1986), Parole con parole: Poteri e limiti del linguaggio (Words with words: Powers and limits of language; 1995), and Il ricordo del presente: Saggio sul tempo storico (The memory of the present: Essay on historical time; 1999).

21. In Italy, the crisis of Marxism and of the dialectical reason inspiring it had already been consumed during the 1980s. The degeneration of terrorism further contributed to the calling into question of Marxist ideology and the spreading of a different Stimmung. As Lucio Colletti remarks, “the publishing houses of the extreme left, which are often the most sensitive seismographers … have moved from Rosa Luxemburg to Lou Salomé. From Marx to Nietzsche. And if they have not gotten hold of Heidegger, it is only because in this case they have been preceded by the Catholic publishers” (Tramonto dell’ideologia [Decline of ideology] [Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1980], 80). This situation of general crisis of Marxist ideology culminated in the decision by the PCI led by Achille Occhetto on February 3, 1991, to dissolve the Party and promote the constitution of the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS, Democratic Party of the Left), in which the name change was meant to underline the accentuated democratic component of the newly named party. A number of delegates who did not accept the name change convened in the formation of the Partito di Rifondazione Comunista (PRC, Party for a Communist Refoundation).

22. Judge Falcone lost his life, as did his wife and entire escort, in a killing that upset the whole country at various levels.
killing starts a process eventually leading to the electoral victory in 1994 of Silvio Berlusconi. The success of Berlusconi’s coalition marks the role of media technology and its owners on the configuration of political power, and de facto radically alters the concepts of democracy, political representation, subjectivity and power, and even civic and political commitment and responsibility. It is not by chance, then, that on a strictly philosophical level the main debate of this period originates in conversation with authors such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Derrida, and Rorty, who have radically called into question the concepts of subjectivity, reason, history, foundations, power, technology, and other metaphysically fixed entities such as ground and being. And it is also not by chance that – perhaps as a consequence of, or in response to, Berlusconi’s ascent to power, orchestrated mainly through the channels of mass media public appearance – several philosophers revive the traditional Italian idea of civic and political engagement by intensifying in turn their own media appearances as public figures, and by explicitly engaging in various reflections on the nature and role of technology, especially the mass media. On this front, the position of Mario Perniola seems particularly relevant. Perniola collapses the traditional metaphysical distinction between being and appear-

23. The killing of Falcone was followed by the murder of another anti-Mafia magistrate, Paolo Borsellino, a few days later; then by a series of alleged Mafia attacks against various targets in Florence, Rome, Milan, and Sicily; and finally, by the success and then progressive stalling of the so-called Tangentopoli (bribe-city) trial carried out by the magistrates of the Milan-based pool “Mani pulite” (clean hands), who were investigating and letting surface the connections between briberies (possibly of a mafia kind) and existing traditional political party powers. Taken together, these were all episodes that greatly contributed to the dissolution of the traditional political parties and to the revolution on the political scene culminating in the electoral victory, on March 27, 1994, of the coalition led by former cruise ship entertainer, entrepreneur, business man, and media owner Silvio Berlusconi, a nontraditional figure of a politician, who was himself formally charged with corruption in 1994 while presiding over a world conference on crime organized by the United Nations in Naples.

24. The election of Berlusconi ended the tradition of the so-called First Republic, formally already defunct through the passage (in 1993) from the proportional to the majoritarian form of government based on the personal charismatic power – almost always built through a connivance of economic and technological ownership – of individual political leaders.


26. Mario Perniola (1941– ) is Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata.” He was educated in Turin under Luigi Pareyson, and then developed an interest for the avant-garde, meta-literature, and situationism, especially as developed by Guy Debord. Among his works are: *La società dei simulacri* (The society of simulacra; 1980), *Transiti: Come si va dallo
ance, and reduces all being to appearance construed as mere semblance. In this sense, Perniola writes of *simulacra*: that is, images, or copies without the original, “that impose their own effectiveness on the subjects dissolving their reality.”

The cultural societal forms such as parties, educational institutions, and especially the mass media are not mirrors of reality, then, but simply *simulacra* that act as conditions of social experience. In this condition of heightened public performance, many philosophers seem to resurrect the Platonic model of the philosopher-king by renewing the traditional Italian civic commitment to and involvement in various political activities.

In this context and from a purely theoretical perspective, Salvatore Veca (1943–) is, as Remo Bodei recognizes, “the political philosopher who has translated into the language of ‘public ethics’ the demands for social justice previously advanced by Marxism, and who, together with Bobbio, keeps alive, in other ways, the traditional civic vocation of Italian philosophy.”

Raised in Paci’s phenomenological school, Veca moved from the study of Kant’s epistemology and Marx’s scientific economic program to the “contractualist” variant of Anglo-American political philosophy, especially Rawls’s theory of justice. Considering the idea of global justice as the major challenge for contemporary normative political theory, Veca is interested in determining how the maximum level of common good may be reached in societies marked by the ideals of pluralism and individualism.

During the years 1980–95 various parallel conversations and interest develop, such as the concern with analytic philosophy of language in Andrea Bonomi (1940–), Marco Santambrogio (1946–), and Diego Marconi (1947–). Santambrogio, in particular, has become known for “institutionalizing” the

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28. Most famously, Massimo Cacciari became mayor of Venice in 1996; Marcello Pera became senator for the Berlusconi’s party in 1996 and then president of the senate in 2001; Aldo Masullo was involved in the government of Naples and became senator for two legislatures in 1994; Ugo Perone, a Turin philosopher of the Pareyson school, held several positions in the Turin administration before being appointed director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Berlin in 2001; and Gianni Vattimo started a political career that led him to winning a seat in the European Parliament in 1999.


30. Salvatore Veca is currently Professor of Philosophy of Politics at the University of Pavia. Among his publications are: *La società giusta* (The just society; 1982), *Cittadinanza: Riflessioni filosofiche sull’idea di emancipazione* (Citizenship: Philosophical reflections on the idea of emancipation; 1990), and *La filosofia politica* (Political philosophy; 1998).
Italian interest for analytic philosophy of language through the publication in 1992 of the edited volume *Introduzione alla filosofia analitica del linguaggio* (Introduction to the analytic philosophy of language). There also emerges an interest for various forms of applied ethics and for the theories of justice, for example in Eugenio Lecaldano (1940– ), Maurizio Mori (1946– ) and Sebastiano Maffettone (1948– ). A concern with philosophy of science and epistemology in general is found in the thinking of Francesco Barone (1923–2001) and Paolo Parrini (1943– ), who develop neopositivist studies and positions, in Sergio Moravia (1940– ), who defines himself as a “neo-pragmatist” and an “applied epistemologist,” and in Evandro Agazzi (1934– ), Giulio Giorello (1945– ), Marcello Pera (1943– ), and Dario Antiseri (1940– ), with the latter two contributing significantly to the diffusion of Karl Popper’s philosophy in Italy. The main general reflection of this period gravitates, however, around three major themes of debate, within which individual philosophical thinkers whose contribution to the conversation is particularly (although not exclusively) relevant will be indicated in what follows. The three topics of debate, which are in many ways deeply intertwined, are the crisis of reason and subjectivity; the concepts of modernity, postmodernity, and their relation; and hermeneutics as philosophical *koine* and the notion of “weak thought.”

II. THE CRISIS OF REASON AND SUBJECTIVITY

had already challenged the foundational solidity of sciences in an earlier work, *Il sapere senza fondamenti* (Knowledge without foundations; 1975). According to him, reason, which he names not without equivocation “classical reason,” is incapable of reflecting adequately the laws and forms of reality first of all because reality is not an objective world that can be grasped; rather, reality is itself the consequence of a series of choices, values, interests, and myths constituting a specific civilization. The traditional, rationalistic image of reason inspired by a desire for omnipotence should be denounced and renounced, he argues, whereas philosophy should no longer aim at producing foundations or logical arguments, and should stop competing for status with the hard sciences. Furthermore, philosophy should, as Gargani himself does, unfold into “narrated thought,” which intertwines reflection and narration, development of ideas and personal experiences, philosophy and literature. With no preconstituted certainties to move from, one should learn to transform chance into advantage and benefit, in the recognition that truth is neither possession nor goal but simply a matter of “influential images directing our lives.”33 The idea of a self-centered subject is only “a theater,” a “great exorcism carried out against reality.”34 The task is that of accepting the existential challenge and acquiring “the courage to be” always different from oneself in the unforeseeable encounters to which one is constantly exposed.35

The idea of *Krisis*, which somehow sustains Gargani’s position, is explicitly thematized in the philosophy of Massimo Cacciari, who had already devoted to this topic his books *Krisis: Saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein* (Krisis: An essay on the crisis of negative thought from Nietzsche to Wittgenstein; 1976) and *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* (Negative thought and rationalization; 1977).36 Cacciari opposes to the soteriological, conciliatory, continuous images of reason and history, especially of a dialectical

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36. Massimo Cacciari (1944– ) was three times the mayor of Venice, after being a member of the Italian Parliament, the European Parliament, and the regional government of Veneto. Cacciari studied philosophy at the University of Padua with a dissertation on Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*; he became Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Venice and later Professor of Philosophy at the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University in Milan. He has been among the founders of some of the most important philosophical and cultural journals in Italy: *Angelus Novus* (1964–74), *Contropiano* (1968–71), *Laboratorio Político* (1980–85), *Il Centauro* (1980–85), and *Paradosso*, started in 1992 and codirected with Sergio Givone, Carlo Sini, and Vincenzo Vitiello.
(Hegelian–Marxian as well as Lukácsian) kind, the idea of *Krisis* as the permanent emergency in which thinking and being are situated. In this situation of antidialectical “negative thought,” which is exemplified in the “decadent” figures of Nietzsche and the early-twentieth-century Austrian thinkers Freud, Hoffmannstahl, Rilke, Roth, Schönberg, Trakl, and Wittgenstein, no salvation is ever granted or assured, and there is no possibility for a dogmatic uniqueness of the truth, not even the truth of subjectivity. In *Icone della legge* (Icons of the law; 1985), the symbol of the enigmatic ambiguity of existence bordering on tragedy, that is, of the *Krisis of nomos*, becomes the Kafkaian and Rosenzweigian metaphor of the door, which can be understood both as a barrier that could have been destroyed and as an opening at the end of any apparently closed life path. The contemporary subject is placed in the situation of constantly having to make choices on behalf of a law and a goal the meanings of which are no longer clear – they are obfuscated or lost. Contemporary subjectivity is completely autonomous, but in the sense of its being entirely uprooted from all grounds, and thus standing on a precarious nothing. This is the deepest sense of the nihilism that Cacciari reaches also through a meditation on Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*. The contemporary individual is placed in a situation of nomadism similar to that of the children of Israel. At this point, and especially in some later works, Cacciari’s philosophical approach intertwines with more theological themes, as becomes explicit in his books *The Necessary Angel* ([1986] 1994), an allegory for the infinite tension between the human limited ability of representation and the nonrepresentable, and *Dell’inizio* (On the beginning; 1990), which explores the traditional philosophical theme of the beginning as the proper philosophical problem, whereas all other disciplines start from an already constituted object. Cacciari’s itinerary leads him to reconsider the entire history of metaphysics according to a different line of interpretation than the one suggested by Heidegger. His “negative thought” in fact rereads the history of philosophy according to a different line of origin or beginning, which goes from Proclus to Damascius to Scotus Eriugena to Meister Eckhardt to Cusanus to Schelling and which intersects, once again, philosophy and theology to produce a new “double” heresy. In his works from the mid-1990s, *Geo-filosofia dell’Europa* (Geo-philosophy of Europe; 1994) and *L’arcipelago* (The archipelago; 1997), Cacciari’s philosophical sensitivity to those differences that “negative thought” does not want to unify and reconcile manifests itself through an exploration of the irreducible plurality of cultural roots present in the European landscape.

The idea of a crisis of reason with its tragic and nihilistic implications is parallel to the theme of a crisis of the monolithic subject sustaining such

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37. The theme of tragedy becomes explicit in Luigi Pareyson’s later work on Dostoevsky, Schelling, and Heidegger (see note 48), and finds its utmost conceptualization in his *Ontologia della*
rationality. The themes of the subject and subjectivity in their genesis and as structuring Western modern individuals are powerfully present in the philosophy of Bodei, starting with his work *Scomposizioni: Forme dell’individuo moderno* (Deformations: Forms of the modern individual; 1987), which in many senses is an inaugural text with respect to later reflections on subjectivity, multiplicity, and the “multiverse.” Moving from the consideration of a fragment by Hegel in which individuality is structured in a pyramidal manner, Bodei understands history, and the individual, neither as a continuum according to the historicist model nor as eternal history à la Vico, but rather as a *metamorphosis*, a stratification, a layering, and a passage of forms according to the suggestions of Gestalt psychology. *Scomposizioni* is the first volume in a series including *Geometria delle passioni: Paura, speranza e felicità: filosofia e uso politico* (Geometry of passions: Fear, hope and happiness – philosophy and political use; 1991), *Ordo amoris: Conflitti terreni e felicità celeste* (The order of love: Earthly conflicts and celestial happiness; 1991), and *Logics of Delusion* ([2002] 2007), all devoted to exploring forms of logics different from the one displayed by theoretical rationality, through an extensive conversation with Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza, but also Augustine, Foucault, and psychiatric theory. Bodei’s theoretical project aims at the elaboration of a logical-interpretative structure capable of thinking conceptual and historical tensions and conflicts as a form of antagonistic complicity, that is, of a *logos* intrinsically connected but also foreign to *polemos*. He thus extends the sphere of intelligibility to notions such as passion,

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libertà: Il male e la sofferenza (Ontology of freedom: evil and suffering; 1995). The concept of the tragic is present also in the considerations of Sergio Givone (1944–), a student of Pareyson in Turin and currently Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Florence. For Givone, the tragic, explored in its Romantic and not only Nietzschean implications, constitutes the hermeneutic model capable of confronting the current historical epoch hanging over the abyss of nihilism. Among Givone’s publications are *Ermeneutica e romanticismo* (Hermeneutics and Romanticism; 1983), *Disincanto del mondo e pensiero tragico* (Disenchantment of the world and tragic thought; 1988), and *Storia del nulla* (History of nothingness; 1996).

38. Remo Bodei (1938–) studied at the University of Pisa. He was then awarded various fellowships at the universities of Tübingen and Freiburg, where he attended lectures by Ernst Bloch and Eugen Fink, and at the University of Heidelberg, where he attended lectures by Karl Löwith and Dieter Henrich. In 1971 he was appointed Professor of History of Philosophy at the University of Pisa. After being granted a Humboldt fellowship at the Ruhr University in Bochum (1977–79), he became visiting professor at King’s College, Cambridge (1980), and later at Ottawa University (1983). He taught for many years (1969–93) at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. He has also taught on several occasions at New York University, and more recently at the University of California, Los Angeles. His books have been translated into many languages. Among his publications are *Sistema ed epoca in Hegel* (System and epoch in Hegel; 1975), *Multiversum: Tempo e storia in Ernst Bloch* (Multiversum: Time and history in Ernst Bloch; 1979), and *Le forme del bello* (The forms of the beautiful; 1995).
delusion, history, and beauty while preserving their alterity by not submitting them to a form of rationality that searches for absolute exactness and certainty.

The theme of subjectivity is central also to Aldo Masullo, a Neapolitan philosopher educated under the guidance of Antonio Aliotta (1881–1964) and Cleto Carbonara (1896–1976) in the tradition of a historicism of a liberal nature, which is deeply aware of the insufficiencies in which the idealistic historicism à la Giovanni Gentile had fallen. Following Croce’s teaching, Masullo neither abandons the field of history nor understands the humanistic ideal of freedom as spiritual freedom that translates into cultural works and political institutions. Sharing with Gargani and Bodei a deeply antimetaphysical sentiment, Masullo exercises a radical criticism of the foundational pretension of philosophy and of its substantialized concepts. His reflection gravitates toward the notion of subjectivity no longer understood as pure and disembodied activity as in the rationalist or transcendental subject. Rather, Masullo construes subjectivity in terms of passivity, and thus of intersubjectivity. The individual is an intimacy on which time and experience carve deep marks, and leave traces constituting the individual as he or she is. The individual is time, which also means that subjectivity is finite, that is, exposed. This is the dimension of affectivity, or pathetic character of the subject, which is not a subject unless it is in a relation of intersubjectivity, that is of dialogue and communication with others. Far from an ingenuous exaltation of the individual and the power of the will and rationality, Masullo’s philosophy borders on some of the themes of nihilism in the awareness of the unstable and vulnerable nature of subjectivity and the unhappiness of reason, doomed to search for a foundation it can never achieve. Masullo’s project is to elaborate “an active ethics of salvation” understood in a nonreligious register as the ability to recognize the intersubjective connection linking all individuals and as the availability to work within history without closure to the novelty history may bring unexpectedly.

The theme of ethics as the proper field of activities in which contemporary subjectivity can confront and care for its own finitude is present also in Salvatore Natoli, a student of Severino (see below) at Milan Catholic University. Through a meditation on Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault, Natoli elaborates an ethics

39. Aldo Masullo (1923– ) is the author of Il senso del fondamento (The sense of ground; 1967), Anti-metafisica del fondamento (Antimetaphysics of ground; 1971), and Filosofie del soggetto e diritto del senso (Philosophies of the subject and the law of sense; 1990).
40. Salvatore Natoli (1942– ) is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Milan-Bicocca. His publications include Vita buona, vita felice: Scritti di etica e di politica (Good life, happy life: Essays in ethics and politics; 1990), L’esperienza del dolore: Le forme del patire nella cultura occidentale (The experience of pain: Forms of suffering in Western culture; 1995), and Soggetto e fondamento: Il sapere dell’origine e la scientificità della filosofia (Subject and ground: Knowledge of the origin and the scientific character of philosophy; 1996).
of finitude capable of including passions, affections, happiness, the dimension of corporeality, and, in Natoli’s later writings, also the sacred. These dimensions have all been underestimated and marginalized by classical rationalism and contribute to a different configuration of subjectivity. Natoli proposes a form of neopaganism made possible by modernity and secularization. Such paganism abandons Christianity insofar as Natoli’s proposal relies on finitude in its natural and unrevealed dimension: that is, it is centered on an ethos of self-sufficient finitude. It also differs from ancient and modern paganism insofar as Natoli’s neopaganism is void of the tragic aspect characterizing ancient paganism, and it is not anti-Christian (like modern paganism) but rather post-Christian. The measure of finitude is death, which does not open up to nothingness but rather to a sense of mystery. Natoli’s project is therefore not nihilist. Whereas it utters a need for the salvation of the finite, it does not find such salvation in the redemption of the finite but rather in its ethos, in the dwelling in it as self-sufficient as long as it lasts.

A reflection on subjectivity interpreted under the rubric of “person” is carried out by Enrico Berti, who intertwines historical, theoretical, and ethical analyses with the study of Aristotle, an area in which Berti is a world-renowned scholar. Berti, who belongs to a neoclassical and neo-Aristotelian tradition, also engages in a confutation of the absoluteness of experience, which for him always refers to the transcendence of the Principle: that is, to the recognition of the necessity of a transcendent absolute. Such a Principle, or Infinite, is independent of any dogmatic or confessional religious belief, and its necessity, although not its nature, is knowable by finite reason. A supporter of ethical personalism, Berti is especially interested in practical philosophy, a theme privileged also by his student Franco Volpi (1952–2009), a scholar of Heidegger and of Aristotle’s presence in Heidegger’s thought.

In this general climate of a rethinking of the role and nature of reason and subjectivity, an interesting experience occurs that, however, remains marginal and unnoticed to the broader philosophical and even academic community. It is the creation by a group of women philosophers of Diotima, a philosophical women’s community based at the University of Verona and finding its major

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41. A student of the neoclassical philosopher Marino Gentile, Berti (1935–) is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Padua. Among his works are Contraddizione e dialettica negli antichi e nei moderni (Contradiction and dialectic in the ancients and the moderns; 1987), Analitica e dialettica nel pensiero antico (Analytics and dialectics in ancient thought; 1989), and Soggetti di responsabilità (Subjects of responsibility; 1993).

42. Despite the history of political activism and success of the women’s liberation movements in Italy, to this day there are no departments of women’s studies in Italian universities where feminist theorists can be housed and develop a “thought of sexual difference” in all its aspects and implications.
representatives in Adriana Cavarero (1947– ), Luisa Muraro (1940– ), and Chiara Zamboni (1954– ). Their philosophical activity is inspired by the thought of Luce Irigaray and the cultural–political debate of women’s movements, especially the so-called feminism of difference. They engage in a rereading of the history of philosophy and culture, and a reconfiguration of subjectivity according to women’s lines of thought (pensiero al femminile). By reconfiguring subjectivity according to sexual difference, they challenge the universality and neutrality of the philosophical discourse and its concepts, which are in fact revealed as the historical and symbolic expression of male subjects. More specifically, they thematize the issues of women’s authority, the symbolic order of the mother, the concept of mother tongue, and the idea of philosophical practice as a starting-from-oneself.

Through the discussion on the crisis of reason and subjectivity, Italian philosophers acknowledge that there is no unifying history providing a single meaning to the world, no unitary knowledge capable of systematizing the various fields of experience, no overarching rationality penetrating and adequately mirroring the complexity of reality, and no monolithic subject supporting all this. During the 1980s and 1990s, the world of modernity and its optimism seems to have come to an end.

III. MODERNITY AND POSTMODERNITY

The second topic of debate that occupies Italian philosophers of the period contemplates precisely the status of the current condition of a general loss of unitary meaning, what has been called “the postmodern condition,” in relation to the previous condition of modernity. This debate, which often assumes the tones of an open, harsh, and in the end sterile polemic, and which prolongs itself for almost a decade, finds major representatives in Gianni Vattimo, Paolo Rossi (1923– ), and Carlo Augusto Viano (1929– ), with the last two taking an explicit position in favor of modernity against any postmodern configuration. Fundamental works engaging the debate are Vattimo’s *The Adventure of Difference: Philosophy After Nietzsche and Heidegger* ([1980] 1993), *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* ([1985] 1992), and the reactions to the postmodern position delineated by Vattimo and others (such as Gargani, Cacciari, Eco, and many of the thinkers analyzed in the present

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*43. For a discussion of Luce Irigaray, see the essay by Mary Beth Mader in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.  
essay) as discussed in Viano’s numerous journal articles in the Rivista di Filosofia and in Va’ pensiero: Il carattere della filosofia italiana contemporanea (Onward, thought: The character of contemporary Italian philosophy; 1985), and in Paolo Rossi’s Paragone degli ingegni moderni e postmoderni (Comparison between modern and postmodern minds; 1989). The debate between the two positions, which originated in the Turin school but ended up dividing the Italian philosophical world, is documented in Giovanni Mari’s edited volume Moderno Postmoderno (Modern postmodern; 1987) and in Berti’s Le vie della ragione (The ways of reason; 1987).

Since, in general, postmodernism appears as an evaluation of history and metaphysics that reconfigures them (when they are not abandoned) in terms of break and discontinuity, the debate on modernity and postmodernity takes up the features of a discussion on the historical and metaphysical categories guiding modernity. The defenders of modernity support neo-Enlightenment, neorationalist, and secular theses considered to be bearers of reform projects and reconfigurations of knowledge in close proximity to science. Among them are Abbagnano’s Turin students, such as Pietro Rossi and Viano, who devote themselves to a historiographic production accompanied by a theoretical commitment against irrationalistic positions. Historiography, which in Italy enjoys a long tradition going back at least to Vico, finds additional representatives in Milan with Dal Pra and his students, and in Florence with the school of Garin. Both schools are geared toward an anti-idealist understanding of the development of history, which is grounded in the empirical historicity of various human beings and philosophers. Among the opponents of postmodernism are also some historians and intellectuals formed in the Marxist tradition such as Lucio Colletti, concerned by the postmodern abandonment of the idea of critical and scientific rationality and the escape into antiscientist positions.

Among the secular scholars, particularly vocal in the debate against postmodernism are Viano and Paolo Rossi. In Va’ pensiero, Viano links postmodernism and its Italian specific variation, Vattimo’s weak thought, to an anti-Enlightenment, antireformist, and traditionalist tendency. This trend, widespread in Italy and internationally, is contrary to science and the industrial society in general, which it counters with tradition and edifying literature. Similarly, Paolo Rossi criticizes and confutes on historical grounds the postmodern discourse of a unified, homogeneous, totalizing “classical rationality” geared toward unity and dominating the philosophical scene up to the twentieth century, when it would finally come to an end. Through the study of major representatives of so-called classical reason such as Bacon, Hobbes, Diderot, and Comte, Rossi shows how the postmodern theses, which unfold out of a Heideggerianism radically different from the one that inspired many Marxist thinkers during the 1960s and 1970s, are an undocumented, superficial construct geared toward attributing prophetic
legitimacy to its supporters in an anti-Enlightenment move. It should be noted that while quite vehement in their tone, the positions outlined above defending modernity represent a minority perspective in Italian philosophy, as they do not seem capable of counteracting the widespread affirmation of the various postmodern attitudes against metaphysics.

An interesting thinker to be considered within the range of this debate because in fact he radically jumps over the terms of the discussion is Emanuele Severino,\(^{45}\) who, taking recourse to Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal recurrence and Heidegger’s analysis of technology and the contemporary world, argues for the return to a pre-Greek, premodern form of thinking as exemplified by Parmenides. Severino was educated at the University of Pavia under the guidance of classical metaphysician Bontadini, with whom he clamorously broke relations while they were teaching together at the Milan Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in 1970. This break, which originated in a dispute regarding Bontadini’s analysis of becoming and prompted Severino’s move to the University of Venice, marked the beginning of the development of Severino’s own original thinking, which has been named “neo-Parmenideanism.” According to Severino, whose philosophical position develops in sustained conversation with Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Marx, the Western world is dominated by a nihilistic will to power, domination, abuse, and the devastation of nature, which is the consequence of the folly of placing trust in the notion of becoming. The will to power, ultimately displayed in the technological attitude and in capitalism but also guiding scientific behavior, is in fact based on the conviction that things and humans are destructible, modifiable, and manipulable because they are exposed to the nullification due to the process of becoming. Against the “folly of becoming” with its dominating and violent charge, Severino suggests a return to Parmenides that does not deny the multiplicity of beings, but rather asserts, contra Heidegger, the immutability of Being and the eternity of all beings because becoming is the appearing and disappearing of the eternal. Through his original Parmenidean ontology, which configures itself as an “ontology of necessity” against much “ontology of freedom” (as in Pareyson’s case, discussed below), Severino reads the entire history of metaphysics as the alteration and forgetfulness of the authentic meaning of being. Thus, his postmetaphysical invi-

\(^{45}\) Emanuele Severino (1929– ) graduated at the University of Pavia in 1950 under the guidance of Gustavo Bontadini with a dissertation on Heidegger and metaphysics. After teaching at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, he became Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Venice. He is a member of the Italian National Academy (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei), and writes regularly for the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera. His publications include Essenza del nichilismo (Essence of nihilism; 1972), Techne: Le radici della violenza (Techne: The roots of violence; 1979), Destino della necessità (Fate of necessity; 1980), and L’anello del ritorno (The ring of the return; 1999).
tation is the return to a premetaphysical, premodern place of thinking that *de facto* ignores the controversy between modernity and postmodernity.

A postmetaphysical position that tries to keep together the results of modernity, especially in its Kantian, transcendental legacy, and the insights of existentialism and hermeneutics, is the one developed by Virgilio Melchiorre.\(^{46}\) Melchiorre’s thought develops within the tradition of classical metaphysics, but he subjects it to a double verification, stemming from phenomenology and hermeneutics, respectively. In the mode of French phenomenology and especially Ricoeur, he considers the concreteness of history and human beings as the center of philosophical discourse, and thus develops an interest in the themes of the body, space, and time. Within these themes, however, Melchiorre finds the experience of something that cannot be dismissed as simple becoming (which is, for him, a concept as abstract as that of pure being). From this experience, one is called to interpret reality, which is better understood in terms of finitude and precariousness rather than becoming. The interpretation leads to a move to the transcendental level in the quest for the conditions of possibility of the finite being that phenomenology and hermeneutics describe. For Melchiorre, the path is thus from consciousness and its concrete historicity to an “ultimately unconditioned,” which is in itself unsayable, but which transpires in the individual perspectives. The analogical path (*via analogica*) becomes the way through which, within the horizon of finitude, the structures of being unconditioned are revealed; reason necessarily requires such structures not simply as its goal but also as the immanent horizon of sense that is implied in every specific meaning. Melchiorre’s long analogical path preoccupies itself with ethical questions, with issues in the philosophy of history, with the topic of symbolism as various ways to indicate a direction toward the unconditioned, which is simultaneously the most sayable (because always implied) and the least determinable (because always escaping speech and communication).

**IV. HERMENEUTICS AS PHILOSOPHICAL KOINE AND WEAK THOUGHT**

The third theme that occupies Italian philosophers, especially in the second part of the 1980s, is *il pensiero debole*, a term that indicates, even before Vattimo’s

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46. Virgilio Melchiorre (1931–) taught moral philosophy at the University of Venice. Later, he became Professor of Moral Philosophy at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, where he had previously taught the philosophy of history since 1961. In 2000, he became Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the same university, where he also directed the School of Specialization in Social Communications. His publications include *Essere e parola: Idee per una antropologia metafisica* (Being and word: Ideas for a metaphysical anthropology; 1982), *Corpo e persona* (Body and person; 1987), and *La via analogica* (The analogical way; 1996).
own specific position, a constellation of positions geared toward a rethinking in “weak” terms of traditional metaphysical categories. In parallel with weak thought and in many senses as a premise for the possibility of the development of weak thought, there emerge various attempts at a reconfiguration of reason, which has undergone a crisis in its techno–scientific–rationalistic as well as Hegelian–Marxist–dialectical variations, both a legacy of modernity. The reconfiguration occurs in terms of the complexity of a hermeneutic reason open to discourse and confrontation with alterities. Thus, a variety of philosophical positions not necessarily associated with weak thought yet more or less loosely affiliated with a properly hermeneutic stance develop. This justifies Vattimo’s recognition of hermeneutics as the contemporary cultural koine.

Vattimo’s weak thought could not have been accomplished without the fundamental influence of Luigi Pareyson, who in Europe is often considered the third hermeneutic variant beside Gadamer and Ricoeur.47 Pareyson’s philosophical itinerary begins in Turin under the guidance of spiritualist and personalist philosophers Guzzo and Carlini, and moves from existentialism, which Pareyson first introduced into Italy and which appears in him not only in its German variations (Jaspers, Barth, Heidegger, Kierkegaard), but also in its French interpretations (especially Marcel and Lavelle, but also Maritain, and, later, Pascal, although he is not canonically an existentialist). He develops a rereading of the history of German Romanticism and classical idealism that releases its representatives (most notably Fichte and later Schelling, but also Schiller and Novalis) from their subservience to Hegel. Pareyson also manifests an interest in aesthetics through the elaboration of the notion of “formativity” that opens up the path to a conception of art (and thus of myth and religion) as a place of interpretation of the truth, and thus as a hermeneutic site.48 In 1971, Pareyson published his highly original and innovative book, Verità e interpretazione (Truth and interpretation), which is arguably the most important essay in Italian hermeneutics. Truth is here understood as something not ineffable (as in Heidegger, who thus walks down the “dead end” of an ontology of the ineffable, or a “negative ontology”), but rather inexhaustible (inesauribile). Quoting Pareyson’s most famous claim, made against any objectivistic and thereby scientistic notion of truth, “of the truth there can only be interpretations; and any interpretation can only be of

the truth,”⁴⁹ which because of its inexhaustibility constantly spurs new interpretations, that is, new relations to itself. Since any interpretation is, ultimately, a matter of a historical and personal decision in favor of a faithfulness to truth and being or a betrayal of them both (and thus any interpretation involves a risk), the theme of interpretation develops, in Pareyson’s final years, in the direction of an “ontology of freedom.” The ontology of freedom not only locates the possibility for human freedom but also, through a reading of Schelling and Dostoevsky, it situates freedom, as both beginning and choice, in God. This is not the God of metaphysics but rather the biblical God, the God of Christianity who is abandoned by God and dies on the cross, God against God, a tragic God who does not explain but rather assumes on himself death, doubt, anguish, and atheism. For Pareyson, the heart of reality is thus freedom and ambiguity, suffering, pain, and evil, as the title of his final, posthumously published volume, *Essere libertà ambiguità* (Being freedom ambiguity; 1998), suggests and as a philosophical hermeneutics of Christian religious experience reveals.

In 1983, Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti published their important and influential coedited volume *Il pensiero debole* (Weak thought), which, besides their own contributions, also contains essays by Leonardo Amoroso, Gianni Carchia, Filippo Costa, Franco Crespi, Alessandro Dal Lago, Umberto Eco, Maurizio Ferraris, and Diego Marconi. Vattimo and Rovatti are the two major representatives of this widespread, precise (although with indefinite margins) philosophical position known as *pensiero debole* (“metaphor,” as it is qualified in their preface to the volume, which Vattimo now prefers to replace with the less demanding term “ontology of decline”), although Vattimo is now its principal proponent.⁵⁰

As evidenced in *Al di là del soggetto* (Beyond the subject; 1981), and *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* ([1985] 1991), Vattimo’s thought emerges from the realization (which he has matured through association with his teachers Pareyson, Gadamer, and Löwith and his readings of Barth, Benjamin, Bloch, Croce, Heidegger, Lukács, Marcuse, and Nietzsche) of the current impossibility of any fixed structure of being. Such impossibility has been completed through the philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger.

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⁵⁰ Gianni Vattimo (1936– ) was a student of Pareyson, under whose guidance he graduated in 1959 in Turin with a dissertation on Aristotle. He studied in Heidelberg with Karl Löwith and Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose thought he introduced in Italy. After teaching aesthetics at the University of Turin, he later became Professor of Theoretical Philosophy there. He has been a visiting professor at various universities in the United States. Recently he was an elected member of the European Parliament in Brussels. Among his publications are *Il soggetto e la maschera: Nietzsche e il problema della liberazione* (The subject and the mask: Nietzsche and the problem of liberation; 1974), *The Transparent Society* ([1989] 1992), and *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy* ([1994] 1997).
The experience of the oblivion of being and of the death of God, however, are not carried far enough by the widespread discourses on the crisis of reason and “negative thought” because of their fundamental nostalgic attitude toward metaphysics. Weak thought aims at completing the process initiated by the two German thinkers by weakening or disempowering the strong metaphysical structures and entities (such as reason, truth, absolute values, and so on) that have constituted modernity. Vattimo thus wishes for an overcoming of metaphysics that results in an ethics of interpretation insofar as the truth is resolved into its continuous interpretations. Playing on the meaning of Überwindung (overcoming) as Verwindung (distortion or twisting), Vattimo considers metaphysical “immutables” as traces that are no longer practicable as absolutes and yet are unrenounceable as the provenance from which the postmodern subject comes. Truth becomes for Vattimo the transmission of a linguistic and historical legacy orienting one’s own understanding of reality. Toward such a legacy, one can only exercise a form of pietas and, as far as the present and the future are concerned, concentrate on an “ontology of actuality” (the term is borrowed from Foucault) focused on the elaboration of a nonunitary, multifaceted subject open to freedom, tolerance, building of consensus, and relations with other cultures. Emancipation for Vattimo is not a matter of a progressive liberation from prejudices toward the goal of a clear, objective truth, but rather the freedom from strong metaphysical structures that hermeneutic reason achieves through the realization that all truths are a matter of interpretation.

The ethical implications of weak thought are taken up by Pier Aldo Rovatti. Although he shares with Vattimo many philosophical presuppositions, Rovatti is a phenomenologist and does not recognize himself in the general landscape of hermeneutics. Especially in his book L’elogio del pudore: Per un pensiero debole (In praise of modesty: Toward a weak thought; 1989), written with Dal Lago, and in conversation with Freud, Heidegger, Husserl, Levinas, and Vattimo, Rovatti introduces the metaphor of modesty (and elsewhere the dimension of silence, as in L’esercizio del silenzio [The exercise of silence; 1992]) as a way to respond ethically to the weakening of philosophy attested in Vattimo’s philosophical hypoth-

51. On these themes as they relate to Vattimo, see Brian Schroeder, “Theological Nihilism and Italian Philosophy,” Philosophy Today 49(4–5) (Winter 2005).
52. Pier Aldo Rovatti (1942– ) completed his studies in theoretical philosophy with a dissertation on Whitehead at Milan State University under the guidance of Enzo Paci and Ludovico Geymonat. After working as a theater critic for the daily newspaper L’Avanti, he taught at Milan State University and later at the University of Trieste, where he is currently Professor of Theoretical Philosophy. Among his publications are La posta in gioco (What is at stake; 1987), Le trasformazioni del soggetto: Un itinerario filosofico (The transformation of the subject: A philosophical itinerary; 1992), and Abitare la distanza: Per un’etica del linguaggio (Inhabiting distance: Toward an ethics of language; 1994).
Modesty is defined by Rovatti as a movement of withdrawal of thought from things and events so as to allow the emergence of a “shadow zone” that remains invisible and ineffable, a zone of renunciation of the claims advanced by traditional philosophy to be able to grasp its objects. The contemporary weakening of philosophy thus entails an ethical aspect, which can be identified with the modesty, discretion, and lack of violence of a universe of thought deprived of its dimension of will to power. Rovatti’s invitation is to an “ethics of diminution,” that is, an ethics of dwelling in the distance, from oneself and from others.

Interesting philosophical perspectives that unfold with hermeneutics on their background and accentuate various different components of the contemporary debate are those of Umberto Eco, Carlo Sini, Vincenzo Vitiello, and Mario Ruggenini. Among the four, the thinker who is most clearly influenced by hermeneutics is Ruggenini, who, in conversation with Heidegger, develops hermeneutics on the grounds of a general evaluation of the crisis of metaphysics inherited from his teacher Severino. Starting with a hermeneutic retrieval of phenomenological themes (Husserl and Heidegger), Ruggenini’s overall philosophy develops the theme of the finitude of existence in relation to the problem of alterity, so as to replace the metaphysics of meaning and sufficient reason with a different experience of the truth—an experience of truth that occurs in human speech and in the conversation with others in which the world opens up. In general, three themes recur in Ruggenini’s philosophy: a rethinking of ontological issues in a hermeneutic-phenomenological register; a new hermeneutics of the I or self that is made possible out of the relation with the other and constitutes the I neither as substance nor as self-certainty, but rather as responsibility for the other; and the appeal of the other as opening to the dimension of the sacred. The sacred is here understood not as the god of presence and ontotheology, but rather as the god of absence, which entails for human beings faithfulness to the earth and a retrieval of the religious sense of philosophical questioning. The entire Western tradition is for Ruggenini marked by an immanent nihilism, which is deepened through the Christian idea of creation from nothingness, since such \textit{creatio ex nihilo} constantly exposes the world to the

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53. Mario Ruggenini (1940–) is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Venice. A student of Emanuele Severino first at the University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, Ruggenini then followed Severino to Venice after the latter’s break with his master and then colleague Bontadini. He has spent periods of study and research in Cambridge and Oxford, and has lectured on questions of phenomenology and hermeneutics in various universities in Europe and elsewhere. Among his publications are \textit{Volontà e interpretazione: Le forme della fine della filosofia} (Will and interpretation: The forms of the end of philosophy; 1984), \textit{I fenomeni e le parole: La verità finita dell’ermeneutica} (Phenomena and speech: The finite truth of hermeneutics; 1991), and \textit{Il discorso dell’altro: Ermeneutica della differenza} (Discourse of the other: Hermeneutics of difference; 1996).
risk of a renewed fall into the nothingness from which it comes. The only way out of such nihilism is through a radically and genuinely hermeneutic attitude. The fall into nothingness is strictly related to the violent domination by a single truth; nothingness can be defeated only with the recognition that the truth is multiple and cannot be owned or possessed. Rather, truth gives itself in the changing and rich intertwining of multiple discourses. As Ruggenini repeats on the wave of Hölderlin, “we are a discourse,” since our finite being is always and already in a relation in which we are, first and foremost, listeners and interlocutors. Ruggenini’s perspective is thus that of a hermeneutic philosophy that has abandoned all forms of transcendence since transcendence is implicitly considered an (albeit unintentional) generator of nihilism. Such a perspective opens up to a dimension of sacredness that is clearly identified with the finitude of human existence, which is always conversation.

The philosophy of Vitiello is also deeply engaged with a hermeneutic of Christian thought, which he rereads in a direction that eliminates all perspectives of redemption while emphasizing finitude. A scholar of German classical idealism, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Christian and Neoplatonist traditions (especially Plotinus and Augustine), Vitiello has focused his research on some crucial theoretical questions such as the interpretation of time, the concept of difference, and the relation between dialectic and hermeneutics, arriving at his own hermeneutic theory – which he names “topology” – founded on a reinterpretation of the notion of space. The recognition of the multiplicity of the truth does not lead him to nihilism or relativism; rather, it solicits the retrieval of a conceptual site or topos capable of constituting the true possibility of the concept. He explores a “topology of the modern,” that is, a possible and always questionable identity constituting the truth of the modern. The concept of possibility extends also to divine being, which Vitiello interprets in the sense of omnipossibility, that is, of complete possibility of everything, at all times – of creation as well as “de-creation.” The Christian experience of the cross becomes the experience of a God that does not save, opening up the dimensions of restlessness, of anguish, of Angst. The cross marks the limit of human beings. The notion of the redeeming God, who denies such dimensions in the victory of salvation, is replaced with the concept of the deus absconditus, which in turn relies on a radical faithfulness to finitude.

54. Vincenzo Vitiello (1935– ) studied at the University of Naples Federico II, where he wrote on the topic of “Freedom and Justice in the Thought of Benedetto Croce.” He has taught aesthetics, the history of modern and contemporary philosophy, and currently is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Salerno. He has also taught in several German and Spanish universities, and at the University of Chapingo in Mexico. Among his publications are Utopia del nichilismo (Utopia of nihilism; 1983), Topologia del moderno (Topology of the modern; 1992), and Cristianesimo senza redenzione (Christianity without redemption; 1995).
The themes of hermeneutics as philosophy of interpretation are taken in a different direction by Umberto Eco, a student of Pareyson who interlaces hermeneutics and semiotic interests in his own original way.\(^{55}\) The hermeneutic theme of an infinity of interpretations, filtered through Peirce’s notion of unlimited semiosis, is taken up by Eco with the suggestion of the construction of “encyclopedia-like semantics,” which, unlike and in opposition to “dictionary semantics,” because of their rhizomatic and labyrinthine structure insert the reader into an open, potentially infinite, at least indefinite, even if perhaps contradictory plot of interdisciplinary references proper to intertextuality. The theory of an interpretative cooperation of various narrative texts extends to the reader, who is also caught in an interpretative game to become the model reader for each particular text. Against many deconstructionist positions, especially in their American variations, Eco nevertheless asserts the limits of interpretation when claiming that, if it is not possible to legitimate good interpretations, it is always possible to invalidate bad ones. The open multiplicity of interpretations is always confronted with the already given and already said, which thus work as the limits of any interpretative freedom. In his philosophy of language, Eco embraces a “contractualist” position not only in reference to signifieds but also to signifiers, which are the result of valid agreements made correctly to mean certain expressions; in other words, their validity is entirely practical.

Linguistic themes, especially the notion of sign, are at the center of the philosophy of Carlo Sini, who is deeply influenced by Peirce’s semiotics, which he intertwines with suggestions coming from Heidegger, phenomenology, the hermeneutic tradition, and Derrida.\(^{56}\) Although Sini is not exactly a hermeneutic philosopher, strong motifs coming from hermeneutic theory play a fundamental role in his position. For Sini, signs are not things but rather relations referring on the one side to the object, and on the other to the interpreter. Objects subsist only as indicated by a sign, and never in themselves. Analogously, interpreters are neither metaphysical subjects nor empirical figures; rather, they are formed within and by virtue of interpretations that are themselves situated within a process of unlimited semiosis understood as event and not as fact. An originary

\(^{55}\text{Umberto Eco (1932– ) is Professor of Semiotics at the University of Bologna. In addition to various novels, he is the author of A Theory of Semiotics ([1975] 1976), The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts ([1979] 1979), Interpretation and Overinterpretation ([1995] 1992), and The Limits of Interpretation ([1990] 1990).}\)

\(^{56}\text{Carlo Sini (1933– ) was educated in the tradition of the Milan State University, where he studied under the guidance of Enzo Paci. Sini is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Milan State University. His publications include Passare il segno (Passing the sign; 1981), Il silenzio e la parola: Luoghi e confine del sapere per un uomo planetario (Silence and speech: Places and boundary of knowledge for a planetary human; 1989), and Etica della scrittura (Ethics of writing; 1992). [\*] For a discussion of Peirce, see the essay by Douglas R. Anderson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.}\)
form of the eventuation of signs is writing, which for Sini is more than a purely mechanical activity. Writing is in fact a practice characterized, as we know it, by the alphabet. This specific alphabetic practice, itself inserted in various other practices based on bodies, voices, writing tools, and material support such as stone, paper, computer screen, and so on, defines the specific way of being of Western civilization with its values and concepts gravitating around logic and scientific rationality. Truth is here inserted in a universe of practices that themselves conform to other social practices while founding new ones. Thus, practices, and the specific practice of writing constituting philosophy, are linked to ethics understood simply as being or dwelling in the world. Following Husserl, Sini is convinced that all theories are in fact the practices through which we inhabit our time. Whereas Husserl's phenomenology aimed at a rigorous form of knowledge, Sini's encyclopedic phenomenology retraces various practices that have more or less meaning, but that can never claim for themselves the status of absolute truth. Thus, Husserl's phenomenology is reinterpreted in the sense of a “phenomenography” geared toward translating truth into signs. This is a commitment, or an ethos, each individual takes upon himself or herself, thereby becoming the figure and not the foundation of a continuously different practice. For Sini, then, the confrontation (made possible by the awareness that Western theory as the outcome of the alphabetic practice is one practice among many, one way of inhabiting the truth among many) among diverse concrete practices of life, discourses, and forms of writing would lead to a profitable reconsideration of various forms of knowledge in the richness of their differences – which cannot be reduced to the alphabetic practice of writing and its will to power.

The three areas of reflection discussed above – the crisis of reason and subjectivity, modernity and postmodernity, and hermeneutics and weak thought – certainly do not exhaust the varied and multiple interests of the Italian philosophical panorama during the years 1980–95. Nevertheless, by challenging and rethinking traditional metaphysical concepts, especially those of subjectivity and the role and nature of philosophy, the Italian philosophers of this period prepare the way for the ethical, political, and religious reflection that shapes much of the philosophical discourse that follows.
The end of the 1970s is marked by the “adventures” of the Charter 77 and by the death of Jan Patočka (1907–77), a former student of Husserl and Heidegger and the most prominent Czech philosopher of the second half of the twentieth century. It is not an exaggeration to say that most of what happened in the following decade is delimited by various efforts to prolong and develop Patočka's specific version of phenomenology and philosophy of history, even though these interpretations very often took unexpected and peculiar forms of personal “philosophies” of particular authors, for whom Patočka’s own ideas represent a pretext for the development of their own specific positions.

A lot has been said about the “underground” character of philosophical activity during the 1970s and 1980s. One of the very few fields of study that seem to have been spared the general persecution of non-Marxist philosophy was German idealism, considered as a precursor of Marxism. For example, remarkable and subtle interpretative work was accomplished by Milan Sobotka (1927–), a specialist on Hegel and author of several books on classical German philosophy (the most important being probably Člověk, práce a sebevědomí [Man and work in German philosophy], published in 1964). Sobotka wrote, coauthored with Ladislav Major (1935–), a clear and concise introduction to Hegel, published in 1979. In 1993, his texts on Hegel (results of seminars on Phenomenology of Spirit and Hegel’s philosophy of law) were published under the title Stati k Hegelově Fenomenologii a filosofii práva (Studies in Hegel’s phenomenology and philosophy of law). Sobotka’s interpretation is concerned with the relation between Hegelianism and the philosophy of antiquity, and with Hegel’s criticism of Kant and the development of post-Hegelian left-oriented philosophy and its Marxist results. Another example is Jiří Pešek (1929–2003), who produced interesting...
and nondogmatic interpretations of the notion of “division of labor” in Marxism. Pešek wrote an important work entitled *Dialektika dělíby práce* (The dialectics of the division of labor) in 1966, and his later interests in the problem of temporality led to his work *Active Man and Time* in 1986. Both Sobotka and Pešek helped form a new generation of students, many of whom became university teachers after 1989 (Milan Znoj, Ladislav Benyovszky, and others).

Nonetheless, the most powerful current of Czech non-Marxist philosophy remained a matter of private teaching. The tradition of Patočka’s private seminars and courses – held during the 1970s with a group of students founded by Ivan Chvatík – has been continued on various levels and in different contexts. Daniel Kroupa, Julius Tomin, Petr Rezek, Zdeněk Neubauer, Ladislav Hejdánek, and Radim Palouš1 were among the most active organizers of lectures and seminars dealing more or less loosely with philosophical matters. On the other hand, this does not mean that Czech philosophy was condemned to remain in complete isolation: a very intense collaboration between the Czech and “Western” philosophers began in the late 1970s, thanks especially to Kathy Wilkes, who came to give a lecture on Aristotle in Tomin’s seminar as early as in 1979. Afterwards, many other thinkers followed: Roger Scruton (who lectured on Wittgenstein in 1979), Alan Montefiore, Anthony Kenny (whose seminar on Aristotle was interrupted by the secret police), Christopher Kirwan (who lectures on Augustine in Hejdánek’s seminar), and others. These visits soon became systematically organized: the Jan Hus Association was founded in 1980 to facilitate the intellectual exchanges between Anglo-Saxon and Czech philosophers and to provide material aid (books, research fellowships) to isolated Czech intellectuals. This project soon included the French intellectual scene as well. Jean-Pierre Vernant became the president of the French section of the Jan Hus Association (he remained in this position until his death in 2007, when the presidency was taken over by Étienne Balibar), and Jacques Derrida accepted the role of vice-president. This moment marked the beginning of regular visits of French philosophers in unofficial Czech seminars – the first being Paul Ricoeur in 1980. In 1984, Derrida came to Prague to give a lecture on Descartes in Hejdánek’s seminar, after which a bizarre and well-known incident occurred: he was arrested by the police, accused of drug smuggling, and released only after the intervention of the French government. This curious event, however, did not dissuade others from coming, and Jean-Claude Eslin, Balibar, Richard Rorty, Jürgen Habermas, and Ernst Tugendhat were among the other lecturers who took part in the Czech

1. Daniel Kroupa (1949– ) became a deputy in the Czech parliament in 1996. He also teaches political philosophy at the University of Plzeň. Radim Palouš (1924– ) worked as a rector of the Charles University from 1990–94. In his theoretical work, he concentrates on the philosophy of education and his approach is inspired especially by Patočka and Levinas. Julius Tomin (1938– ) studied philosophy and psychology. He works especially on Descartes and Plato.
“underground university.” The publication policy reflected this rather unusual situation. Very few philosophers managed to write (and to publish) a full book: most of what happened in Czech philosophy is concentrated in articles that were published in samizdat editions — Hejdánek directed the publishing house oikoumenh, which became official after 1989 and is now a leading publisher of philosophical literature in the Czech Republic. Karel Palek, a philologist and author of a book on the relation between totalitarianism and language, founded a samizdat review entitled Kritický sborník (Critical review). This review played a particularly important role in the Czech underground intellectual scene in the 1980s and started to be published officially in the 1990s. Apart from original works, several translations were produced, mainly as a result of the work in the seminars: these include Nietzsche’s Untimely Meditations, Heidegger’s Being and Time, and works by Levinas, Popper, and others.

From this tumultuous atmosphere an unusual image of Czech philosophy emerges: a sort of bricolage, an unusual mixture of penetrating insights and curious conceptions, high ambitions and abandoned projects that often remained in the form of unfinished sketches, plans and proclamations. There are, however, at least two lines of thought that are specific to Czech philosophy and represent an original achievement. The first consists in reinterpreting and developing Patočka’s phenomenology; the second in connecting the legacy of the Czech structuralism (particularly the thought of Jan Mukařovský) with French poststructuralism and deconstruction. In what follows, it is those two domains that we will briefly examine.

I. PATOČKA AND HIS SHADOW

In his philosophical project, Patočka outlined several domains of reflection that remain “open” for future interpreters. As early as the 1950s, he developed his conception of negative Platonism, which is an original reinterpretation of the notion of idea in Plato’s philosophy. Although Patočka’s essay on negative Platonism deals specifically with Plato, the question involved concerns Western metaphysics in general and the problem of ideality in particular. As a starting-point, Patočka takes the Platonic notion of khorismos (the dividing line between the sphere of ideality and the material world) and reinterprets it in a negative way: khorismos is not a border between two realms, an ideal one and a material one, but rather an expression of the separation itself, a negativity that makes it impossible to hypostatize the ideality as a “second positivity“ based on the model

of a material object. Human freedom and indeterminacy (living “on the edge,” we might say) is a correlate of this negative experience of separation that is a basic structure of human existence.

Another important project, formulated in a series of articles written in German,\(^3\) consists in predicting the possibility of what Patočka calls “asubjective phenomenology.” Asubjective phenomenology is not a phenomenology without subject; such a claim would be ridiculous. Rather, it is a phenomenological project in which the subject loses the status of transcendental guarantee of the phenomenal field (Patočka’s criticism of Husserl’s alleged subjectivism goes precisely in this direction) and becomes a part of the structure of appearance (i.e. the world). In other words, the subject becomes implied in the world and ceases to be an abstract instance to which the world appears (certain parallels here between Patočka and late Merleau-Ponty are obvious). As a consequence, Patočka proposes to understand the subject as a corporeal entity whose existence in the world is conceived in terms of movement (one of the most important notions in Patočka’s later philosophy, which originated in his interpretation and radicalization of Aristotle), which represents the most fundamental dimension of being-in-the-world; hence Patočka’s renewed interest in the Husserlian concept of Lebenswelt, which became a key notion for many of his Czech interpreters.

Last but not least, it is Patočka’s philosophy of history that has attracted considerable attention. Patočka’s considerations on history are expressed – in its most consistent form – in his last great work, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*.\(^4\) This book was heavily influenced by Heidegger; especially the final essay entitled “Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War.” In this essay, Patočka stressed the ecstatic, “nocturnal” experience of the war front, but in a way that leaves the reader both fascinated and perplexed, as it reminds one more of Georges Bataille than phenomenology.

In the Czech context, all of the motives mentioned above were taken over and developed, enabling the Czech philosophers, for whom Patočka was the major point of reference, to delimit their own positions.

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Ladislav Hejdánek (1927– ) studied philosophy in the late 1940s and early 1950s, worked as a manual laborer and librarian in the 1950s and became, for a short period in the late 1960s (1968–71) a researcher at the Academy of Science. He signed the Charter 77 and during the 1970s and 1980s, he became one of the most efficient organizers of the underground intellectual life. In his own philosophy – developed in a series of essays – Patočka’s influence, although it is not the only one, is undeniable and is overtly acknowledged in the preface to one of his most important books. The notion of negative Platonism led Hejdánek to specify the two key notions of his own philosophical project: nonobjective thought and meontology. Roughly speaking, the idea of nonobjectivity or rather nonobjectiveness (partly inspired by the Patočkian interpretation of the khorismos) led Hejdánek to criticize the stiff model of the subject–object relation, as well as the correlative notion of the subject as a non-object, and to propose a model of thought that is based on meontological (from the Greek me ontos) premises, according to which non-being is more originary than positivity. In this perspective, the subject is no longer considered as a stable constitutive entity but rather as an event whose concrete form is unforeseeable and cannot be subjected to calculable laws. It is in theology and in religious experiences that Hejdánek finds a model for such unforeseeable and nonobjectifiable events – a conclusion that seems to resonate, for example, with Jean-Luc Marion’s conception of the saturated phenomenon. Even what Hejdánek calls “the loss of subject” in contemporary philosophy is interpreted in the same vein: as a crisis of the objectifying thought for which the positive delimitation of the subject is “an unthinkable and untenable concept.” The problems of such a philosophical perspective are obvious enough: it may present itself as an impressive philosophy of invention, unforeseeability, and event, but the fact remains that the all-embracing notion of nonobjectivity remains vague (unlike Patočka’s very precise reinterpretation of Plato). Moreover, Hejdánek’s essays often take the form of programmatic

5. See Ladislav Hejdánek, Nepředmětnost v myšlení a ve skutečnosti [Non-objectiveness in thought and in reality] (Prague: oikoymenh, 1997), 16. Even though the book in question was published in 1997, it is composed mainly of essays written in the 1980s.

6. The adjective “non-objective” is a clumsy translation of the Czech word “nepředmětný,” which could equally be translated “insubstantial.” “Nepředmětný” does not mean a lack of objectivity, but rather a distance taken toward the notion of object and toward the objectifying tendency of thought. Hejdánek’s “self-made” and highly personal terminology makes him very often exceedingly difficult to translate.


8. Hejdánek, Nepředmětnost v myšlení a ve skutečnosti, 156.
proclamations rather than of a concise and consistently developed philosophical analysis. Recently, Hejdánek has been heavily criticized for inconsistencies and his generalizing tendencies of thought, and criticisms of his very specific terminology often verge on irony.ª

Zdeněk Neubauer (1942– ) is a former biologist who turned to philosophy and tried to connect phenomenological perspectives with scientific thought in the strict sense of the word. Neubauer criticizes the traditional conception of scientific objectivity (drawing often on thinkers such as Prigogine, Kuhn, and others) and defends the essentially subjective nature of experience. The notion of the natural world (Lebenswelt) becomes a key feature of this critique. According to Neubauer, the task of philosophy is “to take care of the natural world, of its sense and unity.”10

It is, nonetheless, the work of Petr Rezek and Miroslav Petříček that might be seen as the most remarkable accomplishments of Czech phenomenological philosophy in the 1980s. Rezek (1948– ), an important but also a very controversial figure, has acquired the reputation of an enfant terrible of Czech philosophy. A psychologist by profession, he studied under Patočka’s guidance in the 1970s, and his private seminar, which he led during the 1980s, was one of the most popular and productive ones. His interests range from philosophy to visual arts, music, and psychopathology. His most original contribution consists in drawing a link between phenomenology and aesthetics, which he elaborated in a series of articles, later gathered in volumes entitled Jan Patočka a věc fenomenologie (Jan Patočka and the problem of phenomenology; 1993), and Tělo, věc a skutečnost v současném umění (Body, thing and reality in contemporary art; 1983). In 1991, he published Filosofie a politika kýče (Philosophy and politics of Kitsch), a violent attack on several Czech philosophers (including Neubauer and Hejdánek) whom he accuses – in a very straightforward and ironic manner – of incompetence and lack of rigor.

In his interpretations of Patočka, Rezek concentrates – unlike his colleagues – on the originality of Patočka’s position within the frame of phenomenology itself. By abandoning the idea of the transcendental subject as a substratum of apparition, Patočka is forced to come up with a new conception of the relation between the subject and the world. This relation, as we have already mentioned, takes form in movement; it is, therefore, no longer treated in terms of contemplation or objectifying intentionality (as in early Husserl) but rather in terms of


the active engagement of the subject in the world.\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, the corporeality of the subject, which acquires an “ontological status,”\textsuperscript{12} becomes a key issue in this version of phenomenology, albeit in a different sense from, for example, Merleau-Ponty, who speaks about the intertwining of the body and the world. Where Merleau-Ponty transforms this into his famous concept of the flesh of the world, Patočka treats the relation in question on the level of the subject’s corporeal capacity to move. In Rezek’s view, the very notion of the world is deeply affected by this change of perspective. The world is not an intentional correlate of a transcendental consciousness, but rather a \textit{milieu} or a system of places. With the shift from transcendental ego to movement, the subject becomes situated – placed in the world. The theory of movement “is not a theory of absolute subjectivity, but rather a \textit{topology} of the natural world.”\textsuperscript{13} The notion of the \textit{Lebenswelt} as topology enables Rezek to grasp the radicalism of the transformation Patočka has brought about, as well as to stress the undeniable fact that this version of phenomenology verges on a kind of cosmology because the capacity to move is not specific to the human subject. Another inevitable consequence is that the relation of the subject to his milieu is less transparent than in classical phenomenology: Patočka discovers, according to Rezek, the dark side of human existence, which can never be clarified and which finds its paroxysmal expression in the last of the \textit{Heretical Essays}.

In his essays on aesthetics, Rezek tries to apply Patočkian phenomenology to modern visual arts. In the Czech context, it is one of the rare attempts to elaborate an interdisciplinary approach based on phenomenology. As Rezek clearly states in the introduction of \textit{Tělo, věc a skutečnost v současném umění} (Body, thing and reality in contemporary art), phenomenology is not “a vision of the visible, but rather a search for the vision itself.”\textsuperscript{14} This basic principle is the starting-point of analyses of pop art, body art, conceptual art, or modern sculpture. Even if some of Rezek’s formulations remind us of Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of Cézanne,\textsuperscript{15} in other essays, he attempts a more original approach. Thus, modern sculpture, interpreted from the point of view of a (potential) haptic contact, is envisaged through the prism of Patočka’s theory of movement.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item It is not by chance that Patočka was, toward the end of his life, fascinated by the work of Hannah Arendt, whose influence is obvious, especially in \textit{Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History}.
\item See Paul Ricoeur, “Pocta Janu Patočkovi” [Tribute to Jan Patočka], Marcela Sedláčková (trans.), \textit{Filosofický časopis} 39(1) (1991), 7.
\item Petr Rezek, \textit{Jan Patočka a věc fenomenologie} (Prague: oikoymenh, 1993), 109.
\item Petr Rezek, \textit{Tělo, věc a skutečnost v současném umění} (Prague: Jazzová sekce, 1982), 11.
\item “The painter treats the phenomenality of phenomena in such a way as to show their corporeal manifestation in the painting” (\textit{ibid.}, 184). [*] Merleau-Ponty’s essay on Cézanne is discussed extensively in the essay by Mauro Carbone in \textit{The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4}
\end{enumerate}
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and the corporeal character of the subject: sculpture is an "invitation to movement" and "our corporeal life in the mode of an ‘ability to move’ finds its counter-weight in modern sculpture."16 In some of these texts, Rezek seems to anticipate the phenomenological conception of ontological desire, proposed recently by Renaud Barbaras,17 as well as the attempts to enrich strictly phenomenological thought (like Merleau-Ponty before him) with references to Kurt Goldstein and Gestalt psychology.

Miroslav Petříček (1951– ), who studied under Patočka from 1972 to 1977, spent the 1980s working in the Czech Meteorological Institute. Equipped with an impressive knowledge of phenomenology and German idealism (he translated Schelling together with Patočka), he soon took interest in contemporary French philosophy. After 1989, while he worked as a researcher at the Czech Academy of Science and as a teacher at the Central European University in Prague, he became one of the most active promoters on the Czech intellectual scene – both as a translator and original philosopher – of French thought. In 1993, he published an excellent volume of translations of Derrida's works, including Speech and Phenomena and a selection of essays from Margins of Philosophy, Writing and Difference, and Positions, that was accompanied by a long preface in which a comprehensive introduction to Derrida's thought is combined with a very specific interpretation of the deconstruction that seems to have set the tone of Petříček's own thought in the years to come (we will deal with this text in the next section). His other translations include Deleuze’s Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? Levinas’s Totalité et infini, a selection of Lyotard’s essays from Des dispositifs pulsionnels, L’Inhumain, and Moralités postmodernes, Ricoeur’s Temps et récit, Merleau-Ponty’s Le Visible et l’invisible, Barthes’s La Chambre claire, and many others. In 1991, he published Úvod do (současné) filosofie (An introduction to (contemporary) philosophy), a book based on introductory lectures on twentieth-century philosophy. Dealing with authors as diverse as Bergson, Husserl, Levinas, Camus, Foucault, or Derrida, Petříček’s introduction still remains one of the most popular textbooks of modern philosophy. Later, in 2000, his reflections resulted in The Majesty of Law, an unusual philosophical interpretation of detective stories (by Raymond Chandler in particular) based implicitly on Derrida (who is hardly mentioned but constantly present), but also Montaigne, Adorno, and others.

As far as the strictly phenomenological line of Petříček’s reflection is concerned, he stresses, like Rezek, the fecund notion of movement, which “refers to human corporeality as a basis for realizing human possibilities and enables

16. Rezek, Tělo, věc a skutečnost v současném umění, 196.
the understanding of human life as a possibility that comes into existence in the relation of man and world, of which we are both actors and witnesses.”

On the other hand, he interprets Patočka’s break with classical phenomenology as a philosophical move that brings Patočka closer to French thinkers, and to poststructuralism. This interpretation is outlined notably in an extensive essay entitled “Jan Patočka a myšlenka přirozeného světa” (Jan Patočka and the idea of the natural world), published in 1990, even though the first version of the text originates from 1987. If we understand human existence as movement, there is no longer a place for the invariant structures in the sense of Husserl’s eidetics. The natural world is a world of praxis and of active participation with the things that surround us. Petříček does not stress the motif of language, which is considered in Patočka’s later works, as an objectifying instrument but as an element that pervades perception itself. In this sense, “in the development of Patočka’s formulations concerning the natural world, it is easy to find a parallel to the development of structuralism.” If, as Patočka’s most fundamental innovations proposed, static eidetic structures are replaced by the dynamism of the natural world and the constitutive transcendental ego steps aside in order to make a place for the possibility of an asubjective phenomenology, where the epoché concerns not only the phenomena themselves but also the very status of the subject to whom they appear, a possibility is opened for a new dialogue between phenomenology and structuralism. This new version of phenomenology examines the process behind the structure rather than the structure itself, and the birth of subjectivity rather than the stable intentional substratum: l’engendrement de la signification, as Petříček puts it. Therefore, it is not illogical to find an indirect link between this dynamic phenomenology and, for example, Derrida’s différence or Foucault’s epistemic foundation of subject and knowledge. This perspective seems rather refreshing, given the fact that even in France (with a few exceptions, such as Ricoeur’s attempt to reconcile structuralism and phenomenologically inspired hermeneutics or Derrida’s early interpretations of Husserl), phenomenology and structuralism have developed more or less separately. Even Patočka’s negative Platonism, considered as an experience of separation that is not a separation between two symmetrical domains (which might make us think of the notion of “difference,” reinvented by Deleuze and other French thinkers), may be reinterpreted in the same spirit. Petříček speaks

about Patočka's philosophy as “heterology” (a term taken over from Bataille), an experience of radical alterity that ties Patočka closely to Levinas or Derrida.20

These few names do not form an exhaustive list. Among other scholars who were involved in the interpretation of Patočka's philosophy are Pavel Kouba, working especially on Nietzsche and Arendt (his interpretation of Nietzsche will be discussed below) and Ivan Chvatík (1941–), publisher of Patočka's collected papers (twenty-seven volumes published until 1989) and founder of Patočka's Archive in Prague in 1990; Jiří Němec (1932–2001), a clinical psychologist, who was also associated with Patočka's group; Jiří Michálek (1941–), who considers himself a pupil of Patočka, and whose special interests are Heidegger and the philosophy of education; and Ivan Dubský (1926–), who works in the domain of both philosophy and literature and who wrote a book on Patočka in 1991.21

Václav Bělohradský (1944–), a philosopher teaching in Italy since the early 1970s, transposes Patočka's reflection into the realm of political philosophy: the title of his most important book, Přirozený svět jako politický problém (The natural world as a political problem), is a clear allusion to Patočka's early work Přirozený svět jako filosofický problém (The natural world as a philosophical problem). Inspired by the Husserlian notion of the crisis of the European sciences, by Patočka’s return to the natural world, and by Arendt’s notion of the banality of evil (and possibly by the Heideggerian concept of Gestell), Bělohradský criticizes the classical Western conception of universalism as an overcoming of “the personal consciousness,” as he puts it, and attempts to “look for universality in what has been up to now stigmatized as unreal and illusionary: in the natural world given in the first person and in personal consciousness.”22 This attempt permits us to grasp “the ethical aspect of phenomenology,” in the sense that “phenomenology is a radical critique of European reason insofar as it refuses the legitimacy of any claim to rationality, if it is not founded … in the reflection on the contents of the personal consciousness.”23 Thus, phenomenology represents a counterpoint of an alleged impersonality of ideology and totalitarianism, because in the phenomenological view, “personal consciousness” is not considered as “merely” private, but constitutes the most essential starting-point of philosophical reflection. The natural world becomes a political problem not in the sense of a “subjectivization” of the political (a sort of political “anything goes”), but in the sense that the political subject cannot be reduced to an impersonal entity devoid of affective states and personal experiences.

23. Ibid., 110.
Erazim Kohák (1933– ), who lived in the United States until 1990 and whose work concerns especially the philosophy of nature, translated some of Patočka’s texts into English (Heretic Essays; Body, Community, Language, World; Introduction to Husserl’s Phenomenology) and wrote an introductory book Jan Patočka: Philosophy and Selected Writings. After 1989, he returned to Prague and lectured especially on ethics and phenomenology.

Even nowadays, the interest in Patočka’s philosophy is considerable. Thanks to the activity of the Patočka Archive and Center for Theoretical Studies, the Czech school of phenomenology has gained something of a reputation abroad. Patočka’s work became known especially in France: brilliant translations of Patočka into French (by Erica Abrams) enabled the French phenomenologists (namely Renaud Barbaras, Marc Richir, and Françoise Dastur, not to mention the well-known essay on Patočka by Jacques Derrida24) to incorporate his theory of movement, asubjective phenomenology and natural world into their own reflection.

II. OPENING THE STRUCTURES

Apart from the Patočkian heritage, there is another important current of reflection, inaugurated by the tradition of Czech structuralism, that has been connected with the activity of the famous Prague Linguistic Circle in the 1920s and 1930s. (Roman Jakobson lived in Prague from 1920 to 1939 and had intense relations with both Czech poets and linguists.25) Prague structuralism found its most considerable achievement in the work of Jan Mukařovský (1891–1975). His multifaceted oeuvre includes erudite studies on Czech poetry (the Czech romantic poet Mácha in particular) as well as a general theory of aesthetics that is based on the notion of the aesthetic function.26 In this line of reasoning, the aesthetic character of any part of reality (the aesthetic function is not limited to an intentionally created work of art) is the basis of the aesthetic function that any object might possibly acquire and opens a way for introducing more subtle analytical criteria than those dictated by the rigid notion of structure. Structural aesthetics is replaced by functional aesthetics within a domain where

25. For a discussion of Jakobson and the Prague School, see the essay by Thomas F. Broden in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
new realities may enter that have hitherto been ignored or left unexplained by classical structuralism.

It is clear that the thought inspired by structuralism constantly oscillated between literary theory and philosophy in the proper sense of the word. In this respect, we must mention at least the name of Josef Zumr (1928– ), who – apart from strictly philosophical work – has always manifested a deep interest in literature, especially in the work of Bohumil Hrabal; and Ladislav Klima (1878–1928), a Czech philosopher and writer known for his slightly bizarre novels and short stories, as well as for his highly personal reinterpretation of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Květoslav Chvatík (1930– ) has done important work introducing the Czech school of structuralism to the German-speaking world in two books: *Tschekoslowakischer Strukturalismus: Theorie und Geschichte* (Czechoslovak structuralism: Theory and history; 1981) and *Mensch und Struktur* (Man and structure; 1987). *Tschekoslowakischer Strukturalismus* deals with the history of the Czech structuralist movement and with its philosophical bases, while *Mensch und Struktur* (1987) is a collection of essays on more particular topics. Oleg Šus (1924–82) and Felix Vodička (1909–74) have added their personal insights to structuralist perspectives. Theorists such as Miroslav Červenka (1932–2005), the editor of Jakobson’s selected paper and author of a monograph *Styl a význam* (Style and meaning; 1991), developed the incentives of structuralism in the field of poetics. Last, but certainly not least, is Robert Kalivoda (1923–89) who in the late 1960s had already attempted to find a bridge between Marxist dialectics and structuralism.27

In a series of texts inaugurated in the late 1960s, literary theorist Milan Jankovič (1929– ) has elaborated his own version of structuralism that often incorporates philosophical elements. His most important text, “Dílo jako dění smyslu” (The work as a process of meaning), takes off from Mukařovský’s concept of “semantic gesture.” Semantic gesture is:

an organizing principle of the semantic construction of the work, which nevertheless cannot be identified with a noetic relation that the author entertains with reality and which appears, in an analysis of the work, rather as a principle of its formal construction, as an author’s particular technique.28

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28. Milan Jankovič, “Dílo jako dění smyslu” [The work as a process of meaning], in *Cesty za smyslem literárního díla* [Pathways toward the meaning of literary work] (Prague: Karolinum, 2005), 59.
The construction of a literary work, for Jankovič, has an essentially dynamic character: speaking about literary meaning in terms of process means, of course, getting away from classical, static structuralism. Mukařovský’s conception of the aesthetic function enables Jankovič to abandon the static structuralist frame and to conceive the literary work as a movement rather than a fixed state. The very notion of semantic gesture suggests the idea of dynamism rather than that of stable structural relations. It is therefore not surprising that Jankovič studies the literary work from the point of view of its “corporeal energy,” rather than that of authorial intention or ideality.

Despite these innovations, Jankovič is a devoted follower of Mukařovský and remains more or less resistant to French poststructuralism and deconstruction. In his work, Roland Barthes’s semiology is mentioned with sympathy: the vision of literary work as an active interplay of signifiers may get very close to the dynamism of semantic gesture. On the other hand, Jankovič believes that Barthes’s weakness is due to his refusal to study this play of signifiers on the level of particular texts, to pass from langue to parole, as he himself puts it, to move “from the linguistic conception of the system of literature to the aesthetic theory of the work.” Even though one might object that in *S/Z* or *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, Barthes does precisely what Jankovič misses in him, that is, he passes from the langue of literature to the parole of individual writers, the fact remains that Jankovič’s book is one of the texts that prepares the way for the reception of poststructuralist thinkers in the Czech Republic.

In 1991, Petříček published an article on “Mukařovský and Deconstruction,” in which the potentialities of the passage from the closed to the open structures are outlined in a very clear manner. This perspective is brought to more radical conclusions in Petříček’s long preface to his translation of Derrida in 1993. Petříček speaks about an “elementary phenomenology of border, limit, and dividing line.” This project puts forward the question of limit not as an outer limitation, but as an internal element and foundation of any structure or system. The limit thus conceived does not divide the inside from the outside, but becomes an internal and constitutive element of any structure – because the structure is founded by its own limit. The Derridian inspiration of such a view is obvious. It needs to be added that in Petříček’s view, the key issue in deconstructive thought is not transcendence but transgression. Once we adopt the deconstructive approach, the problem is “not a transcendental interrogation, but the

transgression of limits.”\footnote{Ibid., 23.} This leads Petříček to meditate on the concept of pure difference, which he develops not only in the preface we are dealing with here, but also in many texts on thinkers as different as Barthes, Levinas, or Foucault. If the object of deconstructive transgression is the difference between the inside and the outside itself, any structure becomes essentially open and infinite. It might seem that such a view leads to an exclusion of otherness: if the structure is infinite, no “outside” is possible and the famous Derridian adage according to which “There is nothing outside the text” takes slightly negative connotations, as it may be understood as a neutralization of alterity, event, or encounter. Petříček, however, does not share this interpretative approach and tries to coin a concept of alterity that would not fall under the simple dichotomy inside/ outside. Deconstruction and the concept of pure difference, according to him, offer a certain possibility to think of an “otherness different from metaphysical alterity.”\footnote{Ibid., 25.} It is not surprising that Levinas becomes a key reference in this effort, regardless of the criticism Derrida addressed to him.\footnote{See Miroslav Petříček, “Derrida a Lévinas” [Derrida and Levinas], Česká mysl [Czech mind] 1–2 (1992), where Petříček stresses the “out-of-joint” nature of philosophical concepts that both Derrida and Levinas bring to philosophy.}

In a monograph Nietzsche: Filosofická interpretace (Nietzsche: A philosophical interpretation), published in 1995, Kouba (1953– ), a specialist on hermeneutics, Patočka, and Arendt, takes a different view of deconstructive philosophy. His Nietzsche is the fruit of many years of research and it still remains one of the most interesting books that appeared after 1989. French Nietzscheanism\footnote{For a discussion of French Nietzscheanism, see the essay by Alan D. Schrift in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5. Nietzsche is the focus of an essay by Daniel Conway in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2.} is not dealt with directly – Deleuze is mentioned only once and Klossowski not at all – but one chapter is devoted to the central motif that French continental philosophy has undoubtedly inherited from Nietzsche, namely what Kouba calls “perspectivism.” By perspectivism, which is considered to be an emblematic character of contemporary (French) thought, Kouba understands the stress put on “the rhetorical and narrative nature of knowledge and on the literary character of philosophy itself.”\footnote{Pavel Kouba, Nietzsche: Filosofická interpretace (Prague: oikoymenh, 2006), 203.} The conditioned character of knowledge, which can no longer be based on the classical model of theoria, does not lead to nihilism and this version of perspectivism abandons precisely the notion of perspective as a \textit{mere} perspective. If contemporary French thought – and deconstruction in particular – adopts this idea of an impossibility of
“any recourse to pre-linguistic evidence,”37 the problem remains – at least for Kouba – that the Derridian reformulation of Nietzsche’s starting-point implies a misunderstanding, as far as the original Nietzsche view itself is concerned: imposing “the autonomy of the signifier” leads to a situation in which “we are left among the perspectives that – given the absence of a regulative idea and the ever escaping character of différence – always remain, in a sense, the same.”38 The question Kouba asks is the following: how does a clash – or at least a dialogue – among those perspectives, none of which aspires to be a true one, become possible? What is abandoned is not a philosophical (or metaphysical) naivety that counts on the existence of objective fact, but the very difference between truth and untruth that Nietzsche himself has never given up. The Nietzschean innovation consists in dynamizing the truth–untruth distinction, not in abandoning it altogether: “Nietzsche destroys the metaphysical foundation of the truth/untruth dichotomy, but insists on a situated persistence of this distinction in a dynamized form,” as well as on our capacity of distinguishing the truth and untruth from our perspective.39 For Kouba, deconstruction is, in fact, a neutralization of alterity rather than its affirmation in a nonmetaphysical form: a uniform slippage of the signifiers (or perspectives) always oscillating between presence and nonpresence and characterized by the sameness of this oscillation. Here, the elusive and omnipresent specter of the différence itself is what precisely excludes alterity from this movement.

Apart from these very different interpretations of deconstruction, the question of alterity or “becoming other,” to be more precise, is a central problem in the first monograph on Foucault written by a Slovak philosopher: Miroslav Marcelli (1947– ).40 The title of the book itself is quite eloquent: Michal Foucault alebo stať sa iným (Michel Foucault or how to become other). The question of otherness is treated on two different levels: first, as a fantasy of Foucault himself, leading him to change constantly his theoretical positions and to undermine any stable identity he might have acquired. This does not mean that the book in question would make any attempt to “psychoanalyze” Foucault. Rather, the idea of becoming other is understood as an impetus inherent to the movement of Foucault’s work itself. In Marcelli’s own words: “I attempt to determine the starting points that did not allow Foucault to remain attached to the positions he has elaborated and led him to constantly change. I am convinced that such an impetus of his theoretical and practical activity was an effort to become other.”41

37. Ibid., 211.
38. Ibid., 220.
39. Ibid., 222.
40. Marcelli is well known for his fine translation of The Order of Things, one of the rare translations from modern French philosophy published officially before 1989.
41. Miroslav Marcelli, Michal Foucault alebo stať sa iným (Bratislava: Archa, 1995), 19.
Becoming other thus develops into a concept enabling Marcelli to envisage Foucault’s work as a “syntax of space,” which he systematically explores. The second level on which the otherness is analyzed is more concrete: the experience of otherness is very often an explicit subject of Foucault’s analyses, be it the otherness of madness in *Madness and Civilization* (the debate between Foucault and Derrida concerning Descartes is interpreted in this manner: what is at stake here is the question whether the otherness is or is not internal to *cogito*), the “death of the author,” or even the late Foucault whose work on Greek and Roman thought “opens a perspective of individual existence: there is the possibility of becoming other and making of one’s life a work of art.”

Marcelli’s book, despite its relative shortness, is a remarkable achievement insofar as it – together with Petříček’s translations and writings – inaugurated an interest in French thought at a time when Czech continental philosophy was still dominated (almost exclusively) by phenomenology and hermeneutics. Since then, an impressive number of translations of Foucault, Derrida, Barthes, and Lyotard appeared, making their philosophy accessible to a larger audience. A very unusual and amusing example of this interest is a book by Ladislav Šerý (1958–), himself a translator of Bataille, Artaud, Jean Genet, and others, entitled *První knížka o tom, že řád je chaos* (The first book on the fact that order is actually chaos; 1997) and written provocatively in nonacademic, colloquial Czech. Drawing on Bataille, Foucault, Pierre Clastres, but also the early Rousseau, the author develops a concept of subversion that echoes Bataille’s transgression, and attacks Patočka’s authority by mocking his “monumental” conception of European history.

The same interest shows in numerous books by Jiří Pechar (1929–), a well-known translator who first translated literature (including Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* or Huysmans’s *Against the Grain*), but later turned to philosophy, with translations of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition*, and other works. His studies provide good and concise information on the topics he chooses, although they rarely go beyond mere summary. However, it needs to be mentioned that Pechar has filled a considerable gap by writing a book on psychoanalysis, overcoming at least partly the absence of interest in this domain that Czech philosophers have generally manifested.

42. *Ibid.*, 133.

Even with nearly twenty years of hindsight, it is not easy to sum up the development that Czech philosophy has undergone after the major political change in 1989. It would be, of course, naive to believe that everything changed all at once and that a fully developed philosophical culture has emerged out of nowhere. A long and often painful reorganization of philosophy departments was needed, which lasted for many years and was not often devoid of personal conflicts. People like Sobotka or Pešek became highly respected experts on German idealism (Pešek died in 2003 and Sobotka still teaches at Charles University in Prague). Rezek started to teach at the philosophy department at the Faculty of Arts in Prague, but not content with the level on which philosophy was taught, he left in the mid-1990s and founded his own publishing house, which specializes in ancient philosophy (Plotinus, Aristotle, and others). Petříček and Kouba have worked in the same department and at the Center for Phenomenological Research in Prague since the early 1990s and are still its most active members. Zdeněk Pinc (1945–), a former student of Patočka, and Jan Sokol (1936–), Patočka’s son-in-law, a former minister of education and the presidential candidate of the Social Democratic party in 2003, founded the Faculty of Humanities at Charles University, conceived as a more liberal counterpoint of the Faculty of Humanities. Philosophy was an integral part of the curriculum and, as time progressed, a specific group of philosophers emerged at the Faculty of Arts, constituting a philosophical school oriented mainly toward Hegel and Heidegger.

It is obvious that a domain in which Czech philosophy was lacking was translation. Officially published translations from modern continental philosophy were extremely rare before 1989. There were only three books by Husserl (*Cartesian Meditations, The Crisis* and *The Lectures on Internal Time Consciousness*, all published in a relatively liberal period in the late 1960s), a rather poor translation of a selection of essays by Merleau-Ponty (*Eye and Mind and Other Essays*), some works by Sartre, Max Scheler, Walter Benjamin, Claude Lévi-Strauss and a few others (*The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, for example). Even though the efforts to translate contemporary philosophy have been considerable since the beginning of the 1990s (we have already mentioned Petříček’s translation of Derrida and others, and Pechar’s translation of Lyotard and Wittgenstein), it was not until the second half of the decade that twentieth-century philosophy was systematically introduced. Even today, the state of things is far from satisfactory, given the limited number of translators capable of translating difficult philosophical texts. Nonetheless, very few important modern European thinkers remain who have not been translated at all into Czech. OIKOYMENH, the publishing house mentioned in the introduction, became an official enterprise and has played a considerable role in this respect, as well as *Filosofický*
Časopis (The philosophical review), which abandoned its former Marxist orientation and became the most important review publishing both translations and original contributions. Among other publishers, there was a publishing house – Herrmann a synové – oriented especially toward French thought (Foucault, Deleuze, Bataille, Blanchot, and others), and filosofia, publishing both phenomenology and analytic philosophy.

The time period between 1989 and 1995 may be considered a transitory one, dominated by a general feeling that there is much to be done and by intense, although sometimes a little chaotic, efforts to catch up on what had been missed during the communist era. The early 1990s also marks the advent of a new generation of younger philosophers, often trained abroad and equipped with a remarkable technical knowledge of the history of philosophy. Filip Karfík (1963–), a former classical philologist, works on both Patočka and ancient philosophy. Lenka Karfíková (1963–) became a professor of theology and is an expert on medieval thought. Karel Thein (1961–) studied in Paris under Derrida in the early 1990s and wrote his thesis on Plato in French. His interests range from Plato and the Stoics to Foucault and Benjamin, literature, and film studies. Karel Novotný (1964–) started working on Kant and Fichte, but later turned to Patočka and French phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Marion). Jindřich Karásek (1963–) is an accomplished Kant expert. Sobotka's student Milan Znoj (1952–) became an authority in the field of political philosophy, and Ladislav Benyovszky (1958–), who studied under Pešek, continues his work on Heidegger and German idealism. It is also thanks to them – and many others – that Czech philosophy has overcome its fragmentary and dispersed character and become a disciplined area of research in the realms of both the history of philosophy and systematic philosophy.
The second generation of Frankfurt School critical theory was largely defined by one towering figure – Jürgen Habermas – and his reorientation of critical theory around issues of normative justification, the pragmatics of language use, and, more recently, the discourse theory of morality, law, and politics. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that members of the third generation of critical theory have devoted a good deal of time and attention to developing criticisms of Habermas’s work. As valuable and important as such critical perspectives are, the third generation has not rested content with this project. Rather, they have used these critiques as a springboard for the development of their own, original work in critical theory. This essay offers an overview of the main themes of three major third generation critical theorists – Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, and Axel Honneth – in each case, situating their work vis-à-vis their critical engagements with Habermas and with each other.

*1. For a discussion of Habermas and other members of the second generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists, see the essays by Christopher F. Zurn and James Swindal in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*


Nancy Fraser (May 20, 1947–; born in Baltimore, Maryland) received a BA in philosophy from Bryn Mawr College (1969) and a PhD in philosophy from the City University in New York (1980). Her influences include Arendt, Foucault, Habermas, and Marx, and she has held
A distinctive feature of the critical theory tradition is its dual emphasis on the project of critiquing actually existing societies (in contrast to analytic political philosophy, which concentrates on the project of ideal theory) and on the location of progressive, context-transcending potentials for change within the existing societies it aims to critique (a point that is often thought to set it at odds with the major figures of poststructuralism, although this point is debatable). In light of this dual emphasis, it is especially important to understand the project of third generation critical theory in terms of how it is shaped by and responds to its social, political, cultural, and historical context. The figures under consideration here were born in the middle of the twentieth century, which means that they came of age as intellectuals against the backdrop of the massive social and cultural upheaval that began in May 1968. As a result, their work has been profoundly shaped by the so-called new social movements of the 1970s. More recently, they have faced the fall of soviet communism and the resulting exhaustion of left-wing utopian energies, the accelerating pace of globalization, and the continual damage wrought by capitalism in its contemporary, neoliberal, globalized form. True to the critical theory tradition, these thinkers are not only shaped by these historical developments, but they continually reflect explicitly on such developments, and strive to develop critical-theoretical tools that can illuminate both the chief dangers of the present moment and the immanent potentials for progressive transformation of it.

There is an inherent difficulty in any attempt to identify a “generation” of thinkers. Moreover, it may be surprising to some readers that two of the three figures identified here as representative of the third generation are not German appointments at the University of Georgia (1980–82), Northwestern University (1982–95), and the New School (1995– ).

Axel Honneth (July 18, 1949–; born in Essen, Federal Republic of Germany) studied philosophy, sociology, and German literature at the Universities of Bonn and Bochum (1969–74), Promotion (~PhD) from the Free University Berlin (1982); and habilitation from the JW Goethe University, Frankfurt (1990). His influences include Adorno, Foucault, Habermas, Hegel, Horkheimer, and George Herbert Mead, and he has held appointments at the Free University of Berlin (1992–96), JW Goethe University, Frankfurt (1996– ), and as Director at the University of Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (2001– ).

3. For Fraser’s comments on the relationship between her activism and her philosophical work, see her Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 1–13. For Benhabib’s views on her work in relation to the new social movements, see the interview with her at: http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people4/Benhabib/benhabib-con0.html (accessed May 2010).

4. On this point, see Joel Anderson’s fine essay “The ‘Third Generation’ of the Frankfurt School,” Intellectual History Newsletter 22 (2000); online at www.phil.uu.nl/~joel/research/publications/3rdGeneration.htm (accessed May 2010). Anderson confines the bulk of his discussion to Honneth, whose work he rightly takes to be representative of the third generation in Germany.
(although both Benhabib and Fraser certainly do situate their work with respect to the German critical theory tradition). To be sure, there are many important third generation critical theorists from both sides of the Atlantic whose work could arguably also be included here. Nevertheless, one could, I think, make a strong case that the work of Benhabib, Fraser, and Honneth is both more original and systematic than that of many of their contemporaries and also is the most familiar to the English-speaking philosophical audience for a volume such as this one. This, in turn, would allow one to make the observation that with the rise of the third generation the center of gravity of critical theory is no longer exclusively in Frankfurt. Critical theory is now thriving at least as much outside Germany as within it.

Because these theorists have developed their ideas largely in and through conversation with one another, I have chosen to organize this discussion thematically, rather than by individual thinker. I begin in the first two sections by discussing two strands of the third generation’s critique of Habermas and the ways in which these criticisms have served as the basis for the development of the third generation’s own distinctive version of critical theory. The first section focuses on Hegelian themes, in particular on Benhabib’s and Honneth’s efforts to contextualize and historicize the insights of Habermas’s communicative action paradigm. The second section focuses on the Foucaultian theme of the role of power in the lifeworld, articulated primarily by Honneth but also by Fraser, and also considers the third generation’s encounter with Foucaultian post-structuralism more broadly. Subsequent sections take up the third generation’s conceptualizations of subjectivity and selfhood and their attempts to rethink the postsocialist condition around the notions of recognition and redistribution. By way of a conclusion, in the final section I consider an emerging trend in third generation critical theory by briefly discussing Benhabib and Fraser’s recent work on cosmopolitanism and global justice.

I. CRITICAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH HABERMAS: HEGELIAN THEMES

Although each of the thinkers considered here has his or her own specific and detailed critique of Habermas, at least two common themes emerge from these critical engagements. The first set of criticisms, which I discuss in this section, concerns the overly rational, procedural, and formal character of his understanding of ethics and morality. The second set, which I turn to in the next section, concerns his inadequate conceptualization of power, particularly as it

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5. For a comprehensive list of both German and American third generation critical theorists, see Anderson, “The ‘Third Generation’ of the Frankfurt School.”
functions in the lifeworld. In articulating these criticisms, the third generation relies on certain Hegelian and Foucaultian themes that Habermas’s work arguably represses.

Benhabib’s critical appropriation of Habermas, for instance, is explicitly grounded in a resuscitation of Hegel’s critique of Kant’s ethics. Although Benhabib does not go so far as to argue for a Hegelian or Aristotelian alternative to discourse ethics, she does advance a more Hegelian version of discourse ethics, one that stresses the contextual, the ethical, the particular, and the concrete as crucial aspects of moral-political deliberation. In so doing, Benhabib develops an interactive version of universalism that is more attentive than is Habermas to the ineliminable role of particularity in our ethical and political lives.

Benhabib’s central criticism of Habermas, articulated in her first book, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, is that, notwithstanding Habermas’s attempts to avoid the empty formalism of Kant’s moral theory, his theory of communicative action and his communicative ethics remain excessively and problematically rationalist. The general thrust of Benhabib’s critical engagement with Habermas and of her own critical theory is the development of a more contextualized and concretized version of critical theory. More specifically, Benhabib criticizes the status of the idealizations that form the normative core of Habermas’s moral-political universalism. Indeed, Benhabib maintains that Habermas’s “program of a strong justification of communicative ethics cannot succeed” (CNU 263). As she puts it:

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7. In this respect, her project is similar to that of Thomas McCarthy, who has also developed a more contextualized and pragmatic version of Habermasian critical theory in works such as *Ideals and Illusions: On Deconstruction and Reconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory*; and (with David Hoy) *Critical Theory*. I discuss McCarthy’s work in more detail in my *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), ch. 6.

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are “irreversible” in that the future we would like to see can only be realized by fulfilling their still unexhausted potential. (CNU 279)

In addition to this critique of the status of Habermas’s normative idealizations, Benhabib is also critical of his notion of autonomy. Here, once again, the central point is that Habermas falls into “a certain rationalistic fallacy of the Kantian sort, in that it ignores the contingent, historical, and affective circumstances which made individuals adopt a universalist-ethical standpoint in the first place” (CNU 298). In other words, Habermas’s allegedly purely formal accounts of universal pragmatics and of the postconventional self necessarily have “a cultural-historical content built into them” (CNU 306). This does not mean that Benhabib thinks we should give them up. On the contrary, Benhabib is quite clear that she shares the normative presuppositions of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity that she claims are implicit in Habermas’s idealizations. But she does think we should advance more modest claims about their status than does Habermas. As Benhabib puts it, our commitment to such norms “is not a consequence of conceptual analysis alone; rather, it reflects the commitments of a moral philosophy as practiced by individuals who are themselves members of a culture that cherishes universalism” (CNU 306).

This critique of Habermas leads Benhabib, in *Situating the Self* (1992), to attempt to develop a “post-Enlightenment defense of universalism,” one that is “interactive not legislative, cognizant of gender difference not gender blind, contextually sensitive and not situation indifferent” (STS 3). Benhabib delineates three steps that are involved in developing such an interactive universalism. First, following Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, Benhabib offers a discursive and communicative, rather than substantive, conception of rationality. Second, she understands subjects of reason as “finite, embodied and fragile creatures, and not disembodied cogitos or abstract unities of transcendental apperception to which may belong one or more bodies” (STS 5). Third, because she regards reason itself as “the contingent achievement of linguistically socialized, finite and embodied creatures,” Benhabib reformulates the moral point of view as “the contingent achievement of an interactive form of rationality rather than as the timeless standpoint of a legislative reason” (STS 6). Even as the first aspect of Benhabib’s post-Enlightenment defense of universalism draws on Habermas for inspiration, her second and third points push beyond his discourse-ethical framework. Indeed, Benhabib claims that her aim is “to save discourse ethics from the excesses of its own rationalistic Enlightenment legacy” (STS 8). This

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involves developing the insights of communicative ethics in a more historically self-conscious way. Thus, for instance, Benhabib emphasizes that the normative principles of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity:

are our philosophical clarification of the constituents of the moral point of view from within the normative hermeneutic horizon of modernity. These principles are neither the only allowable interpretation of the formal constituents of the competency of postconventional moral actors nor are they unequivocal transcendental presuppositions which every rational agent, upon deep reflection, must concede to. (STS 30)

Benhabib’s universalism is not only historically self-conscious but also interactive, in that the goal of her communicative ethics is not consensus (even as a counterfactual ideal) but instead “the idea of an ongoing moral conversation” (STS 38). Thus, in her version of communicative ethics, “the emphasis now is less on rational agreement, but more on sustaining those normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement as a way of life can flourish and continue” (STS 38). Benhabib’s interactive universalism presupposes a completely open-ended model of discourse, one in which “even the presuppositions of discourse can themselves be challenged, called into question and debated” (STS 74).

In addition to offering a more historically self-conscious, interactive, and open-ended version of communicative ethics, Benhabib also aims to articulate a specifically feminist version of Habermasian critical theory. This aim is already evident in Critique, Norm, and Utopia, when she asks: “can the theory of communicative action really explain the emergence of one of the most significant social movements of our times, namely, the women’s movement?” (CNU 252). In Situating the Self, Benhabib further clarifies her feminist engagement with Habermas, arguing that one of her aims is to “engender the subject of moral reasoning, not in order to relativize moral claims to fit gender differences but to make them gender sensitive and cognizant of gender difference” (STS 8). This is part and parcel of her broader goal, which is “to situate reason and the moral self more decisively in contexts of gender and community, while insisting upon the discursive power of individuals to challenge such situatedness in the name of universalistic principles, future identities and as yet undiscovered communities” (STS 8).

A related criticism of Habermas’s excessive formal and concomitant contextualizing impulse can be found in Honneth’s work on recognition. As Honneth argues in his 1993 inaugural lecture at the Free University of Berlin, the central problematic of critical theory and what makes it distinctive as a mode of social
critique is “its attempt (which still has not been abandoned) to give the standards of critique an objective foothold in pre-theoretical praxis.”9 Whereas first-generation theorists10 located this foothold in the point of view of the proletariat, subsequent critiques of the notion of a working-class subject have rendered this strategy unworkable. As Honneth sees it, however, Habermas completely side-steps this issue when he attempts to ground the normative demands of critical theory in a pragmatic account of language use. As Honneth puts it,

the emancipatory process in which Habermas socially anchors the normative perspective of his Critical Theory in no way appears as an emancipatory process in the moral experiences of the subjects involved. They experience an impairment of what we can call their moral experiences, i.e., their “moral point of view,” not as a restriction of intuitively mastered rules of language, but as a violation of identity claims acquired in socialization.11

Honneth’s way out of this problem is to “follow Habermas’s communication paradigm more in the direction of its intersubjective, indeed sociological, presuppositions.”12 The central intersubjective presupposition of the communication paradigm is, according to Honneth, the acquisition of social recognition, which “constitutes the normative expectations connected with our entering into communicative relationships.”13

In his 1992 Habilitationsschrift, Kampf um Anerkennung, published in English as The Struggle for Recognition, Honneth locates the foothold for critique within the subjective experience of injustice that arises when one’s legitimate expectations for recognition are violated. Drawing on the writings of Hegel’s Jena period and on George Herbert Mead’s social psychology, Honneth develops a tripartite conception of social recognition. Following Hegel, Honneth delineates three primary forms of mutual recognition: love in primary (particularly familial) relationships, legal rights, and communal solidarity. Following Mead, Honneth connects these forms of mutual recognition to a social psychological account of the intersubjective development of three primary forms of

10. The first generation of Frankfurt School theorists are discussed in several essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 71.
practical self-relation: basic self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem.\textsuperscript{14} As Joel Anderson points out, “these three modes of relating practically to oneself can be acquired and maintained only intersubjectively, through relationships of mutual recognition.”\textsuperscript{15} Basic self-confidence is dependent on intact mutual recognition in loving, familial relations; self-respect is rooted in legal recognition; and self-esteem is grounded in the mutual recognition afforded by membership in a community of value. Together, these three forms of practical self-relation are constitutive of the possibility of individual autonomy. Honneth also connects these three forms of recognition and of practical self-relation to forms of disrespect: abuse and rape, which undermine basic self-confidence; denial of rights or legal exclusion, which undermine self-respect; and the denigration of culturally specific ways of life, which undermines self-esteem.\textsuperscript{16}

These forms of disrespect generate subjective feelings of humiliation and injustice that can, under the right sorts of social conditions, generate social struggles for the expansion of recognition and that serve, in Honneth’s theory, as the pretheoretical foothold for critical theory in social praxis.

In the final chapter of \textit{The Struggle for Recognition}, Honneth develops these insights in the direction of a formal conception of the good life that further signals his departure from Habermasian proceduralism.\textsuperscript{17} Unlike Habermas, who attempts to develop his normative perspective independently of an ethical-existential conception of the good life, Honneth maintains that a normatively oriented critical theory must appeal at least hypothetically to a provisional conception of the good life. Indeed, Honneth’s teleological account of the progressive expansion of the three forms of recognition through the vehicle of social struggle necessitates such a move. Unlike communitarians, such as Charles Taylor, however, Honneth does not conceive of the good life “as the expression of substantive values that constitute the \textit{ethos} of a concrete tradition-based community.”\textsuperscript{18} Rather, in an attempt to split the difference between proceduralism and communitarianism, Honneth conceives of the good life formally, in terms of “structural elements of ethical life” or “necessary conditions for individual self-realization.”\textsuperscript{19} These necessary conditions are the three forms of practical relation to self – self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem – that emerge

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Anderson, “The ‘Third Generation’ of the Frankfurt School,” 8.
\item \textsuperscript{16} See Honneth, \textit{The Struggle for Recognition}, ch. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{17} For critical discussion of this aspect of Honneth’s work, see Christopher Zurn, “Anthropology and Normativity: A Critique of Axel Honneth’s ‘Formal Conception of Ethical Life,’” \textit{Philosophy and Social Criticism} 26(1) (2000).
\item \textsuperscript{18} Honneth, \textit{The Struggle for Recognition}, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 172, 173–4.
\end{itemize}
only as a result of intact mutual recognition in the forms of love, rights, and solidarity. By rooting his normative perspective in a theory of the good life, albeit a formal one, Honneth has placed much greater emphasis on the ethical notion of self-realization than does Habermas, whose Kantianism has compelled him to endorse a razor-sharp distinction between the right and the good.20

II. CRITICAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH HABERMAS: FOUCAULTIAN THEMES

The relationship between third generation critical theory and Foucaultian poststructuralism is complex and multifaceted.21 All three of the thinkers considered here have offered trenchant – although not always fully convincing – critiques of poststructuralism. Nevertheless, Honneth and Fraser have also drawn productively – although sometimes only implicitly – on Foucaultian themes both in their critical engagements with Habermas and in the articulation of their own critical theories. Indeed, in general, the third generation distinguishes itself from Habermas by its degree of openness to the insights generated by Foucaultian poststructuralism, particularly when it comes to his analysis of power. In this section, I will start by briefly laying out the criticisms of Foucault (and the related critique of Judith Butler’s early feminist-Foucaultian work) offered by the third generation. I will then go on to consider how Honneth in particular mobilizes Foucaultian themes in his critical engagements with Habermas and in the articulation of his own critical theory.

In a series of essays originally published in the early 1980s and subsequently reprinted as the first three chapters of her first book, Unruly Practices, Nancy Fraser initiated the third generation’s critical encounter with Foucault.22 Fraser presents two main criticisms of Foucault, the first focusing on his conception of power, the second, on his critique of humanism. First, in her extremely influential essay “Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions,” Fraser argues that Foucault offers a rich and useful empirical


22. Indeed, in something of a generational inversion, Fraser’s critique of Foucault was also highly influential for Habermas’s critical engagement with Foucault in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Thus, Fraser’s work shaped both the third and second generation’s encounters with Foucault.
account of micropractices of power but remains “normatively confused” inasmuch as his work lacks “normative criteria for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable forms of power.”

Second, in her essays “Michel Foucault: A Young Conservative?” and “Foucault’s Body Language: A Posthumanist Political Rhetoric?,” Fraser argues that Foucault’s critique of humanism is unviable both because it commits the genetic fallacy and because Foucault fails to articulate a plausible alternative conception of human freedom.

In her well-known debate with Butler, Benhabib echoes some similar themes, while also bringing a new issue into focus: the problem of the subject. Although Benhabib’s initial critique of what she calls “postmodernism” ranges over a number of issues, including the postmodern critique of grand metanarratives of historical progress and Enlightenment notions of transcendent reason, it is the issue of the so-called “death of man” that takes center stage in the debate. Although Benhabib sees no problem with a weak version of the “death of man” thesis, according to which the subject is always situated in various social and linguistic practices, she rejects the strong version, which dissolves the subject into just another position in language/discourse, on the grounds that this thesis is “not compatible with the goals of feminism.”

Speaking of Butler’s Nietzschean and Foucaultian inspired notion of the gendered self, Benhabib asks:

If we are no more than the sum total of the gendered expressions we perform, is there ever any chance to stop the performance for a while, to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself? Isn’t this what the struggle over gender is all about?

In general, Benhabib diagnoses the feminist alliance with postmodernism as symptomatic of a broader “retreat from utopia” in feminist thinking.

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23. Fraser, *Unruly Practices*, 31, 33. In a more recent essay, Fraser has substantially weakened the empirical insightfulness claim, arguing that Foucault’s account of power is more suited for the Fordist world of the 1970s than it is for the post-Fordist, globalized, flexibilized world of the early twenty-first century. See Nancy Fraser, “From Discipline to Flexibilization: Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization,” in her *Scales of Justice: Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).


25. Butler’s work is the focus of an essay by Gayle Salamon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.


28. Ibid., 21.

29. Ibid., 29–30.
In her response, Butler scoffs at Benhabib’s overly simplistic characterization of postmodernism, but defends a central insight of Foucaultian poststructuralism, namely, that the subject can be both constituted by power relations and still capable of agency and resistance. Indeed, as Butler puts it, “the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked, resisted?” Fraser, in her reply to this exchange, echoes and affirms Butler’s point: pace Benhabib, “nothing in principle precludes that subjects are both culturally constructed and capable of critique.” What feminists need, according to Fraser, is “an alternative conceptualization of the subject, one that integrates Butler’s poststructuralist emphasis on construction with Benhabib’s critical-theoretical stress on critique.”

Although Benhabib has more recently shown a greater appreciation for Butler’s work on the subject, and although she has incorporated some Derridean themes in her recent work on cosmopolitanism, Benhabib has remained more steadfastly critical of poststructuralism than has either Fraser or Honneth. In this respect, Benhabib is perhaps closer to Habermas than her fellow third generation critical theorists. Honneth, by contrast, despite his critique of what he calls Foucault’s “systems-theoretical solution to the Dialectic of Enlightenment,” also relies on Foucaultian themes in his critical engagement with Habermas. In The Critique of Power, Honneth criticizes Habermas’s social-theoretical distinction between system and lifeworld on the grounds that it presents a problematically norm-free system and a problematically power-free lifeworld. In the “Afterword” to the second German edition of The Critique of Power, Honneth claims that a central question for critical social theory is “the question of how the conceptual framework of an analysis has to be laid out so that it is able to comprehend both the structures of social domination and the

30. Ibid., 46.
31. Ibid., 67.
32. Ibid., 69.
36. Fraser develops a similar critique of Habermas in her essay “What’s Critical About Critical Theory: The Case of Habermas and Gender,” although without any explicit reference to Foucault. See Fraser, Unruly Practices, ch. 6.
social resources for its practical overcoming.” Honneth’s central critique of Habermas here is that, as a result of his distinction between system and lifeworld and his insufficient attention to the role that power plays in the latter, he is incapable of fully illuminating both sides of this duality. As Honneth puts it: “the dynamic that arises in the historical development of social orders can be fully explained only by extending the sphere of communicative action to include the negative dimension of struggle.” To be sure, Honneth is likewise critical of Foucault for the inverse reason. He maintains that whereas Foucault helpfully theorizes the negative moment of social domination, he does not give an account – indeed, perhaps even denies the possibility of – the positive moment that enables the practical overcoming of domination. Still, Honneth emphasizes that the systematic aim of including Foucault in his study was “to show that the dimension of social conflict that Foucault makes central can only be invoked at the level of a social theory if it is grasped as the negative moment of a comprehensive process in the formation of social consensus.”

It is Honneth’s interest in bringing out this “negative moment” emphasized in Foucault’s theory of power that leads to his emphasis on social struggles for recognition within the lifeworld. As he puts it in the “Introduction” to The Struggle for Recognition, his account of recognition is motivated by his conclusion in The Critique of Power that “any attempt to integrate the sociatheoretical insights of Foucault’s historical work within the framework of a theory of communicative action has to rely on the concept of morally motivated struggle.” Hence, despite his criticisms of Foucault, Honneth’s critical engagement with Habermasian social theory and his own recognition-theoretical contribution to critical theory draw a great deal of inspiration from Foucault’s analysis of power.

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38. Ibid., xxviii.
39. On this point, see ibid., xxii–xxviii.
40. Ibid., xxii.
41. Honneth, The Struggle for Recognition, 1.
42. Similarly, Fraser, both in her intervention in the Benhabib–Butler debate and in essays such as “Social Criticism Without Philosophy” (coauthored with Linda Nicholson) and “A Genealogy of Dependency” (coauthored with Linda Gordon), indicates a much greater openness to the insights of poststructuralism than does Habermas, while still remaining critical of what she takes to be its normative deficits. See Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, “Social Criticism without Philosophy,” in Feminism/Postmodernism, Linda Nicholson (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 1990), 19–38; and Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, “A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the US Welfare State,” in Fraser, Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition (New York: Routledge, 1997), 121–49.
The problem of the subject is an important theme not only in the debate between Butlerian poststructuralism and Benhabibian critical theory, but also in much third generation critical theory, just as it is in twentieth-century continental philosophy as a whole. It surfaces particularly in the work of Benhabib, which articulates a narrative conception of the self, and of Honneth, whose account of recognition entails an intersubjectivist account of the subject.

Elements of Benhabib’s narrative conception of the self are evident already in her classic essay on the Gilligan–Kohlberg debate, in which she criticizes the social contract tradition for failing to realize that “the self is not a thing, a substrate, but the protagonist of a life’s tale” (STS 162), and in her critique of Butler, in which she argues that “a subjectivity that would not be structured by language, by narrative and by the symbolic structures of narrative available in a culture is unthinkable. We tell of who we are, of the ‘I’ that we are by means of a narrative.”43 Similarly, in her book on Hannah Arendt, Benhabib argues that one of Arendt’s most important contributions to twentieth-century philosophy is her idea of the web of relationships and narratives as forming the space of human appearance.44 In her recent work, Benhabib expands on these earlier insights and develops them more systematically. In The Claims of Culture, she argues that “to be and to become a self is to insert oneself into webs of interlocution; it is to know how to answer when one is addressed and to know how to address others.”45 As Benhabib notes, we are all thrown, in the Heideggerian sense, into various webs of interlocution or narrative – familial narratives, gender narratives, narratives of ethnic, racial, religious, national identity, and so forth – and “we become who we are by learning to be a conversation partner in these narratives.”46 Moreover, although we are thrown into these ongoing narratives and thus are not in a position to choose them or our interlocutors, “our agency consists in our capacity to weave out of those narratives and fragments of narratives a life story that makes sense for us, as unique individual selves.”47 We are, in other words, not just the protagonists but also the authors of our own stories.

44. Seyla Benhabib, The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt (London, Sage, 1996). In this book, Benhabib stakes out a provocative middle-ground reading of Arendt according to which she is neither a Heideggerian or Nietzschean antimodernist nor a Derridean postmodernist but instead a reluctant modernist who therefore has more in common with the Habermasian discourse ethical tradition than most commentators have assumed.
47. Ibid.
In contrast to Taylor, from whom Benhabib borrows the idea of webs of interlocution, Benhabib emphasizes the anti-essentialism of her narrative conception of the self. Because Benhabib insists that the core of the self consists not in any substantive commitments but in an ability or capacity to make sense of our lives by fitting our experiences into a coherent narrative, Benhabib arguably salvages coherence for the self without essentializing it. Moreover, Benhabib insists that she makes no strong claims about the mastery of the narrative self. We are never in complete control of our own narratives, as they must attain some degree of fit with the continually unfolding narratives of those others with whom our own life stories are inextricably intertwined.48

Honneth's intersubjectivist account of the self emerges out of his analysis of the struggle for recognition. As I discussed above, the three practical relations to self – self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem – that are made possible by intact mutual recognition – in the forms of love, rights, and solidarity – are conditions for the possibility of individual self-realization and autonomy. Honneth's intersubjectivist account of the self both overlaps with Habermas's – which also draws its inspiration from Mead49 – and departs from it, by offering a thicker and richer conception of self-realization. Honneth also departs from Habermas (and aligns himself more with first generation critical theory) by drawing extensively on the insights of psychoanalysis, in particular, the object-relations psychoanalytic theory of Donald Winnicott.50 Honneth's greater appreciation for psychoanalysis goes hand in hand with what Anderson calls a greater appreciation for the Other of Reason; as such it is conceptually related to his greater openness to the insights generated by Foucault's analysis of power.51 In his inaugural lecture at the Free University of Berlin, Honneth makes clear his dissatisfaction with the narrow focus on rationality in Habermas's work. As he puts it:

As soon as the communication paradigm is grasped not in the sense of a conception of rational understanding, but as a conception of the conditions of recognition, the critical diagnosis of the times may no longer be pressed into the narrow scheme of a theory of rationality.52

48. Benhabib also questions the mastery of the narrative self on the grounds of the psychoanalytic insight that the I is not the master of its own house. See ibid., 349.
50. For Honneth's discussion of Winnicott, see Honneth, The Struggle for Recognition, 98–106. For some remarks on the differences between Honneth and Habermas's uses of psychoanalysis, see Honneth, The Critique of Power, xxx–xxxi.
51. See Anderson, “The 'Third Generation' of the Frankfurt School.”
For Honneth, a truly critical diagnosis of the times needs to be rooted in a fuller conception of subjectivity, one that pays greater attention to the affective and recognitional aspects of our selves.

IV. RECOGNITION AND/OR REDISTRIBUTION?

The issue of how best to understand the problematic of recognition – as part of an intersubjectivist theory of the self and of the necessary conditions for ethical self-realization or as part of a broader conception of injustice that construes recognition on the model of the Weberian notion of status – is a central one in the debate between Fraser and Honneth. This debate arose out of Fraser’s 1996 Tanner Lectures, for which Honneth served as a commentator, and which grew into their coauthored book, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. However, also at stake here is the much broader question of how best to renew the tradition of critical theory in a post-Habermasian vein. As they write in their introduction, Fraser and Honneth both “believe that critique achieves both its theoretical warrant and its practical efficacy only by deploying normative concepts that are also informed by a structural understanding of contemporary society, one that can diagnose the tensions and contextualize the struggles of the present.”

In her Tanner Lectures and in her 1997 book, *Justice Interruptus*, Fraser is critical of the one-sidedness of the philosophical focus on the cultural politics of recognition, and she situates this critique in the context of what she calls the “postsocialist condition.” In the wake of the fall of communism, Fraser argues, the political and cultural landscape is characterized by an exhaustion of left-wing utopianism, a lack of clear alternatives to the present social order, a rise in recognition-based cultural politics to the relative eclipse of an economic politics of redistribution, and a resurgence of economic neoliberalism. Even worse, social and political theorists reflecting on the current landscape have taken the economic politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition to represent an either/or choice, generating what Fraser argues is a false antithesis. Failing to call this false antithesis into question amounts to evading what Fraser takes to be:

the crucial “postsocialist” tasks: first, interrogating the distinction between culture and economy; second, understanding how both

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54. See Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, “Introduction.”
work together to produce injustices; and third, figuring out how, as a prerequisite for remedying injustices, claims for recognition can be integrated with claims for redistribution in a comprehensive political project.55

Indeed, the guiding assumption of Fraser’s work of the mid- to late 1990s is “that the cultural politics of recognition ought not simply to supplant the social politics of redistribution. Rather, the two need to be integrated with one another.”56 Fraser proposes to integrate these two conceptions of politics into a two-dimensional conception of justice that encompasses redistribution and recognition. Contra Honneth, who seeks to ground the entire normative framework of critical theory in the notion of recognition, Fraser argues that we cannot fully understand the predicaments of certain oppressed groups without utilizing both of these analytical frameworks; thus, we need to combine them into a single framework of justice. Also contra Honneth, who maintains that misrecognition is unjust because it is an impediment to full individual self-realization, Fraser construes the wrong of misrecognition as being a function of its impeding some individuals from participating as a peer with others in social life. Hence, she proposes a status model of recognition according to which misrecognition is unjust because through it certain individuals or groups “are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them.”57 Fraser’s conception of justice is perspectivally dualist, encompassing both misrecognition and maldistribution as analytically distinct but practically entwined forms of injustice,58 and normatively monistic, inasmuch as it brings both types of injustice under the measure of a single normative standard. This standard, which Fraser labels the principle of parity of participation, she defines as follows: “according to this norm, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers.”59

In his reply to Fraser, Honneth underscores three aims of his recognition-based approach to critical theory. First, his approach roots critical theory in a phenomenology of the experience of injustice, as opposed to tying it to the aims and self-understandings of social movements, as does Fraser.60 Second,
third generation critical theory

contra Fraser, Honneth maintains that his recognition theory can do justice to distributional injustices, for even these “must be understood as the institutional expression of social disrespect.” On Honneth’s view, then, “distribution conflicts” are understood as “a specific kind of struggle for recognition in which the appropriate evaluation of the social contributions of individuals or groups is contested.” Third, and finally, Honneth sees the major conceptual issue as how to normatively ground critical theoretical demands for justice. Whereas Fraser attempts to ground these deontologically in her principle of parity of participation, Honneth insists that they must be grounded teleologically in a (formal) conception of the good life.

Hence, the Fraser–Honneth debate raises but leaves unresolved a number of serious questions for critical theory. What is the best pretheoretical reference point for critical theory: social movements or the subjective experience of injustice? Which is better, a dualistic or monistic framework for conceptualizing injustice? Finally, in an echo of Hegel’s critique of Kant, which should critical theory take to be prior, the right or the good? Third and subsequent generations of critical theorists continue to grapple with these and related issues in an attempt to make sense of the social, cultural and political landscape of the early twenty-first century.

V. EMERGING TRENDS IN CRITICAL THEORY:
COSMOPOLITANISM AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

However, as Fraser has argued in her more recent work, the categories of recognition and redistribution may well be insufficient to conceptualize the political conditions of an increasingly globalized, post-Westphalian world. Picking up

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demands of social movements. For further comment on the role of social movements in Fraser’s critical theory, see Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*, 11–16.


63. For Fraser’s argument to this effect, see *ibid.*, 26–48.

64. For insightful discussion of these and other sticking points in the debate, see McCarthy’s review of *Redistribution or Recognition?*, and Christopher Zurn, “Identity or Status? Struggles over ‘Recognition’ in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor,” *Constellations* 10(4) (2003).

65. For Fraser’s critique of Honneth on this point, see Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*, 201–11. For Honneth’s reply, see *ibid.*, 238–47. For further discussion of Honneth’s views on this issue, see also “The Social Dynamics of Disrespect,” 77.

66. In her more recent work, Fraser has argued in favor of expanding her framework even further, to encompass the specifically political question of representation alongside issues of recognition and redistribution. She indicates that this move may be necessary in Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*, 68. Actually achieving an expansion of this framework is the chief aim of Fraser, *Scales of Justice*. 
where her work on recognition and redistribution left off, Fraser’s recent work expands her formerly two-dimensional framework of justice into a multidimensional one that can accommodate the specifically political dimension of justice (as opposed to the economic or cultural dimensions highlighted by redistribution and recognition, respectively). Fraser’s focus now is on the issue of political representation, specifically, on the metapolitical issues of who counts as a subject of justice and how questions of the frame of justice get decided now that it no longer goes without saying that the bounded nation-state is the proper frame for matters of justice. Her framework now combines “a multidimensional social ontology with normative monism,” still relying on the norm of parity of participation, now construed in both substantive and procedural terms. Staking out a distinctive ground in the vast literature on global justice, Fraser argues for a democratization of the process by which the boundaries of political questions – issues of who is a subject of justice – are determined.

In a similar vein, Benhabib has also turned in her recent work to focus on the issue of cosmopolitan justice. As she argues in her 2004 Tanner Lectures, we are in a period of world history marked by a transition from international to cosmopolitan norms of justice. The former are binding on states or their authorized agents and only as a function of treaties or agreements between states, whereas the latter “accrue to individuals as moral and legal persons in a worldwide civil society.” This situation generates what Benhabib calls the paradox of democratic legitimacy, a paradox that arises at two levels: first, at the level of the intersection between the political sovereignty of bounded territorial states and moral universality of human rights, and second, at a level internal to democracies themselves, given that they “cannot choose the boundaries of their own membership democratically.” Benhabib attempts not to resolve but to mediate or negotiate these paradoxes through her concept of democratic iterations. Drawing inspiration from Derrida’s notion of iterability, Benhabib defines democratic iterations as “linguistic, legal, cultural and political repetitions–in-transformation, invocations that are also revocations. They not only change established understandings but also transform what passes as the valid or established view of an authoritative precedent.” In her recent work, Benhabib analyzes recent clashes over culture (including the French affair du foulard) and citizenship (including recent debates over German citizenship) and shows how, in these cases, the force of democratic iterations have pushed polities in

67. Fraser, Scales of Justice, 58.
68. Ibid., ch. 2.
69. Benhabib, Another Cosmopolitanism, 16.
70. Ibid., 35.
71. Ibid., 48.
the direction of expanding the *demos*. She also argues, *contra* communitarians, liberal nationalists, and some advocates of cosmopolitanism, for “moral universalism and cosmopolitan federalism.”

These and related issues of cosmopolitanism and global justice will no doubt be on the agenda of critical theorists for some time to come. The challenge facing critical theorists of the third and subsequent generations is to continue to craft theoretical perspectives that are capable of illuminating the main dangers and possibilities for change in the world that we now inhabit and to do so without relying for normative support on questionable notions such as the working-class subject or the allegedly context-transcendent ideals of the pragmatic presuppositions of discourse. Each of the third generation theorists discussed here has offered a unique and provocative set of answers to this challenge. Whether they are ultimately successful or not will be for future critical theorists to judge, in light of as yet unforeseen and unforeseeable developments of world history.

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Seyla Benhabib**


**Nancy Fraser**


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72. See Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, ch. 5, and *Another Cosmopolitanism*, lecture 2.

Axel Honneth


A renaissance in Spinoza studies took place in France at the end of the 1960s, which gave new impetus to the study of Spinoza’s work and continues to have a marked effect on the direction of research in the field today. The effect of this renewed interest and direction did not remain isolated to France but quickly spread across the continent. Although certain of the figures involved in this event have become rather well known in some academic circles, and their work widely read, the details of these developments and the specific texts that contributed to and sustained this new direction in research have remained largely unknown in the English-speaking world. The aim of this essay, therefore, is to provide a survey of this event, to review the background to these developments, to introduce the main protagonists – along with some of the lesser known but equally important figures – and to single out and assess the key texts, their specific focus and their contribution to the new direction in research.

One of the peculiarities of Spinoza’s philosophy is that the history of its reception has passed through a number of phases, from its predominantly “materialist” reception in the seventeenth century, when Spinozism was reputed to be a form of atheism, to its “pantheist” instantiation during the greater part of the nineteenth century, due predominantly to the Spinozism of German Romanticism. After the polemics and condemnations of the nineteenth century, a number of sympathetic engagements with Spinoza’s work began to emerge at the turn of the twentieth century in France that were intent on its explication and on promoting its comprehension. These works, however, developed only selected aspects of Spinoza’s thought, and when examining the Spinozist system as a whole, there was a propensity to revert to traditional criticisms essentially characterized by the Spinozism of German Romanticism and the substantialist metaphysics that
Hegel ascribed to Spinoza. There was, in other words, no attempt to provide a coherent and consistent account of Spinoza’s thought as a whole. After a number of years of inactivity, the 1950s–1960s witnessed a resurgence of interest in Spinoza scholarship, with research developing in several quite different directions. To begin with, there were the seminars and then the publications of both Martial Guéroult (1891–1976) and Ferdinand Alquié (1906–85), each with rather different methods and conclusions that were somewhat opposed.

Guéroult’s rigorous and systematic engagement with the *Ethics* – in his two-volume study *Spinoza I: Dieu* (1968) and *Spinoza II: L’Âme* (1974) – perfected the philological reading of Spinoza. In these works, which were devoted to studying the logical *order of reasons* that structured the system of the *Ethics*, Guéroult undertakes to demonstrate the unity and coherence of Spinoza’s work that earlier readings had missed by systematically explicating Spinoza’s arguments and reconstructing the structure or system internal to the *Ethics*. In the first volume, which discussed part I of the *Ethics*, Guéroult demonstrates the objective nature of the relation between the attributes, that is, that the attributes are really distinct from one another and yet unified as attributes of the one substance. In the second volume, which discussed part II, he explicates the deduction that necessarily proceeds from the adequate knowledge of the formal essence of the attributes to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things and thereby realizes the third kind of knowledge as it will be later defined in the *Ethics*. The critical analysis of parts I and II only touch on the broader themes of Spinoza’s metaphysics, physics, and theory of knowledge, because Guéroult is primarily concerned with examining the foundations of the *Ethics*. These themes, which are developed in the three other parts of the *Ethics*, were to be the object of a projected third and final volume on parts III–V of the *Ethics*, but Guéroult died shortly after beginning work on it.

In *Le Rationalisme de Spinoza*, Alquié examines the genesis of the system of Spinoza’s *Ethics*. His main objective is to determine whether or not Spinoza’s system lives up to its ambitions to found and justify a rationalism that is absolute. Alquié methodically demonstrates that the concepts of most importance to Spinoza are “effectively unthinkable.” One of the limitations of Alquié’s work is that his examination of Spinozist concepts is conducted from the point of view of Cartesian ideas, but this was not a limitation that Spinoza accepted. Alquié’s work therefore raises the question of how or from what point of view can Spinoza be read such that Spinozist ideas are rendered “thinkable.” It is

1. Alquié’s lectures on Spinoza at the Sorbonne during the years 1958–59 have recently been published; see Ferdinand Alquié, *Leçons sur Spinoza* (Paris: La Table ronde, 2003).
this problematic that will orient future research in Spinoza studies, and this is exemplified by the marked departure by the next generation of scholars from the Cartesian reading of Spinoza exemplified by Alquié, as they draw inspiration instead from the work of Guéroult.

Another important source of inspiration that contributed to enrich this renewal in Spinoza studies were the seminars and the work of Louis Althusser (1918–90). Althusser’s work, marked by a form of structuralism that can be compared to Guéroult, valued the importance of political thought in philosophy. In Essays in Self-Criticism, Althusser notes that his Spinozism was often mistaken for a form of structuralism. Although Althusser actually cites the importance of Spinoza to his own project in political philosophy and repeatedly draws attention to the importance of Spinoza’s philosophy for Marxism, he himself wrote very little on Spinoza. When he did, Spinoza was cast as an important figure in Althusser’s project of freeing Marxism from Hegelian idealism. The recourse to Spinoza made possible a radical critique of historicism, including Hegelianism. However this did not amount to a critique of Hegelianism per se. In France, from the 1960s on, it is from this perspective of an anti-Hegelianism, more or less generalized, that Spinoza is first brought on to the scene.

The generation of thinkers that followed Althusser, despite their own developments leading them in directions not entirely compatible with his thought, adopted the imperative of valuing political thought. One of the main characteristics that distinguishes the resurgence of interest in Spinoza in the 1960s is the attention that is given to Spinoza’s political works – the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus and Tractatus Politicus. As a result of the influence of Althusser, Spinoza’s political texts became another means of addressing some of the issues of coherence and consistency that had troubled commentator’s working on Spinoza’s metaphysics.

The main figures of this renewal in Spinoza scholarship include Alexandre Matheron, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre Macherey, Antonio Negri, Étienne Balibar and Pierre-François Moreau. Each provides a highly original attempt to think through the work and thought of Spinoza focusing on the problem of the relation between Spinoza’s metaphysical and political works. In doing so, these scholars have together irrevocably altered the direction of Spinoza scholarship today. The first generation of scholars, Matheron and Deleuze, independently developed a new ontological interpretation of Spinoza. Matheron’s work, which examines parts III–V of the Ethics, can be seen to complement Guéroult’s

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unfinished project and to extend it to Spinoza’s political work. Deleuze, on the other hand, develops this ontological interpretation into a new philosophy of power (potentia). The second generation, which includes Balibar, Macherey, and Moreau in France, poses the problem of the movement of immanence, and the fundamental theme of their work is the experience of being. There is also Negri in Italy, who sees in Spinozism the concept of a constitutive thought. Negri makes it his project to develop the political implications of such a thought. The influence of Marxism in these new readings of Spinoza is by no means universal; for example Deleuze’s work on Spinoza is not assimilable to Marxism in any direct way, and nor is Moreau’s more historiographical engagement with Spinoza. There is, however, a consensus about the close relationship between Spinoza’s metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy: so much so that his works themselves are considered to exhibit a remarkable consistency.

A new image of Spinoza is thus affirmed in the wake of the interpretive innovation of Matheron and Deleuze. These texts opened the way to a new set of readings that continued to share a concern to demonstrate the architectonic unity of his major works. The originality of a philosophy of power (potentia) and of its variations has allowed the development of a reading of Spinoza that is no longer solely post-Cartesian, neo-Stoic, or Hegelian. Spinoza now presents a philosophical position articulated between a positive ontology of immanence, a constitutive logic of the imagination, and an affirmative ethics of power (potentia).

In order to further explicate this new image of Spinozism, let us turn to the texts of those responsible for it, beginning with the texts of the first generation of Spinoza scholars in France: Matheron’s Individu et communauté chez Spinoza, published in 1969, and Deleuze’s Spinoza et le problème de l’expression, published in 1968 (although not actually made available until early 1969). Both Matheron and Deleuze cite Guéroult as a major influence on their work. Deleuze argues that:

Guéroult renewed the history of philosophy through a structural-genetic method, which he had developed well before structuralism became fashionable in other disciplines. In Guéroult’s method, a structure is defined by an order of reasons. Reasons are the differential and generative elements of the corresponding system; they are genuine philosophemes that exist only in relation to one another.5

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Deleuze hailed Guéroult’s work on Spinoza as having made possible for the first time a “genuinely scientific study of Spinozism.”

I. MATHERON

From the methodological point of view, Guéroult’s structural genetic method, particularly as employed in his book on Descartes, also functioned as an ideal model for Matheron. He had initially considered studying Spinoza because of his merit as being a precursor to Marx, but quickly came to realize that it was rather “Marx who has the great merit of being one of the successors of Spinoza in certain fields.” Matheron is one of the first to explore the conjuncture between Spinoza’s metaphysics and his politics, as was suggested by Althusser. He takes Spinoza’s politics seriously, by providing close readings of Spinoza’s political texts, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and *Tractatus Politicus*.

*Individu et communauté* opens with a definition of *conatus*, and the recognition of its foundational role in Spinoza’s ethics and politics. For Matheron, the *conatus*, or the effort by which an individual strives to persevere in its existence, is the formal element of *any* individual that unifies its material elements and is equated with its power to act. Matheron begins the first chapter with the presentation of the idea of substance as pure activity. Rather than speaking about substance as having an attribute, Matheron speaks about substance as considered from the point of view of an attribute, in order to account for the method followed by Spinoza in the first proposals of the *Ethics*. What follows is that rather than the productivity being a property unfolding from an *a priori* essence of God, Spinoza considers the existence of God, and consequently also his essence, to be genesis and productivity and nothing else. This understanding is supported by both Deleuze and Negri.

In the first part of *Individu et communauté*, Matheron outlines an analogy between the constitution of human individuality and a form of contract characteristic of political systems that he calls the “physical contract.” Drawing on

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6. Ibid., 155.
10. Ibid., 37–8.
Spinoza’s concept of the *conatus*, Matheron characterizes this analogy according to a principle of self-regulation. For Spinoza, insofar as we act, we preserve our being, and anything that produces effects consequently preserves its being, since the effects that it produces cannot contradict its nature. For example, the free human being, who lives according to reason, endeavors to produce all the effects that follow from their nature as a free human being, and because of this, they tend to preserve their nature as a free human being.

Matheron also considers political systems to be self-regulating systems. The various models of self-regulation are based on the various ways that a mode strives for its preservation. There is a static self-preservation where the identical is reproduced, and there is a dynamic self-preservation where reproduction is achieved each time by rising to a higher level or degree of power (*potentia*). It is the same for individuals: there are those individuals who are preserved in a strict sense, in an identical way, and others who are preserved while developing and by increasing their productivity. Once adequate ideas start to play a predominant role in our mind, it is this second form of self-regulation that is put into play. As far as political systems are concerned, the Hebrew State would be a model of the former (static identity), and the States of the *Tractatus Politicus* – monarchy, aristocracy, democracy – a model of the latter (dynamic identity).

Matheron maintains that the whole domain of ethics could therefore be determined independently of the question of the preservation of identities, and instead in relation to the increase and decrease of the different degrees of an individual’s power (*potentia*) to exist and act that result from their encounters. From the concept of the individual, the central concept that produces creative effects is the principle of the imitation of affects. It belongs to the essence of the human individual to be capable of the imitation of affects and thus of living in interaction with others. It is by means of this imitation of others that human individuals can together form a political individual. The question of the passions, from the point of view of their political productivity, is therefore central to Matheron’s work.

On the basis of the logic of the imitation of affects, Matheron talks about the political productivity of indignation. The subjects of a corrupt sovereign or tyrant would gather against him under the influence of indignation. This would follow a process similar to that of the social contract; however, it would be determined rather by a “physical contract.” Matheron draws on the *Tractatus Politicus* to reconstitute the theoretical genesis of political society independently of a social contract and the rational calculation of utility. Matheron considers the operation of the physical contract by means of the passion of indignation to be possible because, in a hypothetical state of nature, and insofar as men are able to experience indignation, there would never simply be one human being fighting to dominate another, or to steal their possessions. There would always be others
who to some extent would intervene or “meddle in what doesn’t concern them.” According to the logic of the imitation of the affects, they take sides and experience indignation against the adversary. Matheron maintains that ultimately, without any calculation or social contract, an embryonic political society will be formed.

It is, however, necessary not to confuse the affect of indignation and that to which it eventually leads, if the final result is positive. Such a result, which is never guaranteed, always comes from something other than indignation. What is required are positive affects such as enthusiasm for freedom and justice, along with favorable historical and institutional conditions, together with much reflection.11

Once deployed, indignation cannot be extinguished in a society. Matheron characterizes it as a kind of original defect or flaw of political society – the original sin of the state – that can only be neutralized in varying degrees. The constitutions of the Tractatus Politicus attempt to motivate their citizens by positive feelings that limit indignation to the smallest possible role in society. This is achieved by transforming it into an abstracted indignation, directed no longer against specific people, but rather against those who deserve to be punished “in general,” whoever they may be.

Matheron’s reading of Spinoza remains today one of the major references for researchers in Spinoza studies in France. Although those who have recently published works on Spinoza all have rather different theses, they are always within the framework that has been defined by Matheron’s work.

II. DELEUZE

According to the reading of Spinoza that Deleuze12 presents in Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza, Spinoza’s philosophy should not be represented as a moment that can be simply subsumed and sublated within the dialectical progression of the history of philosophy, as it is figured by Hegel in the Science of Logic, but rather should be considered as providing an alternative point of view for the development of a philosophy that overcomes Hegelian idealism.13 Indeed, Deleuze demonstrates, by means of Spinoza, that a more complex philosophy antedates Hegel’s, which cannot be supplanted by it. Spinoza therefore becomes a significant figure in Deleuze’s project of renewing the history of philosophy by

13. For a further explication of Hegel’s reading of Spinoza, see the following section on Macherey.
tracing an alternative lineage that challenges the Hegelian concept of the history of philosophy determined by the dialectical logic, and that culminates in the construction of a philosophy of difference. The problem that orients Deleuze's reading of Spinoza is the concept of expression. The first occurrence of the form of the verb *exprimere* that appears in the *Ethics* is in EID6:15 “By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence.” Deleuze argues that, rather than being a definition of substance, Spinoza here begins by characterizing the act of expressing or of being expressed. Deleuze considers Spinoza to have understood and explained expression in terms of the dynamic constitution and production of being, which is what actually constitutes reality.

The strategy of reading the *Ethics* as determined according to the logic of expression marks not only the originality of Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza, but also one of the points where Deleuze can be considered to depart from the Hegelian and Cartesian Spinoza familiar to Spinoza studies. Rather than reading the philosophy of Spinoza either solely in relation to Descartes, or simply as one stage in the dialectical progression of the history of philosophy, Deleuze traces an alternative lineage in the history of philosophy that expresses the convergence between Spinoza's ontology, the mathematics of Leibniz, specifically his differential calculus, and the metaphysics of Duns Scotus, in particular the concepts of formal distinction, the univocity of being, and individuality. Deleuze does not read Spinoza as a Scotist, but rather, by reading Scotus alongside Spinoza, he examines Spinoza's reformulation of these Scotist concepts in order to develop those aspects of Spinoza's philosophy that are specifically anti-Cartesian. This anti-Cartesian reading of Spinoza provides the framework for the development of a reading of Spinoza that challenges the Hegelian concept of the dialectical progression of the history of philosophy.

Deleuze considers Spinoza's *Ethics* to have given expression to the concept of individuality, whose themes can be found scattered among several other authors

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15. Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, Definition 6. The following conventional abbreviated notation will be used when referring to Spinoza's *Ethics*: EI for *Ethics*, Part I (roman numerals refer to the parts of the *Ethics*); A for axiom; C for corollary; D for demonstration (or definition if followed by an Arabic numeral); L for lemma; Post. for postulate; P for proposition; S for scholium (Arabic numerals denote the lemma, proposition or scholium number); and, Ap for appendix. Thus EIP8S2 or *Ethics*, I, P8S2 refer to *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 8, Scholium 2. Citations from the *Ethics* are quoted from *The Collected Works of Spinoza, Volume I*, Edwin M. Curley (trans.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
of the seventeenth century, most notably Duns Scotus. In relation to the concept of individuality, the Hegelian categories of quantity, quality, and relation, which articulate differences in the distances or dimensions of things (quantity), in their nature (quality), and in their order (relation), are considered by Deleuze to be antedated by the three different dimensions of the individual as presented by Spinoza, namely relation, power (quantity), and mode (quality). The individual is characterized as relation insofar as there is a composition of individuals in relation to one another, or among themselves. Deleuze maintains that it is the highest exercise of the imagination, the point where it inspires understanding, to have bodies or individuals meet according to composable relationships: both the physical composition of bodies and the political constitution of humans. Thus the importance of Spinoza’s theory of common notions, which Deleuze considers to be a cornerstone of the *Ethics*. Deleuze maintains that for Spinoza, to think adequate ideas is not a natural faculty: it is rather a discovery, the product of an encounter. The form of the truth is therefore not given, but is rather obtained by experimentation. It is by means of developing common notions that we gain knowledge. In practice, this involves the experimental organization of ethical encounters: those encounters that allow us to understand the conditions of our knowledge, of our immanent thought. The object of this immanent thought is the body, understood as the product of its engagements with other bodies, ethical or adequate engagements that are experienced as affects, and are expressed by the individual’s power (*potentia*) to act.18

The characterization of the individual as power (*potentia*) indicates the individual’s capacity to compose new relations with other individuals. The concept of *potentia* – translated by the concept of power as force or capacity – is different from that of *potestas* – translated by power in the juridico-political sense of the term19 – insofar as it expresses that which an individual body can do, and which is verified by joy. Composition therefore refers not only to the characteristic relations between individuals, but also to the capacity or potential to create these kinds of relations. With the aid of chapter XVI of Spinoza’s *Tractatus*


19. Guéroult is one of the first to demonstrate the importance of this distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* in Spinoza’s *Ethics*; see Martial Guéroult, *Spinoza I: Dieu (Éthique, I)* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), 387–9. It is later taken up by Antonio Negri, who offers a thorough examination of the social and political implications of this distinction in relation to Spinoza’s work as a whole. I have followed Michael Hardt’s suggestion in the “Translator’s Preface” to Negri’s *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) to “make the distinction nominally through capitalization, rendering *potestas* as ‘Power’ and *potentia* as ‘power’ and including the Latin terms in brackets where there might be confusion” (*ibid.*, xii).
Theologico-Politicus, Deleuze describes an ethical world where differences in power (potentia) are the sole principle of discrimination.

III. MACHEREY

Pierre Macherey’s Hegel ou Spinoza, which appeared in 1979, is regarded as the definitive text that sets the record straight in regard to Hegel’s reading of Spinoza as presented in The History of Philosophy and The Science of Logic. Macherey maintains that the position that Spinoza is given in the process of the development of philosophical thought by Hegel conditions the very interpretation that Hegel provides of his work.20

The question of whether or not one can find a dialectic operating in the Ethics is one of the defining problematics that Macherey brings to bear on Hegel’s reading of Spinoza. He argues that Hegel transposes the Ethics by using the notions of opposition and contradiction, which are evidently not those of Spinoza, “implicitly making the dialectic, in the Hegelian sense, intervene” in the Spinozist system.21 The simple negation that Hegel locates in the Ethics in this way serves to position the philosophy of Spinoza as one moment in the linear progression of the history of philosophy that is determined according to the Hegelian dialectical logic.22 Macherey considers such a logic to be “manifestly absent” from Spinoza’s work; he suggests rather that “it is Spinoza who constitutes the real alternative to the Hegelian philosophy.”23 What Macherey proposes is “to rethink the dialectic, starting with Spinoza”,24 such a project would require responding to the question of whether or not a concept of historical contradiction free from dialectical negativity is able to be determined in relation to Spinoza.

Hegel argues in The History of Philosophy that, in carrying the Cartesian system to its “furthest logical conclusions,” Spinoza actually sets aside the dualism inherent in that system.25 However, by reducing the attributes to external forms of reflection, of which only two are perceived, Hegel reinstalls in substance “a hidden duality.” “The unity of substance is,” for Hegel, “both resolved and

23. Macherey, Hegel ou Spinoza, 12.
24. Ibid.
undone in the distinction of thought and extension.” This allows Hegel “to rediscover Descartes in Spinoza.” Hegel considers Spinoza to remain constrained by “the same problem of the relation of two distinct entities, between which it is necessary to establish the conditions of an agreement.” “In this sense, Hegel can say that Spinozism is a failed effort to go beyond the limits of Cartesianism.”

Insofar as Hegel’s reading of Spinoza set the tenor of the reception of Spinoza in the shadow of Descartes, it has thereby become one of the most influential interpretations of Spinoza.

This controversy between Hegel and Spinoza turns around the question of whether the attribute, as defined by Spinoza (EID4), is “attributed” to substance by an intellect as a subjective representation, or whether it should rather be considered as belonging to the objective reality of substance. In book two of the Science of Logic, Hegel offers a subjectivist interpretation of EID4. He argues that despite his conception of a unitary absolute substance to which thought is immanent, Spinoza still implicitly appeals to a form of thought that is opposed to any conceivable form of thought found within substance.

Macherey develops an alternative to this Hegelian interpretation, according to which the attributes are understood to be really distinct and the form of understanding implied in this definition, which Hegel construes as an abstract external intellect, can be conceived as an understanding that is immanent to substance. Hegel’s error, Macherey contends, consists in having posed the distinction of the attributes in a relation of opposition. The Spinozist thesis of “an infinity of attributes” (EID6) allows this Hegelian complication to be avoided. Hegel excludes this thesis by retaining only two opposing attributes. The reciprocal irreducibility of the infinite number of infinite attributes, which is the positive expression of infinite substance, is, according to Macherey, “perfectly coherent with their [unity] in substance.” According to Macherey, the attribute belongs to the objective reality of substance, as a positive expression, and therefore as a constitutive form, of substance.

Spinozist thought represents “the positive sign of an anticipated resistance” to the idealism of the Hegelian dialectic. The “true question” that frames Hegel ou Spinoza for Macherey then becomes “what is the limit which separates an idealist dialectic from a materialist dialectic?” Is a Spinozist corrective to the Marxist dialectic, which would consist of a Marxism purged of all Hegelian elements, conceivable? By examining Hegel’s problematic reading of Spinoza, Macherey

29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
demonstrates that Spinoza eludes the grasp of the dialectical progression of the history of philosophy and thereby restores to the history of philosophy, and also to Marxism, what is valuable in Spinoza as an alternative to Hegel.

IV. NEGRI

The publication of Antonio Negri’s *The Savage Anomaly* in 1981, and of the French translation, which appeared the following year with no less than three separate prefaces by the leading figures in French Spinoza scholarship (Deleuze, Macherey, and Matheron), provoked vigorous debate in Spinozist circles. Negri moves beyond the textual analysis that characterizes the French Spinozists to a consideration of the historical and political context of Spinoza’s philosophical and political writing. Indeed, Negri, more so than his French counterparts, can be seen to pursue the concerns raised by Althusser by developing his hypotheses above all on the terrain of politics.

Negri considers the rediscovery of Spinoza at the end of the 1960s to open a series of fundamental problems associated with the definition of contemporary materialism, which relate to ontology, ethics, and politics. Negri proposes Spinoza as the philosopher of materialism, and by materialism he means the radical operation that allows the analysis of the world according to the real constitution of its power (*potentia*).

In political philosophy, Spinoza is often presented as belonging to the traditional legal lineage, the sovereign line that runs from Hobbes via Rousseau and Kant to Hegel, who give the state a specific dignity and legitimacy by contrasting it with society. This is not the case according to Negri, who recasts Spinoza as representing the linchpin of an antilegalist tradition that begins with Machiavelli and leads to Marx, and is opposed to the hegemony of the tradition of modern political thought. Negri’s thesis is that Spinoza’s theory of state and law is based on the ontological productivity of the multitude as the very agent of politics.

The force of Negri’s work lies in his identification of Spinoza as the first philosopher to see society as “constituted” by the power of the masses or the multitude (*multitudo*). “The *multitudo* is now no longer a negative condition but the positive premise of the self-constitution of right.” Negri maintains that the *multitudo*, a term that rarely appears in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and only once in the *Ethics*, is absolutely central to Spinoza’s *Tractatus Politicus*. Negri proposes a reading of Spinoza that pits a politics of the multitude against state domination. This culminates in a radically constitutive conception of democracy, which is the expression of the multitude without representation.

Negri argues that Spinoza founds his new concept of human existence on the
dynamic of desire, as an expression of potentia, or natural power, which escapes
the mediation imposed by the artificial order of potestas, which is a Power in
the juridico-political sense of the term. He takes the philological distinction
between potestas and potentia for granted and considers the problem instead as
a philosophical and political issue that affords a new perspective on Spinoza’s
work. Negri seeks to demonstrate how such a Spinozist perspective would afford
a richer understanding of the nature of power (potentia) and thereby provide
new possibilities for contemporary political theory and practice.\textsuperscript{32}

Negri argues that Spinoza’s philosophy can be divided into two parts or
periods, which he calls the first and the second foundations of Spinoza’s meta-
physics. The “first foundation,” which culminates in the first two parts of the
Ethics (I–II), attempts to synthesize the pantheism of the Spinoza circle, what
Negri characterizes as the milieu in which Spinoza’s early work was produced,
by developing a substantialist ontology to its extreme limit. Negri maintains
that this largely conforms to the neo-Platonic utopian idealism that had domi-
nated much of the Renaissance. He argues that it is owing to the limits of
utopian thought that the problems of substantial constitution characteristic of
Spinoza’s first foundation cannot be resolved, except by resorting to idealism
and asceticism.

The break from the first foundation is effected by the Tractatus Theologico-
Politicus, which Negri considers to play an extraordinarily important role in
the history of the development of Spinoza’s thought. Spinoza interrupted the
composition of the Ethics in 1665, and began work on the Theologico-Political
Treatise (1670) before returning to complete the Ethics between 1670 and 1675.
The Tractatus Theologico-Politicus exhibits a tension between a juridical ideology
of the social contract and a recognition of the power (potentia) (and simultane-
ously the right) of the multitude. Negri maintains that in the final chapters of
the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Spinoza makes the decisive move in rejecting
the utopia of ideal and substantial constitution and abandoning the problem of
the dialectical mediation of the social contract, in order to reorient his work
towards a conception of ontological “constitution” or of a physical and dynamic
“composition.” This move in Spinoza’s work completely renews the question of
the relation between the individual and the community.

The structural feature of the system of the Ethics that Negri identifies as deter-
mining the separation of the first two parts of the Ethics (I–II) from the last
three parts (III–V), and therefore of the first from the second foundation, is the
role of the attributes in Spinoza’s thought. Negri makes the same interpretation
of the attributes as Hegel. However, in doing so, they each come to opposing

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., xii.
conclusions about the role of the attributes in Spinoza’s thought. Rather than concluding that this amounts to the insufficiency of the Spinozist point of view of philosophy, as Hegel does, Negri identifies the doctrine of the attributes with the first foundation, and argues that the tensions in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* led to the necessity of overcoming this point of view. He maintains that the attributes start to resemble simple irrelevant contours within the framework of Spinoza’s ontology. Negri dismisses the real, objective explication of the notion of attribute, and opts instead for their removal from the system entirely. By doing so, Negri splits the Spinozist perspective in two: into a purely intellectual, ascetic project (corresponding to the first foundation) on the one hand, and a materialist project (corresponding to the second foundation) on the other. Dividing Spinoza’s major work in two in this way is considered to be a highly controversial move among scholars working in the field of Spinoza studies.\(^{33}\)

This hypothesis, however, is necessary in order for Negri to be able to characterize Spinoza as a materialist. In several later essays, Negri acknowledges that the distinction between the first and second foundations of Spinoza’s metaphysics in the *Savage Anomaly* was overstated, but he nevertheless maintains it as an operative distinction in his own work.\(^{34}\)

The philosophical tensions in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* – the problem of mediation, both in the doctrine of the attributes and of the contract – find their resolution in the materialism of the mature Spinoza (parts III–V of the *Ethics*, together with the unfinished *Tractatus Politicus*), which Negri considers to be a revolutionary materialism based on the constitutive power of the multitude. Negri characterizes the metaphysics of Spinoza’s second foundation as a dynamic transformative ontology, which is “founded on the spontaneity of needs and organized by the collective imagination.”\(^{35}\)

With these arguments Negri hopes to have demonstrated the central role of politics in Spinoza’s philosophy. Indeed he maintains that Spinoza’s thought is an example of how politics intervenes “in” philosophy, that is, from the interior, as distinct from “on” philosophy, from the outside. The enduring point that Negri picks up from the French Spinozists and develops to its logical extreme is that the *Ethics*, despite its manifest content, is already inhabited by a political preoccupation, even if this remains relatively unspoken. This preoccupation, he maintains, allows it to overcome the limits imposed by its initial problematic.

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In *Spinoza and Politics*, Balibar continues the line of investigation established by his recent colleagues in French Spinoza studies, advocating the inseparability of Spinoza’s metaphysics from his politics. However, Balibar begins with Spinoza’s political works and from this starting-point aims to produce a coherent account of Spinoza’s work as a whole. The result is a more rigorous engagement with the Althusserian problematic of the conjuncture between Spinoza’s metaphysics and his politics. Like Negri, he maintains that each of Spinoza’s texts should be understood as engagements with specific historical, political, and philosophical developments. However, Balibar investigates in far greater detail than earlier commentators the political and historical developments of the Dutch Republic in the latter half of the seventeenth century. He characterizes Spinoza’s political works as a working through of the conflicts constitutive of liberal political theory. He argues that “the TTP could be seen as one great negative argument, a *reductio ad absurdum*.”

36 In the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza announces that right is coextensive with power (*potentia*), and that “if the rights-powers of individuals do not combine harmoniously, civil society will be destroyed.” Balibar argues that this is “why men most often establish and respect rules by which their individual powers are combined.”

The most effective rule is that specified in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, which advocates the total freedom of expression, limited only (but rigorously) by the need to guarantee obedience to the law (TTP: XX). The problem of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is how to establish a state that can take advantage of the whole active potential of all its citizens, while at the same time securing their freedom of thought, the only one of their rights that Spinoza considers to be inalienable.

For Balibar, as a result of the political developments in the Netherlands after 1672, Spinoza’s interest in the problem of freedom in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is attenuated in favor of the problem of security in the *Tractatus Politicus*. Balibar argues that this is reflected in the latter parts of the *Ethics*, by the tension between the affective, or passional, and the rational grounds for “sociability” (EIVP37D). As Balibar argues, reason, for Spinoza, does not need to master or transcend the affects or emotions in order to be effective. Instead, the traditional opposition between reason and the emotions is displaced by Spinoza with the difference between active and passive affects. While active affects increase the power of the body to act and simultaneously the power of

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37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
the mind to think, passive affects or passions diminish our power to think and to act. The struggle to increase our power to act, “far from pitting us against [other] individuals, as if power were a possession to be fought over, leads us to unite with them to increase our power.”39 This marks the emergence of the multitude or mass on the political stage. It is in the *Tractatus Politicus* that Spinoza takes his postulates concerning power in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* to their logical conclusions. In the *Tractatus Politicus*, the idea of a social contract is no longer one of the foundations of the state. In its place Spinoza offers a description of the process by which individuals with their natural right, that is, their power (*potentia*), come together to create “a collective individual, that is, the State as an individual of individuals.”40 Balibar maintains that “this collective individual has a ‘body,’ which is produced by the combination of the bodies of each and every one” of the individuals of which it is composed. And, in conformity with Spinoza’s metaphysics, he insists the there is an *idea* of this body. This idea is the representation of the body either in the imagination, as “the expression of the collective passions,” or in reason, as “the condition of effective decision (that is, government).”41

The inquiry into the conditions of freedom in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is extended in the *Tractatus Politicus* to the question of how it can be guaranteed under different types of political regime. The security of the citizens of a state from internal conflict, which Spinoza considers to be the greatest threat to the body politic, is guaranteed only “when it is able to constitute itself as a stable individuality.”42 If these conditions are met, then the state can be characterized as “the collective author of every individual action that is in conformity with the law.”43

Unlike Negri, who focuses on the positive, affirmative aspects of the multitude, Balibar insists on the aporetic character of Spinoza’s reflections on the multitude, which he describes as a “mass”:

> How can consensus be produced since the matter of politics is not constituted of isolated individuals but of a *mass*, whose most frequent passion is fear, and to whom everyone belongs, rulers and ruled alike? For a mass, in this sense is a fearful thing, not only to those who govern, but even to itself.44

41. *Ibid*.
Balibar emphasizes that there is a despairing gap between a mass ideally free and reasonable, and a really ignorant and “terrible crowd, when without fear” (TP: VII, 27). The point for Balibar is that the mass does not have an atemporal essence in Spinoza; it rather is a variable power (*potentia multitudinis*), an always unfinished process. Balibar also maintains that the mass behaves as a crowd within a precise institutional framework. The collective response to natural affects that are not easily avoidable are determined by social structures or institutions that use it to establish their own operations of Power (*potestas*).

For Balibar, then, the political question in Spinoza’s work is: which institutions reduce men to being only masses, crowds? The response is that, in theory, every type of regime can have this effect. While Spinoza does assert that an effective democracy would be “the most stable” state, that is, would combine the greatest possible freedom and equality with the greatest possible security, he fails to demonstrate this assertion, because the *Tractatus Politicus* remains unfinished. Balibar maintains that rather than attempting to complete Spinoza’s theory of democracy, the conclusion that we should draw from the state of the unfinished *Tractatus Politicus* should rather be that Spinoza has provided a “theory of democratization that is valid for every regime.”

**VI. MOREAU**

Moreau also considers Spinoza’s works to exhibit a remarkable consistency, and in *Spinoza: L’Expérience et l’éternité*, he aims to demonstrate the systematic unity of Spinoza’s thought. However, rather than beginning with Spinoza’s political work, Moreau turns to the enigmatic fifth part of the *Ethics*. Moreau constructs his reading of Spinoza around the scholium of E V P23, where Spinoza claims that “we feel and know by experience that we are eternal.” Moreau considers this claim to bring together all the difficulties of interpretation of the fifth part of the *Ethics*, and to be the key to the relation between the *Ethics* and all of Spinoza’s other work. Moreau claims that this scholium, and a similar passage from Spinoza’s correspondence with Simon de Vries, indicates that experience has an essential role to play in Spinoza’s thought. Moreau maintains that this notion of experience has been neglected by scholars working in the field of Spinoza studies, as a result of it either being reduced to scientific experimentation, or marginalized along with, and as a necessary component of, imagination and error. Habitually, the logic of Spinoza’s absolute rationalism is reduced to the geometrical method, which is solely represented as a deductive demonstration.

In *Spinoza: L’Expérience et l’éternité*, Moreau proposes to reevaluate the status of experience in Spinoza’s thought.

*Experientia* is not opposed to reason; it is rather the mode of intervention of reason in the fields where reason does not have direct access. It is one of the principle forms of accounting for reality. It is also an essential means for understanding Spinoza’s reflections on language, “our relation to words and to texts, to the passions, to the figure of the State, to circumstantial events, and to the historical destiny of the unforeseen or unexpected.” Moreau engages with the often neglected problem of Spinoza’s epistemology, that is, the problem of conceptualizing inadequate, or, as Spinoza also describes them, partial ideas, and the role they play in the development of adequate ideas of reason. Experience is thus not foreign or extrinsic to Spinoza’s rationalism, but informs our relationship with the world, albeit under the guidance of reason.

One of the concepts that Moreau develops in his analysis is that of the *ingenium*, which is the collective term for the complex of passions of an individual. Each individual is dominated by a particular passion which is determined by its biographical and environmental context, and is therefore different for each individual. It accounts for why, despite all individual human beings being equal, they have diverse capacities both for knowledge and for practical activity. Moreau applies this criterion of the *ingenium* not only at the level of the individual, but also at the collective level. He considers the *ingenium* to mark the point of difference between a singular individual and a community. *Ingenia* vary not only from one individual to another, but also from one society to another, and throughout history. Moreau maintains that it is possible to think the individuality of a people in order to understand the form taken by its legislation. The laws of each state are adapted to the *ingenium* of its people. The *ingenium* therefore contributes to define the proper figure of the state.

While Spinoza does not develop a theory of the *ingenium*, he does mention in passing the traits characteristic of the *ingenium* of the Romans, the Greeks, and the ancient nations, including the Hebrews, Egyptians, and Babylonians respectively. By attributing an *ingenium* to each people, Moreau follows the suggestion of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and provides a history of the constitution of different legislations by analyzing the relations between the *ingenia* of each people and their systems of law.

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Since 1968, Guéroult’s philological renewal of the history of philosophy, together with the renewed importance of Spinoza’s political thought, have simultaneously contributed to enrich the resurgence of interest and productivity in Spinoza studies. The Spinoza that is engaged with in the field of Spinoza studies today is no longer solely post-Cartesian, Hegelian, or that of the German Romantics, but also the new ontological interpretation of Spinoza instigated by Matheron and Deleuze. All Spinozist research, in its great diversity, has developed since then in the wake of this interpretive innovation, particularly in France and Italy, but also in Germany and the United States. Spinoza’s metaphysics, which had traditionally been the major focus of Spinoza studies, while not being relinquished, has since been displaced by interest in Spinoza’s ethics and politics, and by attempts to provide systematic readings of Spinoza’s work as a whole, including his political work. This new work on Spinoza’s political philosophy is testament to the ongoing resonance of French Spinozism and continues to provide new possibilities for engaging with debates in ethical and political philosophy, both from the point of view of the history of philosophy, and from the point of view of contributing to contemporary ethical and political thought.

**MAJOR WORKS**


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47. See, for example, the work of Moira Gatens, Warren Montag, and François Zourabichvili. In *Collective Imagining: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 1999), Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd reconsider the role of the imagination, as developed in the *Ethics*, both historically and from a contemporary political point of view. The book demonstrates how an appreciation of Spinoza’s philosophy can form the basis of a constructive but critical engagement with contemporary concerns. See also Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1996). In *Bodies, Masses, Power: Spinoza and his Contemporaries* (New York: Verso, 1999), Montag makes a contribution to the ongoing discussion of radical democracy by drawing on Althusser’s remarks about the connection between the theory of ideology and Spinoza’s philosophy, as well as the work on Spinoza by Negri, Balibar, and Macherey, to formulate the core problem of his analysis: that there can be no liberation of the mind without a liberation of the body, and, therefore, that there can be no liberation of the individual without collective liberation. Montag thereby extends Spinoza’s materialism in an attempt to characterize the affect of joy as a force of action that leads toward individual liberation. In *Le Conservatisisme paradoxal de Spinoza: Enfance et royauté* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), Zourabichvili undertakes a systematic explication of Spinoza’s theory of relations, centered on the much-debated question of the transformation of modes; and in *Spinoza, une physique de la pensée* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), he undertakes to analyze a “physics of thought” in the philosophy of Spinoza by determining the features of the laws of thought which are the correlates of the laws of bodies.


The term “radical democracy” refers to new ways of thinking about democratic politics beyond essentialist foundations. Radical democrats question not only existing liberal democratic institutions, but also the idea of essential universal foundations on which democracy could be based. Inspired by poststructuralist theories of language and identity, and by poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan, a number of thinkers have attempted to rethink democracy along radical lines from about 1980 onward. These radical democrats include, among others, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, William E. Connolly, and Slavoj Žižek. Inspired by poststructuralist theories of language and identity, these authors have sought to rethink what radical politics means after poststructuralism.¹

What, then, is radical democracy, and what is radical about it? We can think of the “radical” of radical democracy in two related ways. First, we may note the etymological root of the word, namely the Latin “radix,” root. The radical, then, pertains to the root, to what is fundamental. If we are to think of radical democracy as aiming at the roots and the foundations of democracy, the idea is not to provide a new foundation for democracy, for instance by showing that past and present foundations (natural rights, utility, species being, and so on)

are inadequate and need to be substituted with a new and better foundation (say, rational discourse). That is, the aim is not to root democracy more firmly. Rather, the radical of radical democracy refers to the questioning of foundations. Thus, the question becomes what democracy looks like without foundations, without being rooted in something universal and ahistorical. If radical today also has the connotation of extreme, then the extremism of radical democracy is to push beyond any foundation. If this is how we understand the radical of radical democracy, then the question “What is radical democracy?” cannot be answered with reference to a foundation, root, or essence. This does not mean that there are no roots, only that those roots are contingent and, thus, contestable. Contestation of roots and foundations is central to radical democracy, but these contestations will always be partial and local.

There is a second, related sense of radical. When talking about politics or democracy, radical often implies transcending the present state of imperfectness of democracy. Thus radical politics becomes associated with a revolutionary politics that will take us to the other side, to a perfect democracy and society, as for instance in certain Marxist accounts of the communist revolution and society. Here radicalism would be the solution – once and for all – to the problems of democracy today (alienation, inequality, and so on). The radical of radical democracy does not imply this, however. This does not mean that we should accept the present state of things, or that only incremental changes are possible, changes that do not interfere with the very framework governing contemporary capitalist and liberal societies. That framework is also at stake with radical democracy, but transcending that framework will not necessarily have the form of a revolution, and radical democracy cannot guarantee that all alienation, inequality, and disagreement will disappear.

On the contrary, radical democrats hold that these issues will not simply disappear with the introduction of radical democracy. Radical democracy will itself involve exclusions and inequalities of various sorts. More fundamentally, we can think of radical democracy with a Derridean phrase as only possible as impossible. This means that radical democracy is not a regime with a set of institutions, procedures, and practices that can be realized. It cannot – with another phrase from Jacques Derrida – be present, even as a future present. It is, and will remain, “to come.” Radical democracy is not possible in the sense that it can be known or realized; it is only possible as impossible, that is, as incomplete and imperfect – in short, as “to come.”

We can link this back to the first sense of radical as having no foundation. The question “What is radical democracy?” is an essential part of radical democracy.

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Radical democracy

Not only are there de facto theoretical and empirical disputes over what radical democracy means and implies, but radical democracy is constituted by dispute and disagreement. If “What is radical democracy?” is part of the essence of radical democracy, then answers to the question “What is radical democracy?” can be only partial and provisional and can never be exhaustive. Thus, we can never rest content that now we know what it is, or now we have implemented it or even with the thought that we will someday realize radical democracy or know what it is. It is in this sense that radical democracy is possible only as impossible, as never present but always “to come.” Thus, radical democracy is difficult – even impossible – to define, even if this is also what I have just tried to do. This difficulty is reflected in the problems others have with radical democracy: it appears elusive, and it is not always clear what is radical about it.3

In the following, I shed more light on radical democracy, first by situating radical democracy in relation to poststructuralism and then in relation to competing approaches within contemporary political philosophy. Subsequently I look at two representatives of radical democratic thought – Laclau and Connolly – and I try to tease out some of the differences between different theorists of radical democracy. I conclude with some remarks on the future of radical democratic thought.

I. POSTSTRUCTURALIST THEORIES OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND EARLIER RADICAL APPROACHES TO DEMOCRACY

The points raised above about the nature of the radicalism of radical democracy helps us to understand the differences between poststructuralist approaches to radical democracy (the topic of this chapter) and earlier approaches to radical democracy. In the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau criticized representative democracy – a critique echoed by republicans – in the name of an ideal of direct democracy, where the General Will rules. While radical democrats are sympathetic to the Rousseauian critique of liberal democracy for not addressing deeper issues of inequality and for the lack of a theory of community in liberal theory, they nonetheless have problems with Rousseau’s account of democracy.

They object, first, to the ideal of a pure or perfect democracy with no division and to the ideal of a self-transparent and self-identical demos; these ideals, which are summed up in the Rousseauian General Will, are potentially dangerous, they argue. Second, they object to the very possibility that a new citizen and a new form of citizenship will solve the problems of modern society

once and for all. Together these two points can be expressed as an objection to what Derrida calls the metaphysics of presence: for Rousseau, the people is identical to itself when (literally) coming together and speaking in the name of itself. The will of the people is present, and the people is One. This is why Derrida and Laclau have argued that representation, rather than the presence of the people, is constitutive.4

Similarly, poststructuralist radical democrats distinguish themselves from another earlier radical democrat: Karl Marx. Marx criticized the superficiality of liberal citizenship rights as well as the liberal idea of the disembodied, property-owning individual who stands opposed to other, similar individuals. This critique was carried out in the name of a critical ideal of species being and in the name of a teleological conception of history, of which the communist society was supposed to be the end point realizing human emancipation.

Radical democrats are equally critical of a certain superficiality of liberal democracy, especially the ways in which liberal citizenship abstracts from socioeconomic inequalities and from gender, ethnicity, and so on, while at the same time reproducing inequalities and relations of domination. What is problematic in Marxism, however, is the view that all alienation and inequality can be overcome through a revolution of the present. In addition, radical democrats are skeptical of the foundation of the Marxist argument in a conception of human essence, in a teleological History and in the reduction of identity, consciousness, ideology, and the state to economic and class relations. Thus, radical democrats are critical of the radicalism of Marxist radical democracy in the two senses delineated above: the search for new foundations and the view that alienation and inequality can be transcended. Laclau and Mouffe sum up this part of their radical democratic and post-Marxist objection to Marxism in the following way:

What is now in crisis is a whole conception of socialism, which rests upon the ontological centrality of the working class, upon the role of Revolution, with a capital “r”, as the founding moment in the transition from one type of society to another, and upon the illusory prospect of a perfectly unitary and homogeneous collective that will render pointless the moment of politics.5

Finally, radical democrats are critical of the Marxist view of politics and democracy as superficial, that is, as merely secondary to and derived from the

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economic base. For radical democrats, politics and democracy are important in their own right. Indeed, they argue that politics is constitutive, and they think of politics not as a regional category (as opposed to the economy, for instance), but as the very moment of the institution of the social (including the economy and what we usually refer to as politics: political institutions, identities, and behavior). It is in this sense that we can also say that representation is constitutive. That is, for radical democrats, politics is not a reflection of something more fundamental (and present); rather, the political refers to the moments in which sociopolitical institutions and practices are instituted or challenged. If there are roots, they are not prior to politics, but instituted – and challenged – by politics.

II. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE EMERGENCE OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY

The radical democratic critique of earlier radical approaches must also be seen against the background of events and developments at the end of the twentieth century. From the 1960s onwards, new social movements and struggles over identity gained increasing importance within mainstream politics. The civil rights movement, the student protests and the protests against the Vietnam War as well as the women’s movement, the environmental movement, and the anti-nuclear protests all challenged the Marxist emphasis on class as the organizing principle of revolutionary consciousness and emancipatory struggles. Class gradually lost its empirical importance as well as its theoretical centrality to the diagnosis of, and solution to, the problems of contemporary capitalist society. In this light, the question became how to think emancipation without tying it to class. This is another sense in which poststructuralist radical democrats are also often post-Marxists.

Another problem faced by Marxists at the end of the twentieth century was the nonappearance of the revolution despite the developed character of capitalism in the West. In fact, the late 1970s and the 1980s saw the emergent hegemony of neoliberalism personified by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Again, radicals were faced by the question of strategy in the face of neoliberal hegemony and the inadequacy of Marxist analyses and strategies.

Finally, the fall of the Soviet bloc and “real existing socialism” reflected the hegemony of capitalism and liberal democracy and a general sense of “the end of history.”6 Again, this was no doubt an important event in terms of rethinking the strategy of the Left, although it must be remembered that most of the Left

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had already broken with Soviet-style communism after Stalinism and the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968 respectively. The fall of Soviet communism was, of course, not the end of history, but instead introduced a new period with new challenges that required both theoretical and political responses: the emergence of nationalism and xenophobia in Europe and beyond, the rise of religious fundamentalism, the question of the European Union, globalization and the alter-globalization movements, and so on. As Laclau and Mouffe write: “To reread Marxist theory in the light of contemporary problems necessarily involves deconstructing the central categories of that theory.”

III. THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST INFLUENCE: IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND UNIVERSALITY

The poststructuralist conceptions of language, meaning, and identity have been central to the development of new theories of radical democracy. Given the radical democratic critique of the status and centrality of class as a category, this is a useful starting-point for explaining the poststructuralist influence on radical democracy.

For radical democrats, identity is not the reflection of an essence, for instance one’s class position. Class is not a transcendental signified that holds together a set of otherwise disparate identities that can be anchored in an analysis of their class position within the relations of production. Here we can think of identity in terms of the Saussurean sign and the poststructuralist deconstruction of it. Meaning and identity are constituted through relations of difference between signs (or rather, signifiers). That is, we should understand identities not as self-contained, but as relational and constituted through relations to others rather than reflections of an underlying essence or structure.

Identity is constituted within the web of signification, and as such we might think of identity as the effect of the system of differences. However, this comes with the important (post-structuralist) qualification that the structure of the differential relations is never closed or sutured; rather, it is inherently unstable and open to change through the de- and resignification of the signifiers. In other words, the system of differences is marked by some undecidability. For instance, if identity is constituted through relations of difference, we may ask how the system of differences as a whole and the limits of the system are constituted. The answer to that question is undecidable because the whole and its limits would have to be signified by something at once the whole and part of the whole, and

7. Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, ix.
at once inside and outside the system. Given that the whole is involved in the signification of each part, every particular identity is marked by this undecidability. Hence, any identity is partly fluid.

Theorists of radical democracy think of identity and the subject in nonessentialist terms. Identities are inherently unstable, although they may have become more or less naturalized. Indeed, we may think about identity not as identity—that is, as something stable and achieved—but as continuous identifications that “fail” in the sense that they never become stable and self-contained.

We do not have simple pluralism in the sense of dispersed identities, nor do we have a simple plurality of identities as if each one of us were the aggregate of more than one identity. This pluralism is a fact of social life, but there is more to identity than this. No identity—even as the aggregate of different identities—is ever One. Identity is always subverted, for instance by a lack (Lacan and Laclau) or by the fact that they are constituted in flows of materiality that cannot be arrested (Deleuze and Connolly).

As a result, radical democrats focus on processes of identification and subjectivation: Which subjects are formed and how? How do these subjects relate to other subjects? What are the implications for citizenship of the ways in which subjects are formed? And so forth. A good example is Connolly’s work on pluralism. Connolly talks about processes of pluralization—rather than simple pluralism—to refer to the ways in which identities are constantly being created and undone, processes Connolly believes that we must actively encourage through, among other things, agonistic respect.8

At this point, it is useful to return to the very beginning of the essay. I argued that one aspect of the radicalism of radical democracy is that it does not claim that radical democracy has an essence. That is, the question “What is radical democracy?” is part and parcel of radical democracy, and this will subvert any definition of it from within. We can connect this to the poststructuralist conception of meaning. Radical democracy—what it “is” and means—is not the reflection of some underlying structure of history or essence of man. Rather, radical democracy must be seen in relation to other forms of democracy and other regimes, and it is not one thing at all times; it is an essential part of radical democracy that it can be contested and resignified.

Poststructuralists talk a lot about language, and poststructuralism is part of the linguistic turn in philosophy.9 However, it is important to make two points here with implications for radical democracy. First, structures are never
entirely open and undetermined. We can talk of partly sedimented structures or discourses. Identities, for instance, can be de- and resignified, but they must be partly determined and fixed in order for us to be able to talk about identities in the first place. Similarly with meaning and society: complete plasticity is impossible, and there must be some fixation of meaning and of structures, for instance a partial determination of what citizenship means. The important questions are, then, what determinations dominate, and how we relate to them. Second, it is important to note that poststructuralists and radical democrats are not idealists. Rather, they treat the social as consisting of meaningful practices (texts in Derrida’s terminology and discourses in Laclau’s terminology). Radical democracy, then, also concerns what we usually think of as “material,” especially the economic sphere, and it is not limited to the creation of new forms of identities (which of course have their own materiality).

On the basis of poststructuralist arguments, radical democrats eschew any form of essentialism and foundationalism. We may add that they are skeptical of grand narratives, to use Jean-François Lyotard’s phrase. For instance, radical democrats are skeptical of the Marxist grand narrative of emancipation and its links to essentialism and teleology; and they are skeptical of the Enlightenment grand narrative of Man, for instance the way it is expressed in the notion of human rights based on human nature. However, this does not stop radical democrats from talking about emancipation, human rights, and other “universals,” although they have a different understanding of these. For instance, they think of emancipation – like democracy – as possible only as impossible. That is, we never achieve full emancipation (and autonomy, nonalienation, and so on), and emancipation is not a critical ideal, not even a counterfactual ideal. Rather, we have continuous emancipations in the plural as continual processes of becoming rather than fixed states of being.

With Judith Butler and Laclau, we can say that, for radical democrats, universals such as emancipation are the result of contingent significations. They are not ahistorical or simply handed down to us as given, and therefore the task is to do genealogies of their conditions of emergence and to resignify them in new ways. For radical democrats, this resignification of universals must of course take place without founding them again in a new essence, teleology, and so on – in short, a new radix, root. Importantly, while radical democrats argue

11. Laclau, Emancipation(s), ch. 1.
that universals are open to resignification, there is no guarantee that it will be a progressive, leftist resignification that will be the dominant one.

IV. RADICAL DEMOCRACY AND CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Radical democrats often distinguish their position through a critique of contemporary liberalism, for instance John Rawls’s political liberalism. Like Marxists and republicans, radical democrats are critical of the liberal notion of the subject and, by implication, the liberal conception of the citizen.13

For radical democrats, one of the problems with the liberal subject is that it is a disembedded and disembodied individual, a kind of abstract individual outside historical and socioeconomic context and without a (gendered, racial, etc.) body. Liberals thereby overlook the ways in which subjects are constituted in the first place. In addition, they reify a certain kind of subject because the liberal subject is not just something shared by all subjects, abstracting from their particularities (as a thin notion of human nature, for instance); rather, the liberal subject is a particular kind of subject, historically associated with certain experiences and constituencies (the property-owning male, for instance).

Another criticism of the liberal subject concerns the rationality of the subject. First of all, radical democrats point out that the liberal subject is endowed with a certain kind of rationality, which is linked to the individual nature of the subject. It is the rationality of an individual standing apart from and facing the physical and social world in a relation of instrumental reason. Theorists of radical democracy are critical of rationality more generally, and especially of the grand narrative of Enlightenment reason. This is not just because we are facing a complex world and cannot have knowledge about everything; more fundamentally, on the basis of the poststructuralist critique of the subject and universals, radical democrats argue that reason is unable to establish its own foundations.

These criticisms of the liberal subject can be drawn together as a critique of autonomy understood as rational self-legislation. Radical democrats do not necessarily reject autonomy as a value, but they are critical of a liberal conception of autonomy centered on the atomistic individual. In addition, as is the case with emancipation, we must think of autonomy as possible only as impossible, that is, as always implicated with some heteronomy because it cannot establish

its own foundations and conditions of possibility. Again we see how the rejection of foundationalism leads to a rethinking of modern ideals – in this case, autonomy – as something that must be renegotiated again and again without ever being fully achieved.

The radical democratic critique of the liberal subject is reflected in the critique of the liberal notion of citizenship centered as it is on the individual, self-interested bearer of rights. Rights, radical democrats argue, do not exhaust the political. Rather, we must also look at how subjects are constituted, and especially how new subjects are constituted, subjects that may challenge existing rights categories. Again, radical democrats do not simply reject rights or citizenship, but argue that a profound rethinking of these is necessary.

More generally, radical democrats do not simply reject liberal institutions (the rule of law, separation of powers, and so on). Those institutions have their value; for radical democrats, this is especially so in the light of the experiences with twentieth-century totalitarianism. Therefore we cannot reject liberal institutions as meaningless and inconsequential. Yet radical democrats insist on the need to be able to contest the liberal institutional framework of rights, citizenship, the rule of law, and so on. Among other things, this is in order to open up the possibility that new and hitherto excluded and marginalized constituencies gain a place within society on a par with the (so far) normal subjects. Thus, radical democracy is also an exercise in denaturalizing and denormalizing what we take as given, including our conceptions of the subject and of citizenship.14

To sum up, radical democrats want to radicalize liberal values and institutions in two different ways. They want, first, to deepen and extend those values and institutions (for instance, to extend equality to ever more areas in society); and, second, they want to rethink those values and institutions without foundations. They see these values and institutions not as natural or ahistorical, but as political all the way down, and in this way they stress their contestability. In short, theorists of radical democracy seek to repoliticize what has been depoliticized.

Deliberative democrats, such as Jürgen Habermas,15 share some of the criticisms of liberalism raised by radical democrats. Thus, deliberative democrats believe that identity and interests are not given to the political process but constituted in it, and they also believe that the subject is not reducible to the self-interested and atomistic individual. Nonetheless, radical democrats are critical of deliberative democracy for some of the same reasons that they are critical of liberalism. First, radical democrats object to the emphasis on rationality and autonomy, even if these are understood by deliberative democrats in inter-


*15. For a discussion of Jürgen Habermas, see the essay by Christopher F. Zurn in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
subjectivist terms. For instance, theorists of radical democracy have criticized Habermas’s idea of the forceless force of the good argument. Radical democrats have also objected to the emphasis on procedures because they believe that deliberative democrats thereby risk reducing politics to a matter of the right procedure.

In general terms, radical democrats are skeptical of the deliberative democratic conception of dialogue and deliberation. For radical democrats, communication is never transparent, but always marked by relations of power and asymmetry. For instance, some subjects are marked in advance as more rational than others, and some reasons as more reasonable than others. Therefore we need to examine the ways in which the space of dialogue and deliberation is constituted in the first place and what kind of practices and subjects have been excluded.

Similarly, radical democrats are skeptical of any consensus, even if it is the outcome of an allegedly rational discourse. This is not to say that radical democrats are necessarily against any consensus. For instance, Mouffé talks about a consensus on the principles of liberal democracy, namely liberty and equality for all. But, for her, this is a “conflictual” and temporary consensus, and there is no consensus without exclusion: a consensus is always a particular consensus linked to a particular “we” and, hence, to the exclusion of “them.”

Likewise, with regard to consensus, Connolly writes that it is “impossible to participate in discourse without projecting the counterfactual possibility of consensus; but … each attempt to interpret the actual import of that counterfactuality in any concrete setting is also problematical and contestable.” Connolly links this to contestability: “if a pluralizing ethos presupposes a ‘consensus,’ it is mobilized above all around reciprocal appreciation of the contestability of contending presumptions about the fundamental character of being. It is an ironic consensus.” As an ironic consensus, it reflects on its own contingency and the exclusions it implies. The alternative is to think of the relation to the other and of the public sphere in agonistic terms, as suggested by Connolly and Mouffé. This, they argue, will make us more attuned to subjects and constituencies that cannot at present be heard within the public sphere, and it underlines the contestability of the rules that constitute the public sphere.

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Finally, theorists of radical democracy share the communitarian critique of the liberal disembedded subject and the communitarian emphasis on questions of community and identity as one finds it in Michael Sandel, for instance. However, they have a very different conception of community and identity because they believe that division and disagreement are constitutive. In short, no community is a self-contained whole with clear limits. This is the problem with communitarianism: it risks reifying existing (and past) communal identities. Inspired by poststructuralism, radical democrats do not see communities as closed or self-contained wholes; rather, identities are fluid and situated at the intersection of more than one communal identity.

We can sum up these points against liberal, deliberative, and communitarian approaches in the following way: for theorists of radical democracy, these alternative approaches all in one way or another depoliticize the subject, citizenship, consensus, and communal identities. Radical democracy, then, consists in repoliticizing what has been depoliticized, in showing that what appears to us as natural and ahistorical is in fact contingent, constructed, and contestable.

V. RADICAL DEMOCRACY BETWEEN ABUNDANCE AND LACK

So far, I have focused on poststructuralist radical democratic theory as a whole and distinguished it from earlier radical democratic theory and from competing contemporary approaches. I would now like to focus on debates within radical democratic theory. There are different ways to think about the differences between the various radical democratic theorists, although none of the ways of dividing the field entirely exhausts it.

Giorgio Agamben has suggested a distinction between immanence and transcendence as a way to make sense of the differences among contemporary French philosophers. If we apply this distinction to radical democracy, Connolly, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (drawing on Spinoza and Deleuze) would represent the immanence side and Laclau and Mouffe (drawing on Derrida and

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Lacan) would represent the transcendence side. Here I will take Hardt and Negri and Laclau as representatives of the two sides.

The difference between Hardt and Negri and Laclau concerns whether an alternative to the present liberal-capitalist order will emerge immanently or requires a moment of transcendence. For Laclau, we need a moment of transcendence, albeit a “failed” transcendence. He understands this transcendence in terms of hegemony where a particular element comes to stand in for the whole, thus coalescing a hegemonic consensus around it, a hegemonic consensus that can oppose and dissolve the current hegemony. Hardt and Negri, on the other hand, believe that countering one hegemony with another reproduces a form of politics historically associated with Lenin and the vanguard (the Communist Party, taking over – but ultimately leaving intact – the state, and so on). For them, change must arise from below, from the multitude, and they find hope in, among other things, the alter-globalization movements. Thus, the immanence/transcendence distinction is not merely philosophical, but has important implications for political strategy.

Another way of making sense of debates within poststructuralist radical democratic thought is through a distinction between abundance and lack. This distinction is not unrelated to the immanence/abundance distinction, and Hardt and Negri (abundance) and Laclau (lack) would fall on opposite sides of the abundance/lack distinction. Here I will use the abundance/lack distinction heuristically to present two particular, but important, views of radical democracy, namely those of Connolly and Laclau and Mouffe. The aim is to identify some of the theoretical and political choices facing radical democracy.

Central to Laclau and Mouffe’s work is the category of hegemony, which they rework against its reception within Marxist thought and especially Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. For Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony


is essentially an operation whereby signifiers or demands are articulated into a chain of equivalence with other signifiers or demands. The chain of equivalence is organized around what Laclau calls an empty signifier, which fulfills the central role of keeping together otherwise disparate elements. In other words, the empty signifier represents what is otherwise absent or lacking, namely the community as a whole. There is thus a lacking fullness or being of the community, which could be a national community, a counter-hegemonic project, and so on. Hegemony consists in “filling” this lack. However, the filling of the lack always ultimately fails, and the lack always returns.

Any communal identity is marked by a lack, which it may try to project onto an external enemy (the figure of the Jew or the Islamic terrorist, for example). Similarly, any identity is marked by a lack, which sets in motion identifications with objects – a football club, a national symbol, and so on – that are supposed to fill the lack. Yet, even though this is how my identity is constituted, those identifications always ultimately fail. It follows that any identity is precarious and constantly renegotiated. It should be clear by now how Laclau thinks of hegemony in terms of lack, an idea he takes from Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Radical democracy is one hegemonic project among others. Specifically it consists in radicalizing the principles of liberal democracy, namely, equality and liberty. For Laclau and Mouffe, this radicalization implies deepening and extending equality and liberty and doing so without new foundations. In her work, Mouffe has focused on radical democracy and what she calls agonistic democracy. Mouffe is interested in how the democratic “we” is established. For her, the democratic “we” is established hegemonically, for instance as a radical democratic “we,” but importantly the “we” is not a closed whole because it is marked by internal division and differences. It is, thus, a “we” that is always unstable and in the process of being renegotiated. Although the “we” does involve limits and exclusions, these are contestable.

Agonistic democracy refers to the space within which different hegemonic projects – radical democracy being one of them – compete for hegemony. This space will be marked by differences and divisions (among “adversaries”), and it will be established through an exclusion of “enemies.” The latter do not accept

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the principles of equality and liberty, as opposed to adversaries who do, even if adversaries interpret the principles in different ways. Here Mouffe draws on Carl Schmitt to argue for the ineradicability of exclusion and antagonism from politics.

Laclau and Mouffe are interested in the possibility of leftist hegemonic projects after foundationalism, and Mouffe is particularly interested in the way the democratic “we” and the framework for democratic disputes are established. Connolly, too, is interested in how political spaces and relations to others are constituted, but he takes a different approach. For Connolly, it is a question of how existing norms and institutions can be contested and thereby opened up. His focus is on how certain subjects and constituencies are excluded and marginalized, and on how we can relate to these in new ways, thereby giving them a place in the political space. In the process, our own identities and understandings will be put into question, so the process is also one of self-contestation. In other words, it is a matter of pluralization: contesting communal and individual selves and creating new selves.

Politics, for Connolly, concerns the ways in which our identities and our relations to others are articulated: “how an identity is experienced and how it defines itself with respect to different identities.”28 This is what Connolly has in mind when he talks about “agonistic respect,” “critical responsiveness,” and a “generous ethos of engagement”: an agonistic relation to the other that engages with the identity of the other as well as with my own identity. Hence, for Connolly, we should avoid representing others as antagonistic others (as threats, enemies, and so on). In contrast with the respectful and responsive agonistic contests between citizens that are necessary for radical democratic politics, Connolly thinks of antagonism in terms of Nietzschean ressentiment where the self projects its own fragility onto an other, who is then rendered a threat. This is the source of fundamentalism:

> [W]hile every doctrine, culture, faith, identity, theory, and perspective rests upon fundamentals more or less protected from internal interrogation, fundamentalism is a set of political strategies to protect these fundamentals by defining every carrier of critique or destabilization as an enemy marked by exactly those defects, weaknesses, corruptions, and naïvetés you are under an absolute imperative to eliminate.29

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We should instead constantly engage with the other – including the “fundamentalist” other – in order to engage with ourselves and with what appears most fundamental and natural to us.

Although Connolly’s views bear many resemblances with Mouffe’s position, he believes that there is something missing from Mouffe’s account of agonistic and radical democracy. While Mouffe rightly focuses on the agonistic relations among adversaries, she does not say much about the nature of these agonistic relations. In addition, Connolly believes that we must extend agonistic respect to the excluded others, for instance, the fundamentalist. For Connolly, then, Mouffe too readily accepts that exclusion is constitutive, and thereby she risks taking particular exclusions as given as well as taking the hegemonic way of organizing politics as given. Connolly’s radical democracy is organized as a rhizome, as a network that connects and reconnects in new ways all the time; and he opposes this to a politics that takes the trunk as its model, for instance a hegemonic politics where a “we” is established in the center.

Whereas Laclau and Mouffe draw inspiration from Derrida and Lacan, Connolly gets the image of rhizome and trunk from Deleuze, and in addition he draws on Foucault and Nietzsche. From these thinkers, he gets the view of identity as fluid and the view of the self as constituted in flows that prevent any self – whether an “I” or a “we” – from fully stabilizing. Identity is not to be thought of as something lacking, which would suggest a negation that risks reproducing what is negated. Rather, we should think of identity and of politics in terms of abundance – flows of energy, networks of materiality, processes of becoming, and so on – an abundance that is affirmed as a positive source of a politics of contestation.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, poststructuralist radical democratic theory is not radical in the sense of providing us with a new and better foundation for radical politics, but rather in the sense of asking what radical politics looks like without foundations. Linked to this, radical democrats do not promise to transcend alienation, inequality, and exclusion, and radical democracy is not an end state that could be reached in practice or even in theory.

This distinguishes poststructuralist radical democrats from earlier radical democrats such as Rousseau and Marx, and radical democracy also differs from alternative contemporary approaches to democracy. The work involved in defining radical democracy does not stop at distinguishing the radical democratic position from other positions, however. One must also examine debates within radical democratic theory – for instance, between theorists of abundance and theorists of lack – as well as the implications of these debates for radical politics.

Where does radical democracy go from here? I would like to suggest two points where theorists of radical democracy have to pay particular attention in the future. First, more empirical work must be done, analyzing and criticizing institutions and practices. Radical democratic theory has tended to be just that – theory; and debates among radical democrats have tended to focus on theoretical issues. Second, radical democratic theory must pay attention to what we usually call the economic sphere. This is not an attempt to argue for the priority of the economic, but merely to highlight the fact that so far radical democrats have said relatively little about capitalism and the economic sphere.

A final point concerns the present and future debates about radical democratic theory. Recently there has been a challenge to radical democracy from theorists such as Hardt and Negri, Agamben, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek, who all promise a more radical analysis of and break with contemporary liberal and capitalist society. Whether this new radicalism can in fact be cashed in without giving up on the radicalism of radical democracy in the sense identified above is one of the questions of dispute between, for instance, Laclau and Žižek. Žižek argues that Laclau and Mouffe’s radical democracy ultimately

32. Exceptions here include the uses made of Laclau’s theory of hegemony to analyze historical and contemporary discourses. See the contributions in David Howarth et al. (eds), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); and Francisco Panizza (ed.), *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005).


*34. For a discussion of some of these theorists, see the essay by Emily Zakin in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.

buys into a liberal-capitalist ideology because it is too superficial and does not address what really matters according to Žižek, namely the capitalist mode of production. Laclau, on the other hand, retorts that Žižek remains trapped in old essentialist and foundationalist categories such as class, while never actually providing us with a way out of the existing order. Thus, the current debates about radical democracy still turn on the correct understanding of the “radicalism” of radical democracy, that is, whether democracy must be rooted in something more fundamental.36

36. I would like to thank Rosi Braidotti, Saul Newman, Alan D. Schrift, Lars Tønder, and the anonymous reviewer for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.
In an essay published in 1988 entitled “New Ethnicities,” Stuart Hall announced the end of innocence for the “essential black subject.” Learning from the complex geography of black identity formations within occidental modernity, it is perhaps also possible to insist even more incisively on the end of innocence for the hegemonic “white subject.” This would evoke a critical constellation in which the very idea of a “Black Atlantic,” as proposed by Paul Gilroy, becomes a philosophical challenge to the assumed neutral, hence universal, coordinates for comprehending modernity. In such a situation, voices that apparently reach us today from the peripheral margins of a once dying colonialism and a seemingly now distant imperial past, acquire an unsuspected centrality in the reformulation of a philosophical and critical agenda seeking to respond to the complexities of a worldly inheritance that is not only ours to explain and direct. The work of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Ranajit Guha, and the continuing elaborations of Hall, among others, insist in their critical challenge to contemporary thought and cultural analysis (Spivak, Bhabha, Gilroy), interrogating a world yet to come. A discursive formation – European philosophy – seemingly directly inherited from a tradition that was inaugurated on the shores of the Mediterranean by the Greeks, is here interrupted. It is neither cancelled, ignored, nor simply subverted; rather, it is forced to travel in an altogether more extensive space. A continuity that is nurtured and guaranteed by

questions apparently generated from within the autonomous realm of thought is potentially disrupted and dispersed.

Precisely one of the ways to think the philosophical and cultural impact of cultural and postcolonial studies in the anglophone world would be to consider the life and career of the fundamental figure of Stuart Hall.3 Having moved from the Caribbean to Europe, he represents an entwining of a critical and biographical figure, that leads, after empire, to thinking “without guarantees,” now viewed through the supplementary lenses of race, gender, and ethnicity. This is a worldly location that cannot be ignored or simply separated from critical statements. To be a “black” male, and the “subject” of a “sound colonial education” (Derek Walcott), is by no means merely an individual trait. It is precisely this dimension – the biopolitical location of the voice in a critical cartography profoundly characterized by asymmetrical powers – that ignites what has probably acquired the most prominence in the field of cultural and postcolonial studies and its potential impact on contemporary philosophical configurations: the question of identity. To what degree the insistence of a body located, marked, and constructed by historical, political, cultural, and economic forces is allowed to intervene in the configuration of “philosophy” is by no means clear. Its ambiguous status disseminates a disturbance, an interrogation.

It is this slightly unruly, even irreverent, appropriation that induces a critical disposition whereby the “external” and the unrecognized, or “non-philosophical,” irrupts into the field. In this scenario, the postcolonial body – historically marked and culturally located – is not so much a figure that seeks to establish an identity; he or she, as Fanon pointed out many decades ago, has already been thoroughly subjected to one: “Look, a Negro!”4 He or she is rather a figure that reveals identity: its mechanisms, its disciplining, its ideologies. In this critical exposure the procedures and protocols of identity are disturbed and defamiliarized. Here, thinking the very grounds of thought, unpacking the imposed “burden of representation” (Kobena Mercer), and refusing to “be” what was previously ordained, leads into what can be considered a critical multiculturalism.5 The very question of identity (for whom? where, when, and how?)

3. Stuart Hall was born on February 3, 1932, in Kingston, Jamaica. Educated at Oxford, and influenced by the work of Althusser, Foucault, Gramsci, and Marx, he served as Director for the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham (1968–79), and taught at the Open University (1979–97). Among his most important works are Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse; Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain; Policing the Crisis; and Questions of Cultural Identity.


becomes problematic for all, and not merely for those previously located in the designated marginality and subaltern positions of black, native, indigenous, and other: everything that disturbs the colorless universality of whiteness. Here Paul Ricoeur’s meditations on “oneself as another,” Julia Kristeva’s “strangers to ourselves,” and Jacques Derrida’s suggestive exploration of a “monolingualism,” are declined into the rougher intercultural grammar of a quotidian becoming that consistently frustrates philosophical finitude.6

There is also the need here to acknowledge the overspill, interaction, and heterogeneous gestation of thought emerging between developments in continental philosophy, associated with “Paris,” but actually coming out of a far wider configuration that includes anticolonialism and, in particular, the Algerian war, and the nascent British discourse of cultural studies. In the latter case, a post-imperial island is injected with the socially suggestive rigor of structuralism and a reconfigured Marxism sustained by the critical and problematic import of language itself. While the structuralist “dissolving” of man – from Lévi-Strauss and Althusser to Foucault and Derrida – will also come to be read in terms of the restrictive geography implicitly referenced in the humanist and existential Marxism – the “white mythologies” – that dominated post-1945 critical European thought and philosophy.7

This suggests a conjunctural analysis of the coming together and shaping of a critical constellation in the 1960s and 1970s, in which empire, colonialism, and their subsequent cultural and historical fall-out in diverse national formations, in particular those of Britain and France, intertwine in a critical constellation in which the weakness of Anglo-American empirical thought, already under pressure from student disavowal and the cultural secession of youth, is intersected by radical, systematic perspectives (in both the political and epistemological sense) coming from France. Accompanying and fertilizing these developments is the elaboration of British cultural studies through its “break” with a native literary tradition and, subsequently, with the existing modalities of the profoundly limited empiricism of the social sciences. This latter move is to be read less as simply settling accounts with the disciplinary inheritance of “English literature,” “sociology,” or “history,” and rather more in terms of crossing these,


and other, disciplinary paths, in the critical appropriation of such problematic concepts as “culture,” the “social,” the “political,” and the “historical.”

Essential to this overall constellation was not merely the production of interdisciplinary and intercultural spaces, but also a pronounced irritation with the self-serving institutionalization of “knowledge” as an autonomous academic pursuit. Nineteen sixty-eight, of course, but also, and as a consequence of that initial rebellion, the emergence of the critical excavation and evaluation of the archive of occidental modernity understood as a systematic network of power and associated knowledge “affects.” Here, a Marxist inheritance eventually came to be interrogated by what it historically often ignored: the “peripheral” and “subaltern” voices of empire, colonialism, and gender. If feminism was a common thread, although diversely accented, between Paris and London, the attention to race and ethnicity was altogether more acutely considered in Britain. In this critical undoing of culture, now considered as a historical process and a shifting, consensual arrangement of power, there is also the significant reprise of the complex historical and political understanding of cultural formations elaborated in the 1930s by the Sardinian intellectual Antonio Gramsci, who is touched on in Althusser, persistently evoked by Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, and extensively explored by Ranajit Guha \(^8 \) and the Subaltern Studies Group in India.

I. THE REFUSAL TO BE THE OTHER

It is at this point that it becomes legitimate to ask whether, for example, Fanon’s *Les Damnés de la terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*; 1961) is to be considered a philosophical text.\(^9\) The very question poses a potential reconfiguration of the philosophical if we are to include it or, conversely, an institutional restriction if we exclude it. Fanon’s writings most certainly invade and interrupt any thinking that considers itself to be universal and the epitome of humanity. In his preface to the text, Sartre famously defines Fanon as carrying out a “strip-tease of our

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8. Ranajit Guha (1922– ) is an Indian historian, influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci, and most noted for his critical reconfiguration of historical studies with the Subaltern Studies Group.

9. Frantz Fanon (July 20, 1925–December 6, 1961; born in Martinique; died in Bethesda, Maryland, USA) studied medicine at the University of Lyon (1947–51). Among his influences are Césaire, Sartre, and Senghor. He served as Chef de service at the psychiatric hospital of Blida-Joinville, Algeria (1953–56) and on the editorial board of the Algerian liberation movement (Front de Libération Nationale, or FLN) newspaper *El Moudjahid*. Among his important works not cited elsewhere in this essay is *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (*A Dying Colonialism*) and *Pour la révolution africaine* (*Towards the African Revolution*).
humanism.” It was from such a universalism that the chilling certainty of a racist legislation descended on the planet.

In the cultural codification of difference, only the European is a moral subject capable of proposing universal values. History in the colonial world is hence exclusively the history of the colonizer and an extension of the European metropolis. The colonized is immobilized, fixed in her subaltern status, and stabilized in the repetition of a cultural identity that is not permitted to disturb the teleological movement of the colonizer’s “progress.” This is a complex constellation that while obviously theoretical is not always obviously philosophical per se; or, rather, it evokes a philosophical insistence that is continually bent to a cultural and political will. Against theoretical and scholarly rigor, attention is paid to the performative instance of critical thought. There is the enunciation of a volatile location destined to irritate inherited categories of understanding with an ambivalence that insists on the complexity and opaqueness of the world that thought seeks to discipline and render transparent. To insist on what sticks out in language is, as the Indian historian Ranajit Guha forcefully argues in History at the Limit of World-History, to deviate and subvert a linearity that anticipates its conclusions; it is to snap the chains of that history which considers itself to be the unique reason of the world. It is precisely to reintroduce what that language has avoided and negated.

As an interdisciplinary approach to the analyses of contemporary culture, cultural studies has historically posed some forceful epistemological objections to the social sciences and accompanying critical configurations. This has been accompanied by the significant analytical contamination of previously distinct popular and elite cultures. Shifting the aesthetic concerns of literary studies and art history into the critical conundrum of culture as a “whole way of life” (Raymond Williams), has led to thinking critically with other languages and texts rather than simply those inherited from a “Great Tradition” (F. R. Leavis) and its endorsement in the nation’s literary canon, educational programs, museums, and libraries. In this sense, Bob Marley and reggae music can appear as critically suggestive as Goethe contemplating the possibilities of Weltliteratur or Heidegger considering the question of technology.

At this point there exists no external space. Everything presses in on the center in a political and cultural geography that renders disciplinary distinctions and unilateral perspectives problematic in the proximity of immediate complexities. We are encouraged to undertake what Edward Said calls a “contra-puntal reading” of the situation. There is now no “native,” “other,” or “slave” to


11. Edward Said (November 1, 1935—September 25, 2003; born in Jerusalem, British Palestine; died in New York) received a BA from Princeton University (1957) and a PhD from Harvard University (1964). Influenced by Auerbach, Foucault, Gramsci, and Vico, Said spent his career,
legitimize the “progress” of a Hegelian logic or maintain a differential distance, only negated figures and repressed partners in the shared historical realization of modernity. In the complex and uneven act of framing, occidental modernity, rendered in its planetary transit susceptible to postcolonial criticism, loses unique possession of its languages.

To return to Fanon: for this French educated Martiniquan, Europe is not about the fulfillment of humanity, but historically represents the mystification and blocking of its realization. The West holds humanity in hostage, and humanism is transformed into a hypocrisy that consistently evades a “humanisme à la mesure du monde [humanism that is the measure of the world].”12 Similarly, “underdevelopment” is not the sign of European superiority but rather an insulting term whose genesis reveals the cruel centrality of colonialism in the making of the modern world: “L’Europe est littéralement la création du Tiers-Monde [Europe is literally the creation of the Third World].”13 The planet remains in the historical vice forged by Europe, “which never stops talking of man yet massacres him at every one of its street corners, at every corner of the world.”14 In Peaux noires, masques blancs (1952), Fanon is the doctor of a colonial hospital – caught between a Sartrean dialectic of two single subject positions sustained in antagonism and the split Lacanian subject unable to confirm him or herself – who describes psychic relationships sustained in the murderous embrace between the colonizer and the colonized. He is also the critical voice who announces the refusal to be the other.

Object of the exception – “Look, a Negro!” – the subaltern is (mis)recognized and has no other choice than that of shattering the mirror, refusing an imposed alterity. As the mute and immobile object of Western history, she has no alternative but to violate that which frames her or him as object in order to appropriate the right to narrate (Said, Bhabha). To insist on the right to disrupt an imposed and inherited history is not to evoke a philosophy of violence, but is rather to reply to the structures that sustain and disseminate violence; in primis, the reign of terror, as Michael Taussig describes it, that constitutes the space

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beginning in 1963, in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. Among his more than twenty-five books are: Orientalism; Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World; Musical Elaborations; Culture and Imperialism; and Reflections on Exile. [*] Said’s work, along with that of Spivak and Bhabha, is discussed in detail in the essay by Eduardo Mendieta in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.

13. Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre (Paris: Maspero, 1961), 76; The Wretched of the Earth, 102.
14. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, 239; The Wretched of the Earth, 235.
of European colonialism and its mission of imposing its “self” on the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{15} Here we are brought into the “heart of darkness” to confront the structures of violence, the violence of the structures, that cage the colonial and subaltern within modernity itself: nothing is separate, all is coeval as Johannes Fabian points out.\textsuperscript{16}

We are here excavating the archive of modernity, where conditions of thought are inextricably woven into the making of a world designed to mirror, sanction, and extend that very same thought. Even those most directly affected by the rhetoric of the “progress” of the rule of reason – slaves waging war for their freedom on an eighteenth-century island in the French Caribbean – continue to be excluded from the historical, political, cultural and philosophical account: “I met History once, but he ain’t recognize me.”\textsuperscript{17} The historically excluded, the cultural other, the racially abnegated, cannot be absorbed without inducing a sea change in the cartographies of thought (and power). We here return to Fanon’s insistence on the necessity to escape the clutches of a hegemonic history – that of the colonizer who continues to narrate the metropolis on the colonial soil that he is stealing – which leads to sabotaging his historiography and geography, that is, his specific elaboration of time and space.

It was another Martiniquan, the poet Aimé Césaire,\textsuperscript{18} who drew out the terrible equivalence between colonialism and Nazism. Once again Fanon reminds his readers of this disturbing vicinity: “It was my philosophy professor, a native of the Antilles, who recalled the fact to me one day: ‘Whenever you hear anyone abuse the Jews, pay attention, because he is talking about you.’”\textsuperscript{19} The real “scandal” of the Nazi exercise of power consisted precisely in introducing directly into the heartlands of Europe the colonial discipline and discrimination of its internal populations. These were not distant crimes perpetrated against “native” and “savage” Arabs, Africans, Indians, and other non-Europeans, but were rather directly exercised on the bodies and lives of white, “civilized”


\textsuperscript{18} Aimé Césaire (June 25, 1913–April 17, 2000; born in Martinique; died in Fort-de-France, Martinique) travelled to Paris supported by a scholarship, and was educated at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and the École Normale Supérieure. Poet, politician, and one of the founders of the \textit{Négritude} movement, Césaire returned to Martinique in 1939, where he taught at the Lycée Schoelcher, and was a powerful influence on Frantz Fanon. His political career began in 1945, when he was elected mayor of Fort-de-France, and he served for many years as Martinique’s \textit{député} to the French National Assembly.

\textsuperscript{19} Fanon, \textit{Black Skin, White Masks}, 122.
Europeans, now selected and segregated according to racialized hierarchies that had been perpetuated for centuries overseas. Here the Shoah, and the exceptional concentration of an industrialized genocide, enters another genealogy: that of the long history of colonial terror now exercised on European soil. Auschwitz becomes the extreme, shocking realization of the debt of European modernity to colonial reason.\textsuperscript{20} As a commentator has recently suggested, “Césaire takes the camp – to the degree that its exceptional status permits the comprehension of the concentrated colonial universe – as symbolizing, to paraphrase Giorgio Agamben’s formula, the biopolitical \textit{nomos} of colonialism.”\textsuperscript{21} We are brought to Albert Memmi’s noted affirmation that, in its inescapable structural inequality, every colonial system is a form of fascism.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{II. COLONIAL CARTOGRAPHIES}

Philosophy as an institutional practice, as a discursive field, was historically dependent as a part of the very formation of modern Europe, on the persistent distance and differing of the metropolitan center from the colonial periphery that permitted the (violent) maintenance of the illusory and hierarchical distinction between separate worlds. Yet this framing is consistently betrayed by the political and cultural economy that establishes and identifies “center” and “periphery,” “First” and “Third” World, “developed” and “underdeveloped,” within a common cartography of differentiated powers. For the very sense of “Europe,” its authority and reason, is dependent, as the Congolese philosopher Valentin Y. Mudimbe has carefully argued, on the existence and invention of “Africa,” “Asia,” “Oceania,” and the “Americas.”\textsuperscript{23}

“In the 1950s, Octave Mannoni, Frantz Fanon, and Albert Memmi transformed the paradigm of colonial studies.”\textsuperscript{24} To this apt observation by Françoise Verges, it would surely be no exaggeration to argue that such voices have grown

\textsuperscript{20} Césaire, \textit{Discours sur le colonialisme}; Discourse on Colonialism.

\textsuperscript{21} Dino Costantini, \textit{Una malattia europea} (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2006), 218.


\textsuperscript{23} Valentin Y. Mudimbe, \textit{The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{24} Françoise Vergès, \textit{Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 11. Octave Mannoni (1899–1989) was a psychoanalyst who spent more than two decades in the French colony of Madagascar. On returning to France, he was much influenced by the work of Jacques Lacan. He is most widely known for his book \textit{Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization} (1950). Albert Memmi (1920– ), whose mother tongue was Arabic, is of Jewish origin and was brought up in French
in volume in the radical reconstitution of critical thought throughout the developed world since that decade. Breaking the “implacable dependence” (Memmi) between the colonizer and the colonized, it has subsequently become impossible to ignore a fracture destined to vibrate throughout the body of occidental thought, its abstract purity now stained by the contingent disruptions of unruly histories, negated bodies, and the brutal inscriptions of power. Here the repressed colonial archive, and hence the secret histories of the historical and cultural making of modernity and its overall political economy, can no longer be evaded or marginalized.

At this point, we can ask, with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who is the “we” of philosophy?25 In her extended discussion of the anthropological moment of Kantian reason in the context of The Critique of Reason, the Bengali critic points to the Kantian evocation of the non-European native as the limit case of reason: “He is only a casual object of thought, not a paradigmatic example. He is not only not the subject as such; he also does not quite make it as an example of the thing or its species as natural product.”26 In other words, the presence of the native of Tierra del Fuego is not required, need not even exist, for the passage of philosophy to occur. Such “natives” sustain a narrative – anthropological, exotic, instances of the sublime – that does not yet bear the European signature of history. As the author of A Critique of Postcolonial Reason (the very title announces a doubling and dispersal of the inherited imposition of a Kantian logic) concludes: “We find here the axiomatics of imperialism as a natural argument to indicate the limits of the cognition of (cultural) man … The subject as such in Kant is geopolitically differentiated” (CPR 26–7).

The reply at this point is most certainly not about how to appropriate the “native informant” in order to mend and ultimately reconfirm a reconfigured discourse – yet a further imperial invocation – but precisely to leave the gaps, the holes, in critical language open, ambiguous, susceptible to eventual suturing into another place, another language, another subject- hood.

colonial Tunisia. He is known as both a novelist and for his critical work The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957).

25. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (February 24, 1942– ; born in Calcutta, India) received a BA in English from Calcutta University (1959), and a PhD in comparative literature from Cornell University (1967). Influenced by Derrida, Guha, and Said, she has taught at the University of Pittsburgh and, since 1991, Columbia University, where she is now a university professor and Director of the Center for Comparative Literature and Society. Among her most important works are: her “Translator’s Preface” to Derrida’s Of Grammatology; In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics; The Post-Colonial Critic; and A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present.

Two centuries after Kant, such objections can still be moved against those who are apparently among the most radical expression of contemporary critical thought: Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. In some densely argued pages in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak deconstructs the unsuspected architecture of an ingenuous homogeneity in the Parisian referencing of subaltern struggles in both the First and the Third World. Via an intellectually staged ventriloquism, she argues, the rest of the world is still reduced to the rules of representation that render transparent the philosopher’s will. Subjected to totalizing maps of power and desire, to the *vertreten* and *darstellen* of political and ideological representation, there is a simultaneous disavowal of the asymmetrical, inconclusive, and lived complexities of other, worldly subjects. As Spivak puts it, referring to Foucault and Deleuze, the “Third World can enter the resistance program of an alliance politics directed against a ‘unified repression’ only when it is confined to the third-world groups that are directly accessible to the First World” (CPR 277). This is to forget the important advice of Assia Djebar: “Don’t claim to ‘speak for’ or worse, to ‘speak on,’ barely speaking next to, and if possible very close to …”27

There is, as Spivak notes, no space for a “counterhegemonic ideological production” (CPR 255). In this “empirical register of resistance talk,” intellectual radicalism ends up playing witness to “capitalist colonialism” and its “positivist empiricism” (CPR 254–5). With the abstract concepts of the working class, the subaltern, and the multitude, political and ideological representation is reduced to the purity of an abstract plane, however folded and multiplied, that provokes the lines of flight, or relay, of theory itself, confirming the philosopher’s desired will to revolt, while it paradoxically “restores the category of the sovereign subject within the theory that seems most to question it” (CPR 261).

The provenance of the pronouncement continues to configure the analytical constellation in a “topographical reinscription of imperialism” that invariably, even in its most radical formulations, exposes First World concerns (CPR 279). The failure and refusal to track discontinuity – geographical, economical, social, and cultural – in the differentiated but entwined complexity of what is clearly now a planetary mode of production and being ensures the sovereignty of the occidental subject as the subject of history. In such a manner, Foucault’s clinic, asylum, and prison, like “determinitalization” in Deleuze and Guattari, “seem to be screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism” (CPR 279):

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This reintroduces the constitutive subject on at least two levels: the Subject of desire and power as an irreducible methodological presupposition; and the self-proximate, if not identical, subject of the oppressed. Further, the intellectuals, who are neither of these S/subjects, become transparent in the relay race, for they merely report on the nonrepresented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of (the unnamed Subject irreducibly proposed by) power and desire. (CPR 264–5)

Beyond the troubling unconscious and the disturbance of ambiguity, all is dispersed into mobile vectors where dynamic monads form dualisms but avoid contaminating contradictions and the potential locations of critique: a machine “without organs.” The subaltern is not allowed to invest in her itinerary, for she is already produced and spoken for in a logic overdetermined by economical, political, and cultural powers that are also theoretical. This particular subject – subaltern, oppressed, in resistance, and in revolt – belongs, as Spivak bluntly puts it, “to the exploiters side of the international division of labor. It is impossible for contemporary French intellectuals to imagine the kind of Power and Desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe” (CPR 265). I think we can safely substitute occidental for “French” on this point. The eventual hole, rent, and discontinuity in this discursive tissue challenges the sanctioned ignorance of a simulated identification with the “other,” which is always about some form of self-investment. It registers precisely what exceeds and escapes “my” world as an insistent irreducibility: a perpetual interrogation and interruption of my “self” and its associated languages of meaning and managing the world.

This is not, of course, to suggest that such critical languages are unable to travel fruitfully elsewhere. However, it is precisely the fact of their being “othered” in the elsewhere that proves pertinent. Europe, once systemized in the Caribbean, for example, proposes a radical reassessment: from Fanon’s stern insistence on taking the limits of European humanism seriously to Glissant’s fluid, Deleuzian-influenced, explorations of the political and poetical conditions of créolité.28 Here a continual metissage of languages, histories and cultures propose a profoundly Caribbean critical perspective in which Europe, Africa,

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28. Édouard Glissant (1928– ; born in Martinique) is a poet and writer, critically renowned for promoting a Caribbean and postcolonial understanding of critical creolization that produces a complex archipelago of shared difference. He draws inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari’s work on rhizomatic becoming and “minor” literatures. Glissant’s most important critical writings in English are Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays, and Poetics of Relation. [*] For further discussion of Glissant, see the essay by Rosi Braidotti in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
and the Americas are critically conjoined in earshot of the terrifying rhythms of slavery and its racist aftermath. Here, where the so-called “periphery” radically reassess the “center,” the teleology of occidental “progress” is dispersed in an altogether more complex, unfinished, and rhizomatic becoming.

III. THE VIOLENCE OF IDENTITY

The historical sovereignty of this discourse, its position, its power, is founded, as Foucault himself insisted in *L’Archeologie du savoir* (1969), on the organizing principles of the occidental *ratio* in its relationship with all other societies. The elsewhere is always a product, an extension, and an “invention” of that cultural and historical order: a European mandate on the rest of the planet. The violence of the ensuing dichotomies is the violence of thinking the world in a manner that only mirrors your “self.” As Mudimbe, following Foucault, points out, this is precisely the “epistemological possibility” of the discourse in question: the possibility and subsequent disciplining of thought that produces anthropology, comparative linguistics, geography, sociology, history, and the social sciences in general, as part of a precise historical and cultural, hence epistemic, formation.

The power and violence of language is evidenced in the success of conceptual systems able to take possession of the world in such a manner that they are universally recognized. To be recognized implies inhabiting this syntax. The structural violence of thought is enacted precisely in becoming a “subject.” As Judith Butler argues, the subject must first be subjected, that is, subordinated and disciplined by the languages that permit her or him to appear and to act as a recognizable agent; that is, as a “subject.”29 Here we can register in the discursive formation of an “Orient,” an “Africa,” “underdevelopment,” the “South,” the “subaltern,” an “other,” the power of language that is simultaneously the language of power inscribed in the categorization of the world: the objectification of a precise subjectivity.

What is being entertained here is the undoing and dispersal – *not the cancellation* – of that configuration of knowledge, leading, in turn, to the unwinding of the legislative authority of the West as the unique subject of history. This is to push thinking into uncharted territory, for, to borrow a metaphor from urban geography, it suggests a vast and indefinite area – like the sprawling urban slums and shanty towns peopled by a complex, anonymous, marginalized underclass that is neither recognized as urban nor rural – that lies between disciplinary definitions and other modalities of knowledge (or gnosis, as Mudimbe puts

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it). If the former presents themselves in terms of an epistemic and rigorous configuration of knowledge that pretends to impose itself universally and hence unilaterally, the latter, as a heterogeneous and unsystematic interrogation of that configuration, sets a limit, proposing an insistent border that provokes a transit, a translation, an elsewhere.

The occidental institution of philosophy rarely recognizes the full significance of this critical challenge. When there is seemingly a direct response – Deleuze, Negri, and Hardt – it remains locked within the confirmation of its own discursive horizon. As Spivak rightly points out, the other, as subaltern, multitude, immigrant, sustains, rather than shatters, the authority of the critical paradigm. It is precisely here that the deconstructive turn within occidental reasoning becomes most suggestive and subversive: as the internal “outsider,” as the voice that speaks the “West” without being fully reducible to the law of its logos: thinking on the threshold of metaphysical certainties. If less direct, interesting symptoms have also emerged in the Italian proposal of “weak thought” (Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti) and the necessary recognition of the undoing of the metaphysical will. More recently there have been the precise considerations of Giorgio Agamben on the critical limits of representation and the authorization of its reason confronted with the incommensurable instance of genocide, the death camp, and the essential violence on which the liberal state establishes and, ultimately, propagates its legitimacy.

To return to Butler’s observations on our subjection in the languages in which we appear, act, and become “subjects,” the complex traffic between occidental thought and the seemingly external space of the non occidental has now to be located in the coeval coordinates of a shared planetary spatiotemporality. The distance sought by a discipline is ontologically shrunk to a disturbing proximity, and the precise ethnoscape (Appadurai) and location (Bhabha) of a discursive formation that declares itself universal looms into view.

If the West has worlded the world, if modernity has become the syntax of historical, cultural, and economic exchange, then Fabian’s crucial idea of a shared or coeval time undermines an occidental epistemology intent on constructing, cataloguing, and distancing “objects” of study, polity, and rule. It is precisely here, as Bhabha argues, that the mimicry, repetition, and dissemination of

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*30. “Weak thought” is discussed in this volume in the essay by Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder.
33. Fabian, Time and the Other.
modernity leads to the performative realizations of everyday hybridization, creolization, and métissage, leads to the emerging critical problematic of translation: historical, cultural, and poetical. If this is by now a well-rehearsed debate in anthropology and postcolonial literary and cultural studies, it continues to propose a radical, but largely unsuspected, reconfiguration of the social and human sciences tout court. It is in this profound sense that the practices of the disciplines, and their scriptural economies of facts, documents, texts, and testimonies, always remain instances of interpretation, sites of ambivalence: are always historical and political acts. Philosophy is neither immune nor able to secede from this constellation.

Against this expansion of critical horizons we can conclude this journey by returning to Stuart Hall. Hall’s earlier important work on the seemingly local configurations of television and the media in contemporary British culture was motivated by attention to the construction and articulation of a social, political, and cultural consensus. It was subsequently refined in his highly influential elaborations of the interactive construction of race in the positioning and defining of the racialized subject in the unfolding narration of the nation. This critical work rendered the performative affects of a language deeply political. It also rendered highly problematic the assumed neutrality and accompanying authority of the disciplinary voice (from sociology and social history to political and media commentary) that is analyzing, explaining, and defining the actors involved. Increasingly in Hall’s more recent work, it has been in the altogether less-guaranteed spaces provided and provoked by the languages of the visual arts that such arguments have found an increasing resonance. The turn to these languages, and a seemingly aesthetic discourse, has paradoxically provided the means to probe, provoke, and propagate a wider sense of the “political.” In the 1980s and the Thatcherite epoch characterized by riots and resentment against racialized policing, and the tightening definitions of nation and citizenship, the radical insistence on being both black and British challenged a narrowing of social and cultural perspectives. This spilled over, not only into the streets, but also into an avantgardist black arts movement. The photographic, film and visual

34. Homi K. Bhabha (November 1, 1949– ; born in Mumbai, India) received a BA from the University of Mumbai and a PhD in English literature from Christ Church, Oxford University. Among his influences are Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, and Said. He has taught in the English Department at the University of Sussex (1978–94), in Humanities at the University of Chicago (1996–2000), and as Professor of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University (2001– ), where he also is Director of the Humanities Center. His best-known work is The Location of Culture.

35. Apart from many articles and talks on the argument, the culmination of Hall’s direct involvement in these critical artistic processes has been his promotion and overseeing of the realization of the new location of the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) and Autograph ABP at Rivington Place that opened in London in 2007.
work of young black artists such as Isaac Julien, Mona Hartoum, Keith Piper, Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers, and Sutapa Biswas, along with many others, opened up an important series of interventionary spaces in Britain. Through challenging more conservative understandings, the simultaneous occupation of aesthetic and ethical discourses (art and philosophy) achieved the conjunctural realization of a new critical constellation. Here, in the interdisciplinary and intercultural spaces registered and explored in the visual frame, inherited understandings of identity, language, and art were effectively reconfigured.

In this hybridizing space, sustained in the ambivalence between poetics and philosophy, critical distinctions between institutional and discursive competence (for example, between cultural and postcolonial studies) become increasingly difficult to maintain in a differentiated but shared planetary mesh. Critically attuned to the complex orchestration of location, the very idea of maintaining historical, cultural, disciplinary, ethnic, and religious autonomies sharply signals the rhetorical limits of “globalization.” It is surely against this inherited positioning of authority and “knowledge” that occidental philosophy is required to measure itself. Its very identity, as with all identities, is perhaps less to be defended and rather to be disturbed and dissipated in order that other possibilities, other horizons, other hopes can acquire cultural shape and historical force.
THE “ETHICAL TURN” IN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE 1980S

Robert Eaglestone

There is a general consensus that the late 1970s and 1980s saw an “ethical turn” in continental philosophy. Yet, like all generalizations about moments and movements in the history of philosophy, this overstatement has some truth about it. On the one hand, there was a change in the tenor of discussions; on the other, it is unclear if this was a wider “turn” or an “excavation” of a layer of thought brought to the surface by intellectual, cultural, and social events or the sudden elevation of one philosophical and theoretical conversation over others. The aim of this chapter is to explore this moment, its origins, and its significance. However, the nature of the subject matter makes this discussion much more complex.

Philosophizing about ethics is hard, especially in the continental tradition, because “ethics” is never just one topic among others; it is not what Heidegger calls “a classroom matter.”1 Faced properly, questions of ethics are interwoven with the most demanding questions that can be asked. Theodor Adorno finds a line in Sartre’s Morts sans Sépulture that expresses this:

[It] is said by a young resistance fighter who is subjected to torture, who asks whether one should live in a world in which one is beaten until one’s bones are smashed. Since it concerns the possibility of the affirmation of life, this question cannot be evaded. And I would think that any thought which is not measured by this standard, which does not assimilate it theoretically, simply pushes aside at the

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outset that which thought should address – so that it cannot really be called thought at all.\(^2\)

Ethics as a field of inquiry should not only challenge us, as it were, intellectually. It also overwhols the disciplines and structures that try to analyze, describe, or encapsulate it, and so to attend to ethics – to the standard Adorno rightly demands here – is not just to attend to a narrow philosophical subject but to attend to an almost-infinite series of demands and questions across a huge range of discourses: technological, ontological, juridical, historical, cultural, social, and aesthetic.

Moreover, as the citation from Adorno suggests, there is a key sense in which the continental and analytic/Anglo-American traditions of ethical inquiry differ. Where the analytic/Anglo-American tradition of ethical inquiry can often appear etiolated, inquiring either into the meaning of ethical language or into the “professional ethics” of, say, doctors, the continental tradition is profoundly and self-consciously interwoven with history, both the history of philosophy and what one might call (hoping to encapsulate both considerations of the “history of being” and the micro-histories of the political) the histories of the world. This is to say that while the analytic/Anglo-American tradition often allies itself to law and legalistic frameworks, the continental tradition finds resources in the political, the historical, the literary, and the religious.

It is with these two ideas in mind – the sense that ethics is not simply one discourse among others, and the sense of its inextricable interweaving with history in the continental tradition – that the “ethical turn” of the 1980s has to be located. As I have suggested, like most “turns” in the history of philosophy, the shift in interest in relation to ethics was not so much a “turn,” or even a “return,” but more a twist in a continually changing and developing path. It represented a change both in thought and in the historical and cultural context of that thinking, but it did not generate a revolution. Its origins can be traced through two paths: through the historical conditions and intellectual questions that led to it and through the surge of interest in the major figure in this turn, Emmanuel Levinas.

I. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The late 1970s and early 1980s were disorienting times for continental philosophy. First, and perhaps most urgently, a huge array of interlinked issues that

stemmed from the nature and history of modernity were making an impact on intellectual life and work. The broad scope of issues included: feminism and other questions of gender relations and sexuality; questions about race, racism, and of the postcolonial settlement, about migration and state power; the relation between indigenous and migrant traditions and collective memories (“multiculturalism”); increasing flexibility of capital and global markets; contrasts between secular and religious frameworks; the changing nature of the industrial base in the West and the onset of the “digital age” – indeed, many of the complex cluster of issues that have come to be located in the early twenty-first century under the banner of “globalization.” In addition, the rapid rise of technology raised questions from the fields of medicine and science about the nature of humanity in relation to bodily life and to consciousness. Finally, the environmental movement began to gather momentum in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and began to raise philosophical and ethical questions. While some of these issues and positions for inquiry found themselves in allegiance, others found themselves competing for intellectual space. All investigate the limitations of ethics as an intellectual location and questioned ethical frameworks from their particular standpoint.3

Second, many of the fundamental questions put to Western thought by, for example, Nietzsche and Freud, two “masters of suspicion,” and in a more technically philosophical way by Husserl and by Heidegger, seemed to reemerge, as if generations had awoken from the nightmare of the Second World War and the happy dream of the 1960s. The great questions of the late nineteenth century that pertained to ethics in this broader sense – questions of nihilism, of science, of post-theological humanity – and the reemergence of questions that had begun to circulate at the beginning of the twentieth century – of order, of subjectivity, of what the human might be, of technology – seemed to rearticulate themselves and demand new answers. In addition, the experience of the Holocaust and other genocides, of vicious colonial wars and of voices previously unheard by the mainstream philosophical traditions became added to this complex mélange. Institutionally, too, there were changes. Thinkers from the canon of European thought – such as Husserl and Heidegger, but others, too – had been sidelined by other, principally analytic but also sociological and psychological ways of approaching issues and problems. In the US, these philosophers were isolated even within philosophy departments because they were seen to be engaged with “the history of philosophy” and were rarely taken seriously, except in departments that explored the philosophy of religion. However, intellectual changes,

*3. Many of the issues mentioned here – including gender and sexuality, postcolonialism, citizenship, environmentalism, and globalization – are discussed in essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
often stemming from literature departments, created a new interest in the thinkers from this canon, and this itself led to a renewed interest in ethics.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the political realm was radically changing: a generation earlier, the crimes of Stalinism and the events of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 led some intellectuals either into a wholesale reevaluation of their ethical and political commitments, or they engaged in arguments that often became farcical defenses of communism and Stalinism or of an exhausted and corrupt leftist tradition. By the 1970s, the failure of Marxism had become clear: the collapse of the “events” of 1968 in Paris (in which, of course, many French intellectuals had been involved), the crushing of the Prague “Spring,” and the realization of the horrors of Mao’s “Cultural Revolution” were all part of this, which coincided with the rise of an intellectually aggressive new Right, of which the apotheosis was the presidency of Ronald Reagan and premiership of Margaret Thatcher. The withering away of a broadly Marxist intellectual framework, which had generated either sufficient answers or, at the very least, provided a marxisant discourse for intellectual inquiry, meant that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Marxism no longer offered convincing answers to questions of justice, especially social justice. Indeed, none of the previously established systems, either extant or ideal, could answer the political and social questions put to them.

In one way, all three of these areas – the changing status of political ideologies, rapid historical and social change, and the return of the most demanding intellectual questions – were often, and sometimes clumsily, summed up in the term “postmodernism.” In this light, the question arose as to the “ethics of postmodernism,” meaning the ethical response to all these complex interrelated issues and, in turn, what they meant for more traditional conceptions of ethics.

However, in a more profound way, these issues were bound up with a changing conception of – to speak very broadly – “otherness,” and it is this concept that underlies much of the renewed interest in ethics. Of course, the term “otherness” is in one sense banal and too general, and led, naturally, to all sorts of banalities and generalities that amounted to little more than exhortations to “be good” or “play nicely.” However, “otherness” also points to a complex series of interactions between the world and systems of thought. It can mean both a concrete living other, a person, persons, or categories of traditions that are different from the accepted conventions or general consensus. It can also be understood to mean that which is outside, an indefinable thing outside the system that indicates that the system is not closed. This second sense of “otherness,” for example, underlies much of Derrida’s work. Deconstruction, he says, is:

a search for, but itself the consequence of, the fact that the system is impossible; it often consists … in making appear – in each alleged
system, in each self-interpretation of and by a system – a force of dislocation, a limit in the totalization ... it consists ... in remarking ... that what has made it possible for philosophers to effect a system is nothing other than a ... certain incapacity to close the system.4

It consists, in other words, of encountering the outside through an analysis that is other to the dominant discourse. And it is Derrida’s work – itself and its influence – that played a crucial role in the “ethical turn.” However, Derrida’s own thinking, especially in relation to otherness, was shaped in turn by his encounter with the work of Levinas, a figure whose philosophical considerations of the other are unparalleled. Indeed, it is fair to say that, perhaps led by Derrida, the major influence in the turn toward ethics in the 1980s was the surge of interest – in France and in the anglophone world – in Levinas. As Alain Badiou writes, in a backhanded compliment, it is to Levinas “that we owe, long before the current fashion, a kind of ethical radicalism.”5

II. Levinas’s Life and Work

Unlike many philosophers, who, in Heidegger’s dictum, were born, thought, and died, Levinas’s life was involved with the major events of Europe in the twentieth century and his biography is a useful way of situating his philosophical and ethical work and its relationship to history. Born in 1906 (or, in the then Russian Calendar, December 1905), in Kovno in Lithuania, his family was part of the large Jewish community there. Fleeing the German occupation in 1915, Levinas’s family moved to Ukraine, and returned to Lithuania in 1920. In 1923, he went to study philosophy in France, and then in 1928, he traveled to Germany, to further explore Husserl’s work. While in Germany, however, he was exposed to the work of Heidegger. In 1930, he married, became a French citizen, did military service and took a job teaching for the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris. Drafted into the army in 1939, he was captured by the Germans in 1940 and imprisoned in a camp for Jewish prisoners of war. His status as a French soldier protected him from being murdered in the Holocaust. However, while his wife and daughter were hidden in France, the rest of his family in Lithuania were murdered by the Nazis or by Lithuanian nationalists.

After the war, Levinas returned to France and became director of the École Normale Israélite Orientale. Mixing in philosophical circles in Paris, Levinas

published papers on a number of themes connected to ethics. He also began a study of Talmud with an enigmatic but influential master, Monsieur Chouchani. Levinas became actively involved in Jewish intellectual life and became a major figure in the Jewish community, often giving radio talks and speaking at events. His first book, *Existence and Existents*, was published in 1947. However, the first of his two most important books, *Totality and Infinity*, was not published until 1961. Levinas taught at three well-known universities in Paris: in 1964, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at Poitiers, in 1967 at Paris-Nanterre, and in 1973 at the Sorbonne. His second major book, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence*, was published in 1974. Although he retired in 1976, he continued teaching and writing. In the 1980s and 1990s, many conferences were organized to discuss him and his works. In 1996 Levinas died after a long illness.

Levinas's work is rooted in the phenomenological tradition and interwoven with a concern for Judaism and religion, and with the impact of the Shoah on European Jews. Hence, his work draws on the prominent intellectuals of the European canon and is intimately interwoven with the Holocaust, an event that has led to more ethical questioning than any other in Europe. There is not space here to fully do his work justice, but only to explain why his work became of interest.

Levinas's work is centrally, almost exclusively, concerned with ethics. However, he proffers a number of meanings to the conceptualization of “ethics”: ethics refers to the traditional philosophical discipline; it refers to his own philosophical discourse; and it refers to one's own relation to the other. As I have suggested, his work is both phenomenological and oriented by a tradition of phenomenology, drawn from Husserl and principally, although he was sometimes evasive about this, from Heidegger. The agonistic relationship between Levinas and Heidegger has prompted a significant amount of critical commentary that frequently begins with Levinas's remark that there was a “profound need to leave the climate” of Heidegger's philosophy that is linked with his “conviction that we cannot leave it for a philosophy that would be pre-Heideggerian.” Again, in a 1981 interview, Levinas said that “I think that one cannot seriously philosophize today without traversing the Heideggerian path in some form or other.”

6. “Monsieur Chouchani” was the pseudonym of a mysterious Jewish teacher who in post-Second World War Paris and elsewhere mentored a small number of distinguished students, including Levinas and Elie Wiesel. His gravestone in Montevideo, Uruguay, where he died in 1968, bears the epigraph written by Wiesel, “The wise Rabbi Chouchani of blessed memory. His birth and his life are sealed in enigma.”


speaks of the “debt” that every contemporary philosopher owes to Heidegger, “a debt that he often owes to his regret.”9 Stupefied and disappointed by Heidegger’s active Nazism in 1933, Levinas continued utterly to despise Heidegger and his Nazi sympathies while admiring Being and Time as one the greatest works of philosophy. Even so, he asks if we can “be assured … that there was never any Echo of Evil in it?”10 Still, as Levinas says, “Mont Blanc is Mont Blanc,” meaning that however he feels, the influence is there.11

Levinas’s crucial development of Heidegger’s thought, which reveals a great deal about Levinas’s work and about the ethical turn, can be seen by considering where each locates the “origin” of philosophy. If, for Heidegger, the experience of philosophy, of Dasein’s being an issue for itself, begins with being-toward-death, and the associated phenomena of anxiety and care, it becomes the task of fundamental ontology to uncover these. In contrast, Levinas finds another, and for him, more important and “pre-ontological” starting-point: the encounter with the other. For Levinas, “ethics is first philosophy,” by which he means that it is the actual concrete encounter with the other, with the “face” of the other, that underlies our sense of self and identity, and this in turn is the beginning of Levinas’s understanding of what philosophy is. Philosophy begins, as it were, with the other. For Heidegger, death has mine-only-ness (Jemeiningkeit): “dying … is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative” and it is through this angst that Dasein comes to its authenticity and individuality.12 For Levinas, on the other hand, what generates crucial awareness, and self-understanding, is revealed in the underpinnings of existence – what it means to be other. He writes: “‘Me’ is not an inimitable nuance of Jemeiningkeit that would be added on to a being belonging to the genus ‘soul’ or ‘man’ or ‘individual,’ and would thus be common to several souls, men and individuals.”13 In other words, one’s sense of subjectivity is not a category in a philosophical anthropology or a defining character of what it is to be “human.” Rather, it is the basis of any such definition in the first place: “it is I, I and no one else, who am a hostage for the others. … The self in a being is exactly the not-being-able-to-slip-away-from an assignation” (OTB 26–7). The experience of ethics is that which underlies the self and is inescapable. Because ethics is not solipsistic but

11. Levinas, God, Death and Time, 158.
is (not just “comes from,” but is) the experience of the other or, as Levinas calls it, “proximity,” ethics is experienced as “obsession” (OTB 101): “responsibility justified by no prior commitment” (OTB 102); being “summoned as someone irreplaceable” (OTB 114); “being-in-one’s-skin, having-the-other-in-one’s skin” (OTB 115); the “unconditionality of being hostage” (OTB 117); “an accusation which I cannot answer, but for which I cannot decline responsibility” (OTB 127).

A crucial passage in Otherwise than Being illuminates this. He asks: “[Why] does the other concern me? What is Hecuba to me? Am I my brother’s keeper?” His answer is that these questions:

have meaning only if one has already supposed the ego is concerned only with itself, is only a concern for itself. In this hypothesis, it indeed remains incomprehensible that the absolute outside-of-me, the other, would concern me. But in the “pre-history” of the ego posited for itself speaks a responsibility, the self is through and through a hostage, older than the ego, prior to principles.

(OTB 117)

He is suggesting that before we think of ourselves as ourselves, we must consider our relationship to others because we are already responsible for the others who people the world. We are, to use one of his many terms for the experience of obligation, their hostages, and their very otherness – rather than some shared quality, such as national identity – imposes this burden on us. One of his key terms for this experience of the ethical both stems from and is named “the face.” By this he means that when we face someone, before we decide how to respond (to give or not to give a beggar money, to wish someone “good morning” or to turn away), we are already put into a relationship with them. This unconditional responsibility is not something we take on or a rule by which we agree to be bound; instead, it exists before us and we are “thrown” into it, without any choice.

Levinas’s work, then, is not aiming to offer a new moral or ethical system or provide a regulated moral standard; rather, it is an attempt to understand how our obligations to others arise, and this means that it is a form of metaethics. This aspect of Levinas’s thought has caused some confusion. With the exception of some of his radio talks, Levinas’s own philosophical work is not exhortative to an ethical life or a moral or political code. Rather, it is descriptive of the grounds of possibility of such codes – and indeed of all human interaction – in the first place. Levinas is not demanding that we become aware of the other, but
is instead arguing phenomenologically that we always already are aware of the other. For example, in one of the most complex passages in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas argues that murder already acknowledges the ethical relationship. He suggests that murder is not the domination or use of someone, the turning of another person from an end to a use. Instead, it is to recognize them as Other, as beyond one's power: the “Other is the sole being I can wish to kill.” One does not speak of killing a chair, or of murdering a cup of coffee. (One might speak of murdering – rather than butchering – a cow, which would raise the question, if, for Levinas or post-Levinasian thought, animals can be “other” in this ethical sense). The importance of Levinas’s work, however, lies not only with the work itself; it also lies with its influence and reception, with how it became the fulcrum for the “ethical turn.”

III. LEVINAS’S THOUGHT AND THE “ETHICAL TURN”

Levinas’s thought is often understood as deeply interwoven with that of his friend and philosophical colleague, the critic and novelist Maurice Blanchot. Levinas and Blanchot met as students, and throughout their lives, their works responded to each other. Blanchot’s thought is varied and complex, and in general focused on but not limited to the aesthetic, broadly defined. In this ethical context, there are three key elements that intertwine with Levinas (and are an influence on Derrida). The first is his unswerving thinking of singularity: in relation to literature, for example, he writes that:

> the essence of literature is precisely to evade any essential characterization, any affirmation which would stabilize or even realize it: it is never already there, it is always to be rediscovered or reinvented. It is never even certain that the words “literature” or “art” correspond to anything real, anything possible, or anything important.15

That is to say, the categories of “art” and “literature” already overcode or cover up the singular event of the literary text: to properly encounter a work of literature we cannot look for a “core” of the literary, a generic marker that all literary texts share. This is even more the case with the event of a human: like Levinas, Blanchot believes there is no “genus” of man. Each is a singularity and this

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creates “the infinite relation of one person to another” which “obligates beyond any obligation.” In turn, this leads to the importance of the idea of “witnessing” to Blanchot. This is not “witnessing” in the sense of reporting back an event, but, in the language he develops from Levinas, a “saying,” a witnessing of the event of the human. One consequence of this is what he sees – in a book mainly if implicitly about Levinas, The Infinite Conversation – as the impossibility of ever “having done” with questioning. Finally, and again in protracted literary dialogue with Levinas – and with his own right-wing views from the 1930s – Blanchot is centrally concerned with the Holocaust. His poetic/philosophical fragmentary meditation, The Writing of the Disaster is in no small part about this.

There are also congruencies between Levinas’s work and the thought of Vladimir Jankélévitch, a thinker very little known outside France, as Levinas’s short account of him in Outside the Subject illustrates. Like Levinas, Jankélévitch was influenced by Bergson, and sought to develop an ethics – like Levinas – as “first philosophy” that both underlies and is not delimited to declarations of principles. He is perhaps best known for his discussion about the relationship between forgiveness and the genocide of the European Jews. Here, often with the blackest humor, he argued against the possibility of forgiveness for the Nazi crimes:

Today when the sophists recommend forgetfulness, we will forcefully mark our mute and impotent horror before the dogs of hate; we will think hard about the agony of the deportees without sepulchers and of the little children who did not come back. Because this agony will last until the end of the world.

Here, both his sense of ethics and his division of “scientific” time and duration, developed from Bergson, bring to the fore the inexhaustibility of the Shoah.

This way of conceptualizing ethics – as interwoven with metaphysics, as first philosophy – that is common to Levinas, Blanchot, and Jankélévitch, and was taken up by others, as I will suggest below, is strikingly different from some others and is the core of the “ethical turn.” In contrast, for example, Foucault’s late work is sometimes discussed or named as ethics. In a way, this has some purchase; however, his work focused more on the “technics of the self” – that is, the historical, political and cultural matrices that form subjectivity and the

18. Derrida’s essay “On Forgiveness” also addresses Jankélévitch’s work.
the “ethical turn” in continental philosophy

possibility of resistance to them or action within them – than on ethics per se, even as he attempted to develop ways of thinking about “how to live” in the contemporary situation of modernity.

IV. THE RECEPTION OF LEVINAS’S WORK AND THE “ETHICAL TURN”

During the 1960s and 1970s, Levinas’s philosophy – his early essays and his two major books Totality and Infinity and Otherwise than Being – remained fairly obscure and seemed to have a limited effect outside of a very narrow philosophical and Jewish intellectual circle. In the Anglo-American world, too, this was the case. Translations of his work were published in an untimely manner and very little critical commentary was produced. Even so, Levinas’s work made an impact in a number of significant places. As I have suggested, his lifelong friend Blanchot was greatly influenced by Levinas’s work and wrote both of and on him. Jean-François Lyotard, too, was greatly influenced by Levinas and discussed his work at length in his most important book, The Differend (1986).

In the philosophy of religion, Levinas’s work made an impact and attracted commentary from, among others, leading theologian Jean-Luc Marion and Pope John Paul II. While Levinas argued that he articulated “a clear distinction, in what I write, between philosophical and confessional texts,” he could not “deny that they ultimately have a common source of inspiration.” If philosophy and religion “happen to be in harmony … it is probably because every philosophical thought rests on pre-philosophical experiences.” Whether Levinas was, at heart, a religious thinker, or one who analyzes some of the phenomenological experiences of religion that are widely shared, is a matter for debate. One must note, however, that the influence of religion in his work has been of interest to theologians. Equally noteworthy, his work does play a large role in Dominique Janicaud’s polemic about phenomenology and religion in French philosophy.

Another major thinker, influenced in some part by Levinas’s work, was Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur is a significant figure in European thought, and his work is

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19. The first book on his work was Edith Wyschogrod’s Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).
20. Kearney, Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers, 54.
23. For a more extensive discussion of Ricoeur’s philosophy, see the essay by Wayne J. Froman in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
characterized by a desire to synthesize differing traditions, both within European philosophy and, especially in his work most centrally concerned with ethics, *Soi-même comme un autre* (*Oneself as Another,* 1990), European and analytic traditions. His work on ethics drew on the conceptions of “virtue ethics” developed by, among others, Alasdair MacIntyre, with whom he had worked closely. Ricoeur’s work had long been concerned with the nature of narrative: in relation to the ethical, he argued that the *ipse*, the self-consistency of a self, is constructed in and understood through, and as, a narrative. Our identifications with our own narratives (which shape our habits, and our ways of seeing ourselves) lead us to moral behavior – preeminently exemplified, for Ricoeur, in keeping one’s word. Perhaps the main consequence of this view is that it becomes impossible for us to see ourselves in isolation from others: instead, this view leads us to understand ourselves as constantly accountable to and responsible for others.

However, central to the “ethical turn” and to the reception and development of Levinas’s work was the influence it had on the work and the thought of Jacques Derrida. *Totality and Infinity* was the subject of a long essay by Derrida, written in 1964, entitled “Violence and Metaphysics.” This wide-ranging and complex essay is, as Robert Bernasconi suggests, not simply a critique by Derrida of Levinas, but one of the earliest of Derrida’s deconstructive readings; indeed, it is “a key document both in Derrida’s development of deconstruction and in the reception of Levinas’s own ethical thinking.”24 In this essay, Derrida’s chief argument is that in *Totality and Infinity* what is fundamental is not ethics *per se* but rather Levinas’s phenomenological method of “uncovering” ethics. Derrida argues that this means that “ethics finds within phenomenology its own meaning, its freedom and its radicality.”25 For Levinas, Derrida suggests, it is the way in which ethics is represented by phenomenological thought that reduces ethics to representation; the “meaning of the non-theoretical as such (for example, ethics or the metaphysical in Levinas’s sense)” is only made clear by “theoretical knowledge.”26 Ethics, then, is not “first philosophy.” Rather, the representation of the ethical by phenomenological thought becomes first philosophy: the nontheoretical, the “true representation” of the face, is understood only through the theoretical, in this case, through the methodology of phenomenology.

Derrida has returned to Levinas and recognizably Levinasian themes throughout his work. However, many of Levinas’s ideas – the idea of the trace, for example – were taken up and transformed by Derrida. In fact, it is possible to see Levinas’s own work after “Violence and Metaphysics,” including *Otherwise than Being*, as a response to Derrida’s intervention. It is through Derrida’s work that a generation of philosophers associated with him and with deconstruction were influenced by Levinas. Indeed, much of the “ethical turn” can be seen as a response to Derrida’s own Levinas-influenced shift of emphasis over his prolific career from linguistic and epistemological questions (broadly understood) to ethical and political ones.

Like Derrida, Levinas’s influence on the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy can also be seen, although he engages more directly with political and communal concerns. In *The Inoperative Community* (1982), Nancy seeks to develop an idea of community beyond the traditional understanding of Western philosophy, which posits a shared characteristic communality – a “communitarian essence” – that makes up a community. Instead, he posits a community of those who have nothing in common, a community made up precisely because they share having nothing in common save their finitude. Indeed, a community is thought out precisely “on the basis of a shared mortality which cannot be subsumed into any communal project or collective identity … the exposure of each singular existence, its being-outside-of-itself, to a death which is revealed in and through the death of others.” What creates the thought of a community is what exceeds it. In this, like Levinas, he prioritizes Mitsein, being-with, over Dasein. He continues to develop this theme – that our commonality lies not in any quality, but in our very experience of finitude and estrangement – in *Being Singular Plural* (1996), where he puts forward the idea that it is each of our being as singular that marks our communality.

V. PROBLEMS WITH LEVINAS AND THE “ETHICAL TURN”

There are two sorts of problems that are raised by the ethical turn within the history of contemporary philosophy. The first concerns the possible religious element of the turn in general, and in particular in Levinas’s thought; the second concerns the relationship between the ethics espoused in this turn and the political.

Levinas’s apparent religious commitments – whether or not they structure his more rigorous philosophical thought – have raised a range of questions. Indeed, one early and critical account by Gillian Rose argues that Levinas simply presents “Judaic theologico-political prophecy or ethics in philosophical terms as the end of philosophy.”\(^{30}\) It is unclear if the very idea of “the other” is not simply a cover for the “divine other.” This is central to a number of critiques of Levinas’s thought by leading contemporary thinkers. Badiou, for example, is highly critical of Levinas. While – rightly – he dismisses much vague talk of “the ethics of difference” that Levinas’s work has inspired as “strikingly different from Levinas’s actual conception of things,” he argues that Levinas is at base a religious thinker.\(^{31}\) Badiou goes further, and more interestingly, he states that “the ethical primacy of the Other over the Same” (what he takes to be the core of Levinas’s thought) requires “that the experience of alterity be ontologically ‘guaranteed’ as the experience of a distance, or of an essential non-identity, the traversal of which is the ethical experience itself. But nothing in the simple phenomenon of the other contains such a guarantee.”

In order for Levinas’s ethics to function, then, Badiou asserts that it needs an axiom, that “ethics requires that the Other in some sense be carried by a principle of alterity which transcends mere finite experience.” Badiou contends that Levinas calls this principle the “Altogether-other” and “it is quite obviously the ethical name for God.” Badiou continues by arguing that this means that Levinas’s philosophy is “annulled by theology” and that “every effort to turn ethics into a principle of thought and action is essentially religious … ethics is a category of pious discourse.” In his book After Finitude (2006), Quentin Meillassoux makes a similar charge, accusing a whole tradition of phenomenological thought of “fideism.” While it is true that Levinas himself was a religious man, and his work is influenced by religious thought, and that uncovering the implicit workings of a reliance on the divine is a valid task for philosophers, there is much in these critiques that is open to question. Badiou bases his claim on an issue in Levinas’s work – the fact that the alterity of the other cannot be guaranteed, or may not “occur” – that is present as an issue in Totality and Infinity, but that is explicitly addressed in Otherwise than Being. There, the “said” – the concretization of the other in a way that prevents its work as a rupture – overgrows the “saying” – the rupture caused by otherness. Moreover, Levinas never claims in his philosophical work that the “altogether-other” is Divine, and it need not be for his work to function as a description of the moment of ethics. Finally, while for Badiou the operation of axioms is crucial for philosophy, for

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Levinas, axiomatic thought is only one part of philosophical work more widely understood.

Slavoj Žižek, too, shares some of these reservations, especially about the possible role of the Divine. Moreover, he finds the stress on the Face, in *Totality and Infinity* – which is changed in *Otherwise than Being* – too strong, even fetishist. Further, and again, without apparently having read *Otherwise than Being*, where Levinas addresses the question of social justice and the “third,” Žižek questions how an asymmetrical ethics – one in which the “I” is responsible to the Other – can form a communal justice.

Žižek’s concerns point to the second array of questions, about the nature of the ethical turn and the political. And it is in Derrida’s use of Levinas that we see this issue in the “ethical turn” being addressed. This relationship is complex: it is not simply a matter of an “exhortative” gesture; after all, one does not need philosophy for preaching, or for trying to live the good life. Rather, the ethical turn, taking its cue from Levinas and from the phenomenological tradition, was not at first a political philosophy but rather a painstaking reflection on thought and on the traditions and canons of European thought itself that were aware of the exclusion or (often murderous) transformation of otherness. Hannah Arendt – like Levinas, a student of Heidegger – wrote, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that we:

> can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to disregard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all the efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain.32

The ethical turn was focused, then, on this “subterranean stream,” which had “come to the surface” (after all, “Nazism was not born in a desert,” Derrida writes).33 It was the sense that Western thought was, as Levinas described it, an “Omnivorous philosophy” in which “‘I think’ comes down to ‘I can’ – to an appropriation of what is, to an exploitation of reality.”34 That is, the ethical turn can be seen as an attempt to disrupt the metaphysics of comprehension, the

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34. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 46.
gesture that characterizes Western thought. But this is not a rejection of Western thought or of politics. Levinas argued, instead, that this moment of engagement with the other, this:

putting into question of the same by the Other … is, beyond knowledge, the condition of philosophy … not only attested by the articulations of Husserlian thought … but also appears at the summits of philosophies: it is the beyond-being of Plato, it is the entry through the door of the agent intellect in Aristotle; it is the idea of God in us, surpassing our capacity as finite beings; it is the exaltation of theoretical reasoning in Kant’s practical reason; it is the study of the recognition by the Other in Hegel himself; it is the renewal of duration in Bergson; it is the sobering of lucid reason in Heidegger.35

The other is both the foundation and the demarcation of the limits of Western thought. However, this putting into question or thinking the limits can happen only in the conceptual language that is available: the language shaped and characterized by the Greek *logos*. For the West, no other conceptual language is easily available. Yet from this, thinkers have begun to develop and structure senses of political commitment. Of course, Levinas’s work has offered a way of discussing ethics that was outside traditional *marxisant* models and drier, more analytic forms of ethical inquiry. That is, his work simply offered a way to discuss ethics and politics when no others were available or convincing. More than this, as I have suggested, it also brought the reflective critique of thought (traditions of thought inherited from Heidegger and strands of phenomenology) into an ethical arena. Even though Levinas’s own politics were conservative, and sometimes, as Howard Caygill has argued, open to question even in light of his own philosophical commitments, the discussion of ethics began to make a bridge between philosophical and political commitments.36

Indeed, in “Violence and Metaphysics,” Derrida proleptically suggests that this sort of approach to ethics is an “ethics without law and without concept, which maintains its non-violent purity only before being determined as concepts and laws.”37 That is, this understanding of otherness could not become a dictate of a series of moral axioms: it is beyond, although foundational for, law and politics. This might suggest its inapplicability to the political in any sense. Indeed, much in the “ethical turn” reflects an intellectual response to

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the Cold War: not by (pace Arendt in the 1950s) contrasting communism with
democratic liberalism, but rather by revealing that any system itself (liberal,
socialist) is a totalizing one. Evaluating systems in this way, in a globalized era,
might be seen as enabling a new world order or it could, more sinisterly, be seen
as an abdication of political responsibility. It is precisely this suggestion that
one of the leading thinkers of the “ethical turn,” Simon Critchley, has sought to
address. Critchley’s first book, The Ethics of Deconstruction, aimed to uncover
the role that Levinas’s thought played in Derrida’s work and to argue that decon-
struction was ethical in Levinas’s sense. His recent work continues to develop
this line of thought and to explore the impact of the ethical turn on current
political thought. Critchley argues that “ethics without politics is empty … poli-
tics without ethics are blind … we need ethics in order to see what to do in a
political situation.”38 He argues that the problem with much traditional thinking
about politics is that it is “archic: it is obsessed with the moment of founda-
tion, origination, declaration, or institution that is linked to the act of govern-
ment, of sovereignty, of establishment of a state” (128). In contrast, the form of
politics that he develops, from the ethical turn, is what he describes as “anar-
chical meta-politics.” By this, and following up Levinas’s suggestions, Critchley
is not suggesting that anarchy should be a new “arche” – another political cate-
gory – but that it should be the “negation of a totality and not the affirm-
tion of a new totality … a radical disturbance of the state, a disruption of the
state’s attempt to set itself up or erect itself into a whole” (122). “We might say,”
he continues, “that ethical anarchy is the experience of the multiple singulari-
ties of the encounter with others that defines the experience of sociality” (123).
This means that politics, while guided by ethics, cannot respond to “systemic or
structural laws” (132), or overarching principles, but requires “subjective inven-
tion, imagination and endurance, not to mention tenacity and cunning” (132).
The result of the ethical turn in philosophy is to “construct political subjectivi-
ties that are not arbitrary or relativistic, but that are articulations of an ethical
demand whose scope is universal and whose evidence is faced in a concrete
situation. This is dirty, local, practical and largely unthrilling work” (132).

In a similar vein, Judith Butler’s recent work circles around Levinasian themes
and responses to political questions. Like Critchley, she seeks to link the ethical
and political realms through a consideration of the Levinasian face, through
issues of vulnerability. She writes that if:

the humanities has a future as cultural criticism, and cultural criti-
cism has a task at the present moment, it is no doubt to return us to

38. Simon Critchley, Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance (London:
Verso, 2007), 120. Subsequent references to this text are cited parenthetically by page number.
the human where we do not expect to find it, in its frailty and at the limit of its capacity to make sense. We would have to investigate the human at the limits of what we can know, what we can hear, what we can see, what we can sense.39

Critchley, Butler, and others are seeking philosophically informed ethical/political responses from outside the conventional Left/Right positions and are a part of the continuing legacy of the “ethical turn.”

VI. CONCLUSION

I have argued that the transformation in continental philosophy in the 1980s, resulting in the “ethical turn,” was a response to political, cultural, and historical events. The growing number of new areas of philosophical interest and a return to older questions that analyze, both practically and intellectually, the Marxist tradition led to a reconsideration of the category of “otherness.” While Jacques Derrida was perhaps the central, and most well known, figure in this, the primary influence was Emmanuel Levinas, and much of the “ethical turn” can be seen as an exploration and development of themes in his philosophy.

Rooted agonistically in the phenomenological tradition and in a philosophical consideration of the darkest moments of twentieth-century European history, Levinas argued that “ethics was first philosophy”; that is, that our ethical commitments originate in the concrete experience of our encounter with the other and that this “precedes” ontology and subjectivity, that “the self is through and through a hostage, older than the ego, prior to principles” (OTB 117). Until the 1970s and 1980s, this work had a narrow but significant influence. Over time it has become a major force in the theorization of ethics. Although the Levinasian approach – and the “ethical turn” in general – has been criticized for being apolitical and religious, its influence and legacy remains in the work of many recent thinkers who have countered these claims by developing further these Levinasian insights.

11

FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY: COMING OF AGE

Rosi Braidotti

I. THE MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES OF FEMINIST THOUGHT

Around 1981, as Jane Gallop put it in her homonymous book, the second feminist wave enters officially into the academic curriculum of American universities. The baby-boomers, whose restlessness and egalitarian aspirations shaped the politics and the cultural revolution of the 1970s, come of academic age in the 1980s and go knocking on the doors of academia, demanding reforms of the canonical curriculum that will reflect the concerns and anxieties of their generation. The disciplinary area that is most receptive to the theoretical insights, the political passions and the innovative style of the radical epistemologies of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s is not, predictably enough, philosophy. The academic, institutional practice of philosophy is still quite conservative at the dawn of the 1980s, as argued in this volume by Judith Butler and Braidotti. It tends to resist against the swelling tide of radical philosophies and the social and political turmoil of the period. A crucial element of this hostility is related to the “Franco-American disconnection,”¹ and it underscores the extent to which French poststructuralist thought actually shaped the theoretical concerns of the rebellious generation who entered US academia at the end of the 1970s and was thus well placed to shape the agenda throughout the 1980s.

This is not to say, however, that the impact of French thought was uncontro-
versial, or that other traditions within continental philosophy did not impact posi-
tively on the development of feminist philosophies through the 1980s.

For instance, the German critical theory school continues to exert a produc-
tive influence on feminism, in the astute commentaries provided by a new
generation of scholars, but also in original elaborations. For example, Seyla
Benhabib and Nancy Fraser provide new insights into democratic analyses of
societal institutions and social movements. Drucilla Cornell pursues a different
route to radical democracy by combining the methods of deconstruction and
psychoanalytic theory to the analysis of social phenomena.

The legacy of phenomenology also endures and grows, for example through
Iris Marion Young’s illuminating analyses of public policy, race politics, and
democratic practices. The phenomenology of race is enriched by the original
gender perspectives introduced by Linda Alcoff, while Christine Battersby
engages in productive dialogue with both phenomenology and poststructural-
ism. One of the areas of phenomenology that grows exponentially in the period
is the field of “Beauvoir studies,” especially after the death of the grand lady in
1986. Deirdre Bair publishes Simone de Beauvoir’s official biography in 1990, while
critical overviews of Beauvoir’s impact on contemporary feminism begin
to appear. This field of study will intensify at the end of the century and the
start of the new millennium.

2. See, for example, the essays collected in Johanna Meehan (ed.), Feminists read Habermas: 
   Gendering the Subject of Discourse (New York: Routledge, 1995).
   (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (eds), 
   Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 
   Press, 1987); Nancy Fraser, Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary 
   Social Theory (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
4. See Drucilla Cornell, Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law
   (New York: Routledge, 1991), and The Imaginary Domain: Abortion, Pornography and Sexual 
5. For a useful introduction, see Linda Fisher and Lester Embree (eds), Feminism and 
6. See Iris M. Young, Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social 
   Theory (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), and Justice and the Politics of 
7. See for instance Christine Battersby, The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the 
8. Nineteen eight-six was the year that Yale French Studies devoted a special issue to “Simone de 
   Beauvoir: Witness to a Century.”
10. See especially Toril Moi, Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); 
    Margaret A. Simons (ed.) Feminist Interpretations of Simone de Beauvoir (University Park, PA: 
    Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). For an overview see Karen Vintges, Philosophy
Another field that grows fast in these years is feminist moral philosophy, which reaches greater heights with the theory of an “ethics of care” proposed by the social psychologist Carol Gilligan and developed into a new social theory of citizenship by Joan Tronto. One of the most eminent feminist moral philosophers is Virginia Held, who combines the radical insights of feminist activism with broader ethical concerns. Of great significance is also the work of Martha Nussbaum, who applies universal but situated ethical principles to public policy and urgent global social issues. Analytic philosophy was itself not immune from the contagious creativity of the era. The pace and quality of these new developments is such that it blurs the boundaries between established schools of thought and national traditions.

Nonetheless, French philosophy was clearly the inspirational force that propelled the most innovative theoretical developments for the feminist philosophers of the period throughout Europe and elsewhere. Even the more skeptical-minded feminist philosophers have to come to terms with the challenges of difference. French thought is thus the hidden agenda that makes

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11. See, for example, Joan C. Tronto, Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care (New York: Routledge, 1993).
15. The most significant works in this tradition are the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective's elaboration of Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). This was developed into an original critique of the history of philosophy by Adriana Cavarero in In Spite of Plato. In German, the significant contributions are Herta Nagl-Docekal and Herlinde Pauer-Studer's edited collection Denken der Geschlechterdifferenz: Neuen Fragen und Perspektiven des feministische Philosophie, and Andrea Maihofer's Geschlecht als Existenzweise: Macht, Moral, Recht und Geschlechterdifferenz. In Spanish, the pioneering work is done by Celia Amorós in Hacia una critica de la razón patriarcal and by Maria Santa Cruz, Marie-Luisa Femenias, and Anna-Maria Bach on Mujeres y filosofía in Latin America.
16. This school, initiated by Janet Radcliffe Richards's The Skeptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry, is pursued by Mary Hawksworth's “Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims to Truth,” which is a critical assessment of feminist postmodernism. Susan Hekman's Gender and Knowledge: Elements of Postmodern Feminism makes important progress on
traditional philosophers cringe with irritation and mistrust at the sight of new philosophical questions, supported by unfamiliar and foreign sounding terminology: subjectivity, discourse, materiality, and power as restrictive or negative (potestas), but also as positive and empowering (potentia). The impact of French poststructuralism on feminist theory is an epistemological upheaval: the French imports are clearly the fallout of what could be called “high” poststructuralism, namely the work of Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and their feminist counterparts Kristeva, Cixous, Kofman, Irigaray, and others. This process of theoretical marketing, however, is not even: some texts – notably those of Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva – enter rapidly into what Edward Said aptly labeled as the “travelling theories” mode, while others, notably those of Deleuze and Irigaray, had to wait much longer before being “discovered.” The different rhythms of translation of these texts had a significant impact on the influence they exercised on Anglo-American feminism.

The effect of French poststructuralism was nonetheless instant and significant. In the mid-1980s, as American feminism plunges into the “sex-wars” that will divide its radical wing, the notion and the politics of difference move materialism, while Anne Phillips's *Democracy and Difference* attempts an interesting dialogue between continental feminism and the British liberal tradition.

17. For a discussion of the work of many of these figures, see the essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*. The French feminism phenomenon was analyzed lucidly by Claire Duchen in *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand*, and it reads as a textbook case of cultural branding on the part of major English-language publishers. I analyzed the cultural marketing exercise with Jane Weistock in “Herstory as Recourse,” in *Hecate*.

18. This movement is led by the linguistically oriented school, inspired by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes, that was centered in the Yale School of literary theory (for a discussion of the Yale School, see the essay by Jeffrey T. Nealon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*). The main feminist figures of this movement had a lot of influence on feminist philosophy, notably Barbara Johnson in *The Critical Difference* and *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race and Gender*. Shoshana Felman combined psychoanalysis and semiotics in inspiring ways in *What Does a Woman Want? Reading and Sexual Difference*, whereas Marjorie Garber adapted them both to cultural studies in *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. The pioneer of French feminist theory in the US was Domna Stanton, who worked on *The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, a women-centered literary canon. Nancy Miller in *The Poetics of Gender*, Alice Jardine with *Gynesis*, Naomi Schor in “Dreaming Dissymmetry”; and Catharina Stimpson in *Where the Meanings Are*, developed radical perspectives on the specificity of the feminist approach to textual criticism. An inspiring deconstructivist like Gayatri Spivak also bases her interventions on the postpsychoanalytic and Derridian understanding of the ontological value of subjectivity and the primacy of the power relations that structure it.

19. The core argument of the “sex wars” was the campaign against pornography, which soon developed into a larger dispute about sexual politics and the understanding of sexual freedom. The influence of Andrea Dworkin and Catharine McKinnon resulted in a prohibitionist approach to sexual practices, which produced both an alliance with the Christian Right and a violent reaction by radical feminists and sexual liberationists. French philosophy provided
The epicenter of the new philosophical developments stays in Paris, but a widespread diaspora of poststructuralist ideas takes place through the institutional basis for this movement of thought in the US, such as literary theory, comparative literature, cultural studies, and film theory. Philosophy departments place themselves at a clear and explicit distance from these fashionable trends and close ranks. This hostility will continue to grow throughout the 1980s as the “theory wars” rage through American universities under the combined effect of Reagonomics, neoconservatism, and the rise of the religious Christian Right. Poststructuralism did not fare much better on its home turf, especially after the presidential election of Mitterrand in 1981, when a wave of “new philosophers” (André Glucksmann, Bernard-Henri Lévy, etc.), turned its back on the philosophical giants of the previous generation.

By 1995, the game will be over and the counter-offensive against poststructuralism will have won the day. Gayatri Spivak, looking back over this period in 2003, speaks of the death of a discipline to indicate the decline and fall of poststructuralist-driven literary theory and comparative literature in the US academy. Nonetheless, the hegemonic hold that high poststructuralist thought had over the most critical and creative minds of that academic generation endures. Spivak’s analysis covers the external pressures of a fast-changing world driven by globalization, technological mediation, cultural hybridization, and the rising economic power of the global South. Spivak also stresses, however, the internal flaws of what she considers an incurably Eurocentric system of thought. Gallop herself, writing in 1997 about a controversial lawsuit instigated by her lesbian students, spells out in unequivocal terms the political debacles generated by the rise of identity politics and the extent to which they absorbed the best energies of poststructuralism.

Narrating the course of feminist philosophies in the 1980–95 period means having to take into account this complex political and institutional history. The impact of high poststructuralism is in some ways a specifically American phenomenon, but it is connected to the French and European scene not only historically, but also through conceptual and personal ties: a whole generation of

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21. See also my essay in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.

22. See, in this regard, the essay by Iain Chambers in this volume.

graduate students and junior academics actually studied in Paris or read French theories as part of their often independently chosen curriculum. I was one of them and this personal involvement does not simplify my task in this chapter and increases my accountability accordingly. Because of the diasporic nature of poststructuralist philosophies of difference and subjectivity, however, and as a result of their enormous generative force, feminist philosophies in the 1980–95 period simply explode in an outburst of creativity. So much so that it is daunting to even attempt to account for the successful social and intellectual revolution that marks the coming of age of an entirely new generation of feminist philosophers who grew up with and after high poststructuralism.

The changing historical context also plays its hand in rendering feminist philosophy especially complex in this period. The twin phenomena of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the enlargement of the European Union,24 as well as the new wave of wars that emerge in the period (the first Gulf War, the Falklands War, and the Yugoslav and Balkans War), have major impact on the development of continental and transnational feminism.25 The single most important development, however, is the expansion of feminism both east and west of the former border. In the former West, the institutional growth and consolidation of the field results in the creation of new PhD programs in women’s studies. On the other side of the border, feminist philosophical voices from former Eastern Europe can now get a wider audience. This phenomenon is so vast and rich that it deserves a fuller treatment than I can grant it here. Suffice it to stress the importance of original political thinkers trained in philosophy, such as Zarana Papic, whose work on nationalism and subjectivity remains fundamental. Dasa Duhacek provides important analytical insights into Eastern European radical feminism as a critique of the patriarchal aspects of the Yugoslav communist state. Rada Iveković challenges narratives that assume the centrality of a Western philosophical perspective by adopting a broadened, antinationalist and postcolonial perspective.

As a consequence of these historical upheavals and intellectual developments, this chapter could not adopt a chronological structure, let alone a linear one. Nonlinearity has been a distinctive trait of feminist theory since the 1980s. In her seminal essay on women’s time, also published in 1981, Julia Kristeva

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25. Already at the beginning of the 1990s, feminist theory provides the basis for innovative critiques of globalization. Influential pioneers in this field are the political theorist Cynthia Enloe in The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War, and the work of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan on transnational feminism in Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices.
stresses the cyclical, circular nature of female temporality, which she connects both to the specific rhythms of female embodiment and to the social division of labor that assigns women to the most repetitive and unappreciated tasks. Genealogical returns, not chronological continuity, fix the beat of feminist discursive production. The multiple temporalities of feminist philosophy spell patterns of becoming that challenge academic habits of linearity. I will attempt to account for these complex phenomena by drawing a cartography based on a generously broad, yet selective, bibliography of the main sources.

II. THE “INTERMEDIATE” GENERATION

The feminist philosophers who came after poststructuralism were too young to be real baby-boomers, but at the same time old enough to be eye-witnesses to the world-changing events of the 1970s and 1980s. I call the generation of feminist philosophers between 1981 and 1995 the “intermediate” generation, although what exactly it is intermediate between is open for discussion. At the start, it clearly follows “high poststructuralism,” but what succeeds it – be it the third wave or a feminism yet to come – is still an open question. Truly poststructuralist in their desire to apply the great theoretical insights of the previous generation to a variety of social and discursive practices, feminists of the intermediate generation simultaneously pursue the aims of the second feminist wave and lay the foundations for future developments. They are the agents of the “long march through the institutions,” which brings an entire new intellectual generation into academic positions, and with it a new theoretical and political agenda for the institutional practice of philosophy.

Although they are the real heiresses of high poststructuralist thought, there is no official testament to ensure the transmission of ideas, and not all of them had direct contact, either as students or colleagues, with the French master-thinkers who shaped that philosophical movement. They function in English and not all of them can read the French texts in the original, but this diasporic mode of thinking in translation, far from being a problem, turns into the strength of this particular generation of thinkers. Within the English language, many of the feminist philosophers of this period are not from the USA: for instance, the great pioneer of feminist philosophy Lorraine Code is based in Canada, whereas under the influence of Genevieve Lloyd, Australian feminist theory blossoms


27. Genevieve Lloyd (1941– ) studied philosophy at the University of Sydney and then at Somerville College, Oxford. Her DPhil, awarded in 1973, was on time and tense. From 1967
and spreads worldwide. In the US, while many are products of philosophy departments, they tend to gather in interdisciplinary fields – as is the case for Butler, Cornell, and Elizabeth Grosz – although some manage jobs in continental philosophy, like Fraser and Alcoff.

In its diasporic and transnational mode, the intermediate generation of feminist philosophers embraces the concept of difference, but with the explicit aim of making it function differently. They recast feminist theory along a complex line of interrogation that includes race, sexual orientation, and age, and will target the main tenets of equality-minded feminism and question the view of the subject that is implicit in the political program of traditional emancipation in Europe and the liberal feminist politics of equal opportunities in the Anglo-American world. Irigaray’s question “Equal to whom?” could be taken as the war cry for the following generation, which refused to take equality as homologation or reduction to Sameness. The crucial idea is that difference functions as a multi-layered concept not only between binaries, but also among diverse groups and more especially within each category. The “difference within” instills a constitutive distance between each concept and the metaphysical illusion of presence. It is a hiatus between the signifier and the signified in which the solidity of all meanings oscillates, stumbles, stutters, and falters. The positivity of difference, that is to say, the potential for radical transformation that is carried by subjects who are both socially and symbolically described as “others,” becomes the focal point for both the political struggles and the theoretical debates.

28. The Australian phenomenon is worthy of special note for the high quality and the overwhelming quantity of feminist philosophy it produces. Starting from Lloyd’s critique of the masculinity of the history of philosophy in *The Man of Reason*, a whole generation is raised in this tradition. I am proud to be one of Lloyd’s students. Carol Pateman develops important aspects of feminist political theory, and Elizabeth Grosz very early develops French philosophical insights, as will Moira Gatens. The trend will continue in a more diasporic vein after the period covered in this volume with Penelope Deutscher and Claire Colebrook, both of whom now teach in the US.


In terms of the philosophical agenda, the focus shifts accordingly from the humanist individualism of the liberal tradition in the US and the residual humanism of the Marxist traditions in Europe and Latin America to different figurations for the nonunitary structure of subjectivity. Humanist thought assumed a unitary and rational subject in charge of his/her historical endeavors; with the “death of Man” announced by Foucault and the subsequent “death of Woman” predicated by the high poststructuralist feminists, however, this unity is replaced by open structures and an emphasis on processes of subject formation rather than substances. As a consequence, high feminist poststructuralism was antihumanist in that it critiqued from within all the unitary identities because they assumed phallo-logocentric, Eurocentric, white supremacist, anthropocentric, and standardized views of what constitutes the humanist ideal of “Man.” This militant antihumanism intersects productively with postcolonial and race perspectives, which critique humanism for its racist connotations and racialized bias and propose instead the critique of universalist white supremacy, and non-Western forms of radical neohumanism.

For all feminists inspired by poststructuralism, “difference,” or more specifically, the notion of “otherness,” functions through dualistic oppositions that confirm the dominant vision of the subject. In other words, the dominant apparatus of subjectivity is organized along a hierarchical scale that rewards “sameness” by defining the sovereign subject as the zero-degree of difference. By extension it also posits subcategories of difference – through processes of sexualization, racialization, and naturalization – and distributes them along a scale of asymmetrical power relations. Deleuze calls it “the Majority subject” or the Molar center of being, Derrida labels it “phallo-logocentrism,” Irigaray calls it “the Same,” or the hyper-inflated, falsely universal “He,” whereas Hill Collins calls to accountability the white and Eurocentric bias of the subject of humanistic knowledge. The lessons of race and postcolonial theories are of the greatest

31. See, for instance, bell hooks' influential Yearning (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990).
importance to add a political inflection as well as higher degrees of complexity to this philosophical understanding of difference.

Whereas the generation that came of age philosophically with Beauvoir stressed transcendence and rationality, the difference thinkers stress immanence and a nonessentialist brand of embodiment. From Lacanian psychoanalysis they borrow the notion of the materiality of the linguistic sign and from deconstruction the critique of phallo-logocentrism. But over and above all borrowing, this “intermediate” generation of feminist philosophy rises to the challenge of great theoretical creativity and innovates both on categories of thought and on methods. They progress from the critique of classical dualistic notions of difference to the affirmation of diversity, and from the classical opposition transcendence–immanence to new epistemological schemes that allow more complex understandings of what exactly is the “matter” that poststructuralist materialism or deconstructive materiality are all about. However influenced by poststructuralism, the generation that is operational in the 1980–95 period thinks across borders and in an interdisciplinary manner that actually consolidates the entire field of feminist philosophy in powerful new ways.

III. GENDERING THE MASTER’S VOICE

The generation of feminists situated between 1980 and 1995 was the first to enjoy the institutional presence of supportive and talented women teachers and supervisors, many of whom were feminists themselves. The effects of the actual, physical presence of women lecturers in philosophy departments starting from the 1970s and 1980s cannot be stressed enough, and the influence of these teachers on the generation of radicalized younger women philosophers emerging from feminism was enormous.

The philosophical underpinnings of feminist teaching became a matter of great concern for the generation that pioneered feminist and women’s studies in academic institutions. The premises rest on a number of notions derived from classical historical materialism but enriched by a gender perspective. In this respect, feminist philosophy has much in common with other critical epistemologies such as the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, liberation theology, and postcolonial and race theories. The main philosophical premises are the following: first, that the aim of a philosophical education is to cultivate the multifaceted aspects of the common humanity we share. This humanism stands in stark opposition to more utilitarian definitions of higher education, let alone the narrower functionalism that will spread throughout the 1990s as an effect of neoliberal economics and its academic managers.
Second, the basic unit of reference for a philosophical education is not liberal individualism but a social constructivist notion of the subject as a sociopolitical entity defined by material forces and relations. For feminism, these material social relations are linked to both production and reproduction and thus can be said to be embedded and embodied. This vision of the subject supports the humanist ideal described above in believing that education is a collective civic endeavor whose ultimate aims are freedom and equality of chances through socially enacted networks of solidarity.

Third, the neutrality of scientific knowledge, which follows from the idea of the self-regulating structure of rationality, and the method of dispassionate objective observation are challenged. The grounds for contestation are the same social constructivist notions defined above. The universalistic pretensions of the subject are debunked by an epistemic approach based on Adrienne Rich’s idea of “the politics of location.”34 This is both a method and a strategy that makes sense of diversity among women. The category of sexual difference is not only understood as the binary opposite of the dominant phallo-logocentric subject, but also as the virtual potential for multiple differences.

The strategy of the politics of location is coupled with epistemological and political accountability. This is understood as the practice that consists in acknowledging and unveiling the power locations that one inevitably inhabits as the site of one’s identity. Because a “location” is not a self-appointed and self-designed subject-position, but rather a collectively shared and constructed space, it refers to a process of consciousness-raising through the intervention of others. “Politics of locations” produce cartographies of power that rest on a form of self-criticism, a critical, genealogical self-narrative, that is relational and outward-bound. It then follows that feminist knowledge is an embodied, interactive process that brings forth complex aspects of our existence, especially our own implication with power. Thus, black women’s texts and experiences make white women see the limitations of their locations, truths and discourses. In Deleuzian language, it “de-territorializes” us, that is, it estranges us from the familiar, the intimate, the known, and casts an external light on it. The strategy of estrangement or defamiliarization transforms our knowledge of ourselves and others. This entails a critique of science and a thorough examination of the networks of power that constitute and sustain science as a social practice. In this respect, feminist epistemology shares a great deal with the radical thought of Feyerabend, Kuhn, and Foucault.

Last but not least, feminist genealogies come into operation by adopting the strategy of “thinking back through the women” to draw inspiration from the past. For Virginia Woolf this tactic was also a style of writing and a practice

of citation. Women-centered approaches are highly recommended to all the women who aspire to have a mind of their own and to reconnect with the deeper sources of their creativity. This is a groundbreaking development in itself and it becomes even more striking when read in a historical perspective. The previous generation of feminist philosophers—those who came of age in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s—settled into an ambiguous relationship to the actual institutional practice of philosophy. Beauvoir herself was not allowed to teach in the Grandes Écoles that train the French elites. Others, such as Françoise Collin, were pioneer feminist philosophers who deliberately chose to function in self-run collectives or marginal organizations. Owing to the historical context, that generation continued to engage in dialogue more readily with the great male philosophers of the continental tradition than with any living women, let alone cross-referring to their own peer group. The high poststructuralist generation did not fare much better, although they did acknowledge some of the great, dead women intellectuals of the past.

Michèle Le Doeuff, in her work on the philosophical imaginary, was one of the first to raise the question of what she aptly named the Heloise complex: women being devoted head and body to great philosophical masters who tend to take advantage of their love in every possible way. The second feminist wave was to change all this, but the effects on the pedagogical front were slower than the speed of social transformation.

Furthermore, if footnotes and bibliographies are the manifestation of democracy and belonging in a text, there is no question as to the undemocratic and often self-referential nature of a great deal of the feminist texts produced in France in the 1980s by the generation of high poststructuralism, starting from the holy trinity of French feminism itself: Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva. Almost in reaction to it, the intermediate generation made a point of using the scholarly

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35. Françoise Collin is not well known enough in the anglophone world, although she is a pioneer on feminist philosophy in the francophone world. Belgian-born, and a classmate of Luce Irigaray and Jacques Taminiaux at the University of Louvain, she founded the feminist journal *Les Cahiers du Grif* in 1973 and moved the editorial office to Paris in 1981. She wrote a widely acclaimed study of Blanchot, *Maurice Blanchot et la question de l’écriture*, in 1971 (reprinted in 1986), and was the first to write on Hannah Arendt in France. She also coedited the best French anthology on feminist philosophy, *Les Femmes de Platon à Derrida: Anthologie critique* (2000).


apparatus of notes as a genealogical tool. They also took great pedagogical care to empower the critical independence of mind of younger generations of thinkers. This position can be summed up as a healthy disregard of the wholly male lineage in the history of philosophy on the one hand, and a passionate commitment to thinking through female feminist genealogies on the other. The latter implies an explicit recognition of the collective character of most knowledge claims and discursive production as well as the acknowledgment that the politics of citation are textual means by which alternative discursive communities can be constructed and radical democracy implemented.

The new forms of institutionalization also had methodological consequences: footnotes and bibliographies become all important and move to the center of the debates. Cartographies, collections, anthologies, and, after a while, encyclopedias, glossaries, and reference manuals in feminist theory are brought into existence and come into operation. The creation of new journals forms an integral part of these efforts to consolidate and expand the insights of modern-day feminism into philosophy: Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy was founded in 1986 and remains a reference title in the field. Jane Flax argues that a metathetical turn takes place in feminist philosophy at this time, which marks the beginning of a shift of paradigm. This is due to the sheer quantitative expansion of feminist practitioners of philosophy, but also to a qualitative leap in thinking: key concepts, accepted methods, and conventional procedures are questioned and redefined in original ways.

Let me illustrate it with some examples. In 1983, Alison Jaggar produced one of the very first taxonomies of feminist philosophy, Feminist Politics and Human Nature. It rests on a system of political classification of the different feminist schools of thought (socialist, Marxist, liberal, and radical). The influence of Marxism is then at its apex, as shown by the works of Angela Davis and Ti-Grace Atkinson. A few years later in 1986, the epistemologist Sandra Harding and the philosopher Jean Grimshaw were already in a position to adopt more specific and original categories of thought to do justice to the theoretical creativity of the feminist movement. Of special significance among them is “standpoint

40. See Jean Grimshaw, Philosophy and Feminist Thinking (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
41. This was also the case for Hester Eisenstein’s Contemporary Feminist Thought, the first comprehensive account of feminist theory.
feminist theory,42 which covers the full range of feminist philosophies of difference by privileging the epistemological insights of marginal subjects. Standpoint theory is also one of the feminist branches that intersect most productively with antiracist thought and links gender issues to race and postcolonial considerations.43 By 1995, Jaggar and Iris Young had so much original feminist philosophical material at hand that they could edit a fully fledged companion to feminist philosophy, covering every major school and tradition of philosophical thought, all monotheistic and a few other religions, and the different constituencies within feminism itself. This shift and expansion of perspective took barely a decade.44

The politics change accordingly. Again, it may be useful to look at the publications to prove the point. In the 1980s very few collections on women and philosophy were available in the academic market. Carol Gould and Marx Wartofsky’s Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation (1976) and Mary Vetterling-Braggin, Frederick Elliston, and Jane English’s Feminism and Philosophy (1977) are among the first, followed closely by Marilyn Frye’s The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory in 1983. Although they make a claim to difference, these early works are in the spirit of equality-minded or emancipatory feminism in that they are focused on the under-representation of women both in philosophy departments and in the male domination of the actual curriculum of the history of philosophy. This is typically the “women and/in philosophy” phase, which inserted women as an additive to existing philosophical and disciplinary categories, as evidenced by the leading publications of those days.45

Adding women to philosophy, however, could not leave the rules of the disciplinary game unchanged. It resulted instead in a frontal attack on the male domination of the philosophical canon and a concerted effort to dislodge the masculine subject from its falsely universal sovereign position. Lloyd’s The Man of Reason, published in 1984, is the seminal text in this tradition. The feminist revisions of the history of philosophy pursued by Nancy Tuana in a

44. Tina Chanter, writing in Ethics of Eros in 1995, could legitimately speak of a feminist rewriting of the philosophers.
45. See, for instance, Jean Elshtain on social and political thought, Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers on moral theory, Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus on political philosophy, Andrea Nye on humanist thought, and Katharina Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy on legal theory.
series of appraisals of key thinkers also contribute significantly to rethinking the canon.\textsuperscript{46}

High poststructuralism challenged equality and highlighted the difference that feminist philosophers can make to the actual practice of philosophy. The generation that followed radicalized the concepts and methods and developed entire institutional, pedagogical, and methodological structures that brought the full potential of difference into concrete materialization and actual operation. This was not a flat application of pre-established principles, but rather the active creation of new ways of thinking. In so doing the post-poststructuralists of the intermediate generation ended up altering the very theoretical premises from which they had started, innovating on content and concepts. They also established a firm corpus of feminist scholarship that institutionalized the idea of collective teamwork as a key feminist method.

\section*{IV. THE INTERDISCIPLINARY FACTOR}

The institutionalization process, combined with the emphasis on the positivity of difference, produced a high degree of interdisciplinarity in the philosophical works of this period. Thus, a collection such as Linda Nicholson’s \textit{Feminism/Postmodernism}, although not strictly philosophical in itself, was influential across a broad academic field and affected the philosophical debates of the times. Considering the fact that many of the feminist philosophers of the poststructuralist generation found jobs outside academic philosophy, an accurate cartography of the period should therefore exceed the institutional boundaries of the discipline and include an interdisciplinary range of contributions.

Comparative literature, cultural, and film studies are of great importance, as I indicated above, especially volumes such as Teresa de Lauretis’s \textit{Technologies of Gender} and Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey’s \textit{Off-centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies}. Once again the impact of race and postcolonial theory is of crucial philosophical importance, with texts such as Spivak’s \textit{In Other Worlds}, Hill Collins’s seminal \textit{Black Feminist Thought}, and the growing influence of Chandra Mohanty.\textsuperscript{47} Feminist legal theory provides new insights especially

\textsuperscript{46} Also significant in this vein are the writings of Linda Zerilli on high liberalism, Robin Schott on Kantianism, and especially Susan Bordo on Descartes. In France see Sarah Kofman, \textit{Le Respect des femmes} (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1982); Cathérine Chalier, \textit{Figures du féminin: Lecture d’Emmanuel Levinas} (Paris: La nuit surveillée, 1982); Elisabeth de Fontenay, \textit{Diderot ou le matérialisme enchanté} (Paris: Grasset, 1981).

through the invention of the method of intersectionality\textsuperscript{48} and the poststructuralist critical theory of the law of Drucilla Cornell. Ecofeminism also comes of philosophical age with the early Donna Haraway and the pioneer work of Val Plumwood.\textsuperscript{49}

The interdisciplinary approach provides new themes for feminist philosophy. Lesbian theory, diversified by the impact of postmodernism, evolves through two spearheads: one is Rich’s theory of the lesbian continuum, which locates the lesbian experience within a continuum of female sexuality defined in terms of constant woman bonding. As a result of this nondisruptive positioning of lesbian desire, Rich can defend lesbian motherhood in the key text \textit{Of Woman Born}. Rich then goes on to develop woman-centered perspectives in art, culture, and science in seminal texts such as \textit{Of Lies, Secrets and Silence} and \textit{Blood, Bread and Poetry}. The other spearhead is Monique Wittig, who takes the antithetical viewpoint that a lesbian is not a woman, but a “third sex” who escapes the gender dichotomy and refuses to be defined by it. This will prove influential for queer theory throughout the 1990s.

An inspiring discipline for philosophy was feminist theology, which, with towering figures such as Mary Daly\textsuperscript{50} leading a new movement of thought as well as practice, challenges Christian monotheistic logocentrism, just as Muslim feminists such as Fatima Mernissi\textsuperscript{51} question Islam. Interest in mystical thinkers of previous generations such as Simone Weil\textsuperscript{52} intensifies and the vast cluster of feminist spirituality will grow throughout the 1990s, producing what will become known as a postsecular turn in feminist theory.\textsuperscript{53}

Psychoanalysis and film theory exercise huge influence, in spite of great feminist resistances to the idea of the unconscious as a principle of nonclosure of the subject. Key figures such as Jane Flax straddle the shaky ground between philosophy and the discourse of the unconscious by being practicing psychoanalysts. While Irigaray and Kristeva evolve respectively into the left wing and right wing of post-Lacanian psychoanalysis, Juliet Mitchell\textsuperscript{54} is by far the most

\textsuperscript{49} See especially Val Plumwood, \textit{Feminism and the Mastery of Nature} (New York: Routledge, 1993).
\textsuperscript{50} See Mary Daly, \textit{Gyn/Ecology: The Meta-Ethics of Radical Feminism} (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978).
\textsuperscript{53} See on this issue my “In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminism,” \textit{Theory, Culture & Society} 25 (2008).
important influence in psychoanalytic thinking for an entire generation of English-speaking Lacanians. Teresa Brennan\textsuperscript{55} is heiress to this tradition and pursues it in an original manner, while Jessica Benjamin\textsuperscript{56} brilliantly bridges the gap between Lacanian and object-relation psychoanalytic theory.

The single most significant interdisciplinary coalition of the 1980s, however, is the new galaxy formed by women, gender, and feminist studies departments and programs, which grow from self-run classes into a strong academic movement that aims at reforming the curriculum and forces a revision of what counts as scientifically acceptable knowledge. The leading journal in feminist theory, \textit{Signs: a Journal of Women in Culture and Society}, was founded in 1975. In Europe, the institutional rise of women's studies occurs later, as argued by Griffin and myself in \textit{Thinking Differently}, but the theoretical creativity of feminist philosophies is strong from the start. Feminism in Europe draws inspiration from a political genealogy that takes the great women philosophers of European history as major points of reference and claims them as political leaders of the movement. Thus, a pedigree is created that runs from Mary Wollstonecraft to Simone de Beauvoir, to Rosa Luxemburg, and Hannah Arendt, with the historical event that is the women's movement as a central junction. From the 1960s on, this genealogy diversifies into a number of branches, all of which confirm the discursive privilege and prestige accorded by the feminist movement to its key women philosophers – to their critical skills as well as their visionary spirit. What is especially innovative about feminist philosophy, in fact, is the courage with which it turns critique into affirmation. As Joan Kelly argued,\textsuperscript{57} feminism carries a double-edged vision that combines oppositional consciousness with deep empowering creativity. The affirmative element within the feminist recomposition of knowledge is one of this generation's most lasting theoretical legacies.

Women's studies, and gender and feminist studies, bring a necessary dose of supplementary knowledge to the academic practice of the discipline of philosophy. It is no coincidence that so much focus falls, in this period, on epistemological studies of the power structures that affect scientific knowledge production.\textsuperscript{58} Discourse as power is such a foundational idea in the 1980s that feminist theory


\textsuperscript{56} See Jessica Benjamin, \textit{The Bonds of Love} (New York: Pantheon, 1988).


\textsuperscript{58} See Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (eds), \textit{Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology} (New York: Routledge, 1994); Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (eds), \textit{Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing} (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).
is almost equated with the critique of epistemology. Sandra Harding\(^59\) provides a canonical classification system of feminist thought, whereas feminists with a scientific background, notably Evelyn Fox Keller, Donna Haraway and Elizabeth Spelman, play a key role in this first wave of feminist epistemology.\(^60\) Isabelle Stengers strikes a singular note of her own, pleading for a more systematic conceptual dialogue between feminism and science.\(^61\) Linda Alcoff produces systematically the best cartographies of feminist philosophy and epistemology.\(^62\)

The main epistemological debate of this era takes place between Harding and Haraway on the issue of the alleged relativism of postmodernist feminism. Harding privileges the claims to difference made by standpoint theory and is initially dismissive of poststructuralist critiques of reason. Haraway provides a strong rebuke of this position in 1988 in her seminal essay “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives.” By the early 1990s a new consensus is forged in the feminist epistemic community on the need for a revised but “robust” notion of objectivity that avoids both universalism and relativism in the pursuit of alternative ways of grounding feminist knowledge claims.

V. FROM CORPO-REALITY TO MATTER-REALISM

Looking back over the intellectual development of the generation of feminist philosophers within and after poststructuralism, what strikes me is the original brand of embodiment and bodily materialism they developed, in a variety of different but interrelated conceptual ways. This materialist line of thought is different from the more linguistically oriented branch of poststructuralism mentioned (see note 18). They develop together, not so much in opposition as alongside each other, in constant dialogue and often in loving antagonism.\(^63\)

In the last section of this essay, I will consequently concentrate on the concept of bodily materialism and how it developed throughout the 1990s. Feminist

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63. I am grateful to Judy Butler for this felicitous formulation.
philosophy in this period combines in innovative ways phenomenological theories of embodiment with Marxist and psychoanalytic elaborations of the complex social and symbolic interaction between bodies and power. This approach grants an ontological value to the embodied roots of the subject, while resisting essentialism, and hence it also upgrades the issues of subjectivity and of sexuality to a greater degree of complexity than the high poststructuralist generation itself. The notion of the body is transformed from a substance dualistically opposed to the mind, to a dynamic process of embodied interactions: relationality becomes a keyword. The intermediate generation coins the term “corpo-reality” to designate the form of dynamic bodily neomaterialism that they read back into high poststructuralism.

What is characteristic of the thinkers of this generation is that, inspired by Spinoza’s monistic political ontology, they adopt a different political ontology from the Hegelian–Marxist generations that preceded them. They differ, in other words, from social constructivist oppositions between selves and society, because they either do not assume or openly challenge an exterior and prior grid of codification of meanings or master-signifiers that would somehow imprint social codes on the embodied subjects. They are, so to speak, less structuralist than the poststructuralists. In the work of Grosz, Gatens, Butler, or myself, one finds attempts to account for bodies as material and symbolic formations that are always already immersed in strategic conditions and relations of power. Because power, after Foucault, is not only or necessarily conceived in negative terms, however, its effects are perceived as multiple, contradictory, and productive. Power produces, among others, forms of active resistance to the very conditions it engenders.

Thus, the scheme of dialectical opposition is abandoned in favor of more complexity in accounting for the codes and the sociosymbolic processes that constitute the subject as a bounded field of relations to multiple others. The emphasis falls on relational processes of transformation and also on the contradictory power effects that constitute embodied subjects. The political ideal is as transformative as the ethics that sustains it: how to actualize empowering alternative technologies of self–other relations by experimenting with new ways of relating to a multiplicity of others. A sort of neoasceticism will emerge from this, although reformulations of political agency in the period include also, alternatively or in combination: transnational feminist forms of micropolitical action on a global scale; a radical adaptation of Foucaultian politics of


resistance; the politics of melancholia and the politics of affirmation. This is the neomaterialist punch of feminist politics after high poststructuralism.

The materialist corpo-reality branch of feminist philosophy is sociopolitical in orientation and draws inspiration from Foucault and Deleuze, although they are equally attentive to Derrida and the material effects of language on the world. It emphasizes the crucial notion that sexuality is an integral part of the embodied structure of the subject: one is always already sexed. Sexuality is conceptualized, especially in Romance languages like French, as a general life force that cannot be adequately contained within the dichotomous view of gender defined as the social construction of differences between the sexes. Social constructivism meets its limitations when confronted by the ontological shift to sexuality as life itself. Whereas high poststructuralist feminist theory is solidly ensconced in social constructivist methods and political strategies, thinkers of the next generation affirm and explore the ontological aspects of sexuality and sexual difference, and not only its constructed elements.

As a consequence, it is not so much the case that sexuality is caught in the sex-gender binary, but rather that it enjoys more transversal, structural, and vital connotations. Sexuality as life-force provides a nonessentialist ontological structure for the organization of human affectivity and desire. This notion clearly opposes the position of the linguistic mediation school, which argues that the discursive structure of gender functions as a coercive grid that constructs social relations and identities. The counterargument is that sexuality is a constitutive force that is always already present and hence prior to gender, although it intersects with it in constructing functional subjects in the social regime of biopolitical governmentality.

The early work of Foucault stresses the central importance of sexuality as a constitutive force that is targeted by social technologies of control, discipline, and punishment. The feminist commentators on Foucault are aware of the specific brand of bodily materialism that is at stake here. Butler’s appropriation of Foucault for queer theory in *Gender Trouble* is especially significant as it acquires a paradigmatic status especially in US feminism. All these thinkers

66. For more details on this issue see my ”The Uses and Abuses of the Sex/Gender Distinction in European Feminist Practices,” in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women’s Studies*, Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (eds) (London: Zed Books, 2002).

deal with corpo-reality and provide different answers to the question of how to disengage sexuality from the dominant masculinist, logocentric, ethnocentric, heterosexist, and anthropocentric codes of representation. The latter is taken in the double sense of cultural mediation and political intervention, as Spivak argues in her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” As a result, how to disentangle sexuality from identity politics and the formulation of flat countsexual identities – even within feminism – is more than ever the question.

Deleuze-inspired feminists advocate a vision of the body as a sexually preconstituted, dynamic bundle of relations that is especially interesting. In opposition to the linguistic school – whose leading feminist thinkers opposed Deleuze’s vitalist materialism vigorously – Deleuzian feminists develop the notion of the materialist roots of embodied subjectivity and explore the transformative potential of a different concept of the political. They stress that the political advantage of this monistic and vital approach is that it provides a more adequate understanding of the fluid and complex workings of power in advanced capitalism and hence can devise more suitable forms of resistance.

The long-term result of these explorations of corpo-reality or embedded and embodied materialism is a serious reconsideration of what counts as the “matter” for materialist feminist thought. Radical emphasis on a Spinozist monistic ontology results in overcoming the classical opposition “materialism/idealism” and move towards a dynamic, nonessentialist and relational brand of materialist vitalism. “Matter-realism” designates the contemporary form of radical neomaterialism that emerges from corpo-reality and will also become known as vital politics or posthuman feminism.

By the early 1990s, the biogenetic and information technologies revolution provide the historical backdrop for some significant shifts. The change of

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68. This is especially the case for Alice Jardine in Gynesis and Judith Butler in Subjects of Desire.
focus is deliberate and comes in response to fast-shifting global changes\textsuperscript{71} and technological innovations. Mostly thanks to Haraway’s agenda-setting work on cyborg-feminism,\textsuperscript{72} a younger generation of scholars gets inspired by an empiricist form of matter-realism, which combines realism with a twenty-first-century understanding of “matter” as a self-organizing principle. This generation of philosophers drops the endless critiques of representation that had become the trademark of high poststructuralism in the linguistic branch, to turn with renewed interest to ontological and epistemological questions. Claire Colebrook\textsuperscript{73} is a notable example: resting on Deleuzian premises, she explores the potential of vitalist thought and argues for feminist reappraisals of contemporary technoscientific culture in a nondeterministic frame. What matters about this matter-realism, in other words, is the concept of “matter” itself: the switch to a monistic political ontology stresses processes, vital politics and nondeterministic evolutionary theories\textsuperscript{74} as exemplified by Karen Barad’s work on “agential realism.”\textsuperscript{75} Feminist epistemology and science studies replace cultural studies as priority research areas and comparative literature ceases to be the main arena for these debates, as Spivak noted in \textit{Death of a Discipline}.

One of the main implications of this shift of perspective is that matter-realist feminists return again to sexuality, rather than the sex–gender distinction, to explore more specifically the notion of sexuality beyond gender. The polymorphous perversity of sexuality as an ontological force is emphasized, in opposition to a majoritarian or dominant line that privileges heterosexual reproductive sex. An important question that can be raised – after the making of Dolly the sheep in 1996 and the poststructuralist critiques of phallo-logocentrism – is: what happens to gender if sexuality is not based on oppositional terms? What

\textsuperscript{71} For a more detailed analysis, see my “A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-postmodernism,” \textit{Australian Feminist Studies} 20(47) (July 2005).

\textsuperscript{72} Donna J. Haraway (1944– ) is an American feminist and professor in the History of Consciousness Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She earned a degree in zoology and philosophy at Colorado College and received her PhD in the Department of Biology at Yale in 1972. She wrote her dissertation on the functions of metaphor in shaping research in developmental biology in the twentieth century. She writes on biology, technoscience and feminism. Among her main texts are \textit{Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science} (1989), \textit{Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature} (1991), and \textit{Modest Witness@Second Millenium. FemaleMan®_Meets_Oncomouse™: Feminism and Technoscience} (1997).


\textsuperscript{74} Indicative of this trend is Elizabeth Grosz’s \textit{Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures}.

happens when there is sexuality without the possibility of either heterosexual or homosexual union? Patricia MacCormack\textsuperscript{76} rests on Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of radical empiricism and on Irigaray’s emphasis on the sensible transcendental, to stress that corporeal becoming or transformations are open-ended and not necessarily contained by sociosymbolic forms, such as phallo-logocentrism or established categories. The ethics of becoming is rather an ethology of the forces that propel the subject to become by overcoming both forms and categories, deterritorializing all identity formations. By extension, this means that sexuality is a force, or constitutive element, that is capable of destabilizing gender identity and institutions: sexuality beyond gender. Another example of the same tendency is Luciana Parisi’s innovative adaptation of Guattari and Lynn Margulis\textsuperscript{77} to produce a schizo-genesis of sexual difference and of endosymbiosis as an organic variable of autopoeisis.\textsuperscript{78} The new matter-realism stresses the self-organizational capacity of matter, which results in questioning any ontological foundation for difference while avoiding social constructivism. Sexuality beyond gender is the epistemological but also political side of contemporary vitalist matter-realism. It consolidates a philosophical genealogy that includes creative deterritorializations, intensive and hybrid crossfertilizations and generative encounters with multiple and nonhuman others.

VI. CONCLUSION

A cartographic account cannot be concluded, but it must end. In this essay I have tried to steer a collective-minded course among a multiplicity of productive, innovative, radical developments in feminist philosophy that were inspired by French poststructuralist theories but thrived mostly in exile and in the diaspora. I have tried to show that the multiple temporalities of feminist theory and the essentially nonlinear character of feminist philosophy came to a greater degree of critical focus after high poststructuralism. The degree and quality of the scholarship produced in the period under review is such as to warrant the claim of a genuine “coming of age” of feminist philosophy. Central to the success of what I also referred to as the “intermediate” generation is the loyalty it shows to feminist theoretical and political genealogies. This non-oedipal and hence productive relationship to preceding generations of women philosophers

\textsuperscript{76} See Patricia MacCormack, \textit{Cinesexuality} (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).
is strengthened by the fact that many of these were the actual teachers of this generation of scholars, and so they are connected by ties of gratitude and respect. This certainly describes my own position as both a member of this generation and the cartographer of this chapter, a position for which I hold myself accountable by making both my own and my colleagues’ work visible for inspection as explicitly as possible.

If one keeps in mind furthermore that one of the main effects of the fast-growing process of institutionalization of feminist knowledge initiated by my generation was to produce a higher level of continuity in feminist thinking than we are historically used to, it follows that the question of the temporalities of feminist thought becomes even more complex as both a concept and as a practice. It results, for instance, in an acceleration of consciousness that produces a more acute sense of feminist intergenerational justice toward the future generations who will inherit and hopefully pursue this great tradition of scholarship. The so-called feminist third wave79 is closely linked to the “intermediate” generation that built on the legacy of high poststructuralism and moved beyond.

A cartographer is no prophet. The impressive scholarship produced in feminist philosophy in this period is still very much ongoing and in the making and there is no telling which new directions it will take. I have tried, wherever possible, to indicate the points of convergence and divergence both within this generation and between this and the high poststructuralist generation that preceded it, especially on questions of difference, sexuality, embodiment, and materialism. At present one of the most promising lines of development is the one that challenges the deeply seated anthropocentrism that lurks beneath even the most self-assured feminist antihumanism inherited from high poststructuralism.80 The nonhuman – animal, technological, ecological, and planetary – “others” are raising new questions that may trace new interconnections between feminism and animal rights, technology studies, disability, and ecological issues in the frame of the complex political economy of the globally connected world we now inhabit. Feminist philosophers confront the third millennium of Western philosophical history fully aware that they are historically relative newcomers in this discipline and have only just started to play an active role in it. They have also learned from postcolonial and race studies the need to decenter Western hegemony and look beyond ethnocentric boundaries, in a transnational perspective that refuses to equate continental philosophy with the continent of

79. See Astrid Henry, Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).
Europe. Feminist philosophers pursue this critical line of inquiry, more sharply than ever, with acquired maturity and renewed vitality and inspiration.

**MAJOR WORKS**

Having noted the importance of bibliographies and the citation of sources, it is incumbent on me to include some of the major feminist texts that played a significant role in the period 1980–95.


Young, Iris M. *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990.
In his official report to the French government in 1991 regarding the state of philosophy in France – titled *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology* – Dominique Janicaud claims that philosophy (in particular phenomenology, the dominant mode of French philosophy today) has been overtaken by theology.¹ In effect, he accuses Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion, along with Michel Henry and Jean-Louis Chrétien, of having appropriated phenomenology for distinctly “theological” concerns. Given both that Janicaud’s report covers the years 1975–90 (roughly the same period as this volume) and that the theological turn (which in many ways coincides with the so-called “return to religion” in Europe) is surely the most important development in continental philosophy of religion during those years, the concerns of that report and the theological turn in general are the focus of this essay. Since that theological turn is largely distinct to French philosophy, this essay primarily traces its definition and development, as well as the ways in which theological and religious concerns affect not only

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¹. Dominique Janicaud, *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology*, Bernard G. Prusak (trans.), in Dominique Janicaud et al., *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”: The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000); originally published as *Le Tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Paris: Éditions de L’éclat, 1991). It should be pointed out that, in addition to Janicaud’s text, there is a much earlier one that takes up this debate: Mikel Dufrenne, “Pour une philosophie non-théologique” [In defense of a nontheological philosophy], in *Le Poétique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973). There he argues that Derrida, Maurice Blanchot (1907–2003), Gilles Deleuze (1925–95), and others resort to negative theology in their philosophies of difference and absence. As we will see, Derrida explicitly denies this charge. Further, Dufrenne’s charge is much less strong and has proved considerably less influential than that of Janicaud.
philosophical discourse but also phenomenology’s very structure.² Foremost at issue are the questions of (i) the relation between faith and reason (or knowledge), (ii) how God relates to human beings and whether God can be properly addressed, and (iii) whether phenomenology is properly theologically neutral. As will become clear, these questions cannot be answered without considering how the introduction of “revelation” into phenomenology threatens to reverse the very structure of the intentionality that is at the heart of phenomenology.

Of course, one cannot begin to speak about more recent French philosophy of religion without tracing at least a basic outline of the German philosophy that heavily influences it. French philosophy’s recent development is particularly indebted to five German figures: Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger. Less directly, it is also connected to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. A short word regarding each is in order.

I. PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

First, in the Critique of Pure Reason (1781), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) claimed that he “had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.”³ Here it might seem that faith is given the upper hand. Yet in Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason (1793), it becomes clear that these roles have been reversed.⁴ The very fact that Kant insists on religion being limited by reason means that anything religious that does not pass the rigorous test of reason must be either reinterpreted or jettisoned. Although Kant is hardly the first to pit reason against faith, the pattern of reason’s hegemony that he sets up becomes paradigmatic for the subsequent development of continental philosophy of religion. It is a pattern to which recent philosophers (such as Levinas and Marion) have responded

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² Although the theological turn comes about amid an intense engagement with German philosophy, it is truly a French phenomenon without a German counterpart. Interestingly enough, when the Dutch philosopher Hent de Vries writes his text Philosophy and the Turn to Religion, his examples are exclusively French. It is worth noting that other figures could be included here – for example, Blanchot, Stanislas Breton (1912–2005), Jean-François Courtine (1944– ), and Jean Greisch (1942– ) – but the limits of a brief chapter like this make hard decisions necessary.


⁴ Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, in Religion and Rational Theology, Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (eds and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); originally published as Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft (Königsberg: Friedrich Nicolovius, 1793).
quite vehemently. Moreover, it also raises the question of what counts as “faith” and what as “reason.” That it is also one’s own reason that judges faith is clear from Kant’s 1784 essay “What is Enlightenment?” As he puts it there: “Have courage to make use of your own understanding!”

Second, although G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) wrote a great deal on religion, it was his *Phenomenology of Spirit* that proved particularly influential for French philosophy. Surprisingly, even though the text had been published in 1806, Hegel’s great work only arrived in France when Alexandre Kojève lectured on it in the 1930s. Many of those who would become prominent philosophers in France either heard him lecture or else read Jean Hyppolite’s translation of the text (published in two parts in 1939 and 1941) and his influential commentary on it that appeared in 1946. Because Kojève’s reading of the *Phenomenology* was particularly dominated by Hegel’s famed master–slave dialectic, much of subsequent French philosophy became obsessed with Hegel’s dialectical system that was, on the one hand, all encompassing and thus seemingly inescapable and, on the other hand, dependent on negation and so inherently violent. Whether one can escape this totality and the negation of violence prove to be central concerns of recent French philosophy.

Third, Nietzsche contends that the notion of absolute knowledge or any kind of totality is simply the product of human conceit. Moreover, he claims that the very project of adequation of thought to the thing it thinks is misguided and thus the correspondence theory of truth is highly problematic. Moreover, Nietzsche thinks that violence and suffering are irredeemably tragic, whatever “meaning” we may (vainly) attempt to give them. In (in)famously proclaiming that “God is dead,” Nietzsche announces the end of Christianity as any kind of moral grounds for Western culture. Yet he also declares the death of any metaphysical or even any totalizing project. Strangely enough, while Nietzsche had

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9. For Nietzsche’s famous pronouncement, see *The Gay Science* (1882), §125.

arrived in France before the turn of the nineteenth century (well before Hegel), his influence on French philosophy becomes particularly widespread and strong beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Precisely in light of Nietzsche the question arises of what it could mean to move from a totality in which everything can be recouped to one of fragmentation, loss, and tragedy.

Fourth, only a few years before Hegel's *Phenomenology* reached France, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) had visited Paris. Although the reception of his lectures, delivered in 1929 and substantially revised, expanded, and published posthumously as the *Cartesian Meditations* (1950), was initially largely negative, interest in Husserl's phenomenological method eventually became widespread. For Husserl, the motto of phenomenology is “to the things themselves [zu der Sachen selbst].” Thus, the concern in phenomenology is to arrive at an “*adaequatio intellectus et rei,*” literally, an adequation of the intellect and the thing. Husserl works this out in terms of intentionality, intuition, and immanence. We “intend” an object by way of consciousness and it is thus “intuited.” While there are degrees to which an object can be fully intended (or made present to consciousness), the goal is a kind of “adequation,” in which the intended object is fully immanent to consciousness and so “itself there,” “immediately intuited.”

Put in phenomenological terms, the act of thinking (*noesis*) becomes the exact equivalent to its object (*noema*). Husserl explains this by way of what he calls “the principle of all principles” in which “everything originarily ... offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.” While this principle would seem to call for a strict phenomenological neutrality, in which the object sets the conditions for its appearance, both Levinas and Marion will argue that the “limits” of which Husserl speaks place the *subject* in control of the object. This problem becomes all the more acute in Husserl’s later philosophy in which the transcendental ego becomes central: “The world of transcendent ‘res’ is entirely referred to consciousness and, more particularly, not to some logically conceived consciousness but to actual consciousness.”

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on my consciousness, then am I not the ground of that world? And, if so, how can there be an “otherness”? Does one not lose exactly the sense of the particularity of the object or the other? Such was a problem that Husserl certainly recognized, and it is addressed at length by Levinas.

Fifth, this question of how the “other” appears to me also concerned Heidegger (1889–1976), although he provides more than one answer. On the one hand, in Being and Time (1927) Heidegger speaks of the true phenomenon as “the showing-itself-in-itself [das Sich-an-ihm-selbst-zeigen].” On the other hand, Heidegger speaks of the necessity of logos (one might say the “logy” in phenomenology) that not only “lets something be seen” but also is a “letting [something] be seen as something.” This latter aspect Heidegger terms the “as-structure [als-Struktur]” of perception and knowledge. (or, simply put, the “as such”). Thus, Heidegger’s conception of how a phenomenon appears encounters the same difficulties as Husserl’s principle of principles: ostensibly, the object appears just as it is, but then the process of interpretation – whether in the guise of Heidegger’s “as” or Husserl’s “limits” of the horizon of consciousness – itself appears. Heidegger seems to realize the problems with his earlier position and speaks differently in his “Letter on Humanism” (1947). There he speaks of language as beyond human control. In contrast to “language” and “thought,” both of which imply the possibility of control or mastery, Heidegger juxtaposes “saying” and “thinking.” To quote him: “thinking … lets itself be claimed by being so that it can say the truth of being” To think or to say is an attempt to understand without claiming mastery. However, now the divine is situated within being, since “only from the truth of being can the essence of the holy be thought,” and “only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word ‘God’ is to signify.” Finally, though, in “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics” (1957), Heidegger acknowledges that the logos of philosophy has dominated theology. “Metaphysics is a theology, a statement about God, because the deity enters into philosophy.” Yet “the deity can come into philosophy only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its own nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it.” Such is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but one that has been called “the god of the philosophers.” Heidegger reminds us that “man can neither pray nor

17. Ibid., 56.
19. Ibid., 267.
sacrifice” nor “fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this god.”21 In effect, “God” has been reduced to the fundamental principle of metaphysics.

Sixth, while the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur22 does not have quite the influence on those implicated in the theological turn as do the preceding philosophers, he does demonstrate the complexity of introducing theological concerns into the realm of phenomenology.

II. PAUL RICOEUR

Although there were a number of prominent French thinkers in the twentieth century who were working from an explicitly Christian perspective – for example – the medievalist Étienne Gilson (1884–1978) and the existentialist Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) – Paul Ricoeur – a devout Protestant from the Alsace – was a pioneer in bringing theological concerns together with the phenomenological method.23 Much like Levinas and then Marion, Ricoeur sought to keep his philosophical and theological writings separate, being particularly unwilling to use any theological authority in a text of philosophy.24 Yet the influence of theological concerns and even theological concepts are to be found in all of his work, which effectively meant that he was kept outside the major Parisian intellectual circle (a situation that changed substantially with the publication of Time and Narrative in the 1980s). Largely sympathetic to the existential project of Marcel, Ricoeur took Husserl’s eidetic reduction to be a more rigorous way to describe the embodied self.25 Yet he likewise concludes that Husserl’s reductions are too essentialistic and thus not concrete enough. The result is Ricoeur’s

22. For a more extensive discussion of Ricoeur’s philosophy, see the essay by Wayne J. Froman in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
23. Paul Ricoeur (February 27, 1913–May 20, 2005; born in Valence, France; died in Chatenay Malabry) was educated at the University of Rennes (1933), the Sorbonne (1934–35), and received a *doctorat ès lettres* from the Sorbonne in 1950. His influences included Arendt, Gadamer, Heidegger, Husserl, Jaspers, Kant, and Levinas, and he held appointments at the University of Strasbourg (1948–56), Sorbonne (1956–66), University of Nanterre (1966–80), University of Louvain (1970–73), and University of Chicago (1967–92). [*] For a discussion of Marcel, see the essays by Felix Ó Murchadha and Andreas Grossmann in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*.
“hermeneutical phenomenology” that first turns to analyses of the voluntary and involuntary aspects of human action in *Freedom and Nature*. In *Fallible Man*, Ricoeur’s phenomenological analysis comes to the conclusion that evil is made possible precisely because, although human beings are finite, they tend to expect to achieve a level of infinitude (whether in respect to perception or knowledge or simply in terms of everyday practice). It is precisely in not seeing the whole of this equation that evil occurs. In the companion volume to *Fallible Man* – *The Symbolism of Evil* – Ricoeur sets his analysis in a hermeneutical context of religious symbols and myths. In effect, we can understand ourselves only in the context of myth and theology rather than in some sense of pure phenomenological neutrality. Ricoeur’s thought subsequently turned to questions of hermeneutics more generally and his primary contributions to philosophy are these hermeneutical texts, rather than more explicit theological ones. All along, however, he continued to write shorter texts on theology, philosophy of religion, and biblical exegesis – and those theological concerns continued to be in the background of his more explicitly philosophical texts. We will see a similar pattern in both Levinas and Marion.

### III. THE RADICALLY TRANSCENDENTAL OTHER: EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Somewhat like Hegel, Emmanuel Levinas\(^26\) is another interesting case of delayed reception. Although he published his first book (on Husserl\(^27\)) in 1930 and played a major role in introducing both Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology to France, only with the publication in 1961 of *Totality and Infinity* does he begin to gain significant recognition. Yet, by the 1980s, his thought had become highly influential in French philosophy, which is why Janicaud singles him out as having so radically affected phenomenology.\(^28\) While Levinas reacts to both Husserl and Heidegger, he reads all of modern thought and the entire history

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26. Emmanuel Levinas (January 12, 1906–December 25, 1995; born in Kaunas, Lithuania; died in Paris, France) was educated at the universities of Strasbourg (1923–30) and Freiburg (1928–29), and received a *doctorat d’université* from the University of Strasbourg (1930) and a *doctorat d’état* from the Sorbonne (1961). His influences included Buber, Heidegger, Husserl, Marcel, Rosenzweig, and Wahl, and he held appointments at the Alliance Israélite Universelle (1934–39), École Normale Israélite Orientale (1946–79), University of Poitiers (1964–67), University of Paris X–Nanterre (1967–73), and University of Paris IV–Sorbonne (1973–76).


28. Janicaud notes the, in his view, unfortunate coincidence of Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity* appearing the same year – 1961 – as the death of the leading atheistic phenomenologist – Maurice Merleau-Ponty.
of Western metaphysics as an attempt to arrive at a mastery of all “otherness” in order to achieve a totality precisely by way of adequation in which there is “the rigorous coincidence between the thought” and the object “which this thought thinks.”

When he goes on to say that this places everything – including God – within the “gesture or movement of being [gest d’être],” he is clearly criticizing both Heidegger and the entire tradition of metaphysics. One could say that the impossibility of an adequation is a problem of metaphysics or epistemology. Yet Levinas takes this in a different direction, declaring this to be primarily an ethical problem, so that ethics becomes “first philosophy.” Thus, although what Levinas writes has deep metaphysical and epistemological implications, the implications of his thought are first and foremost ethical and religious.

If Levinas is right, then this requires rethinking the very structure of philosophy. Whereas Kant had extolled the virtue of thinking for oneself – what he calls “autonomy” – Levinas claims that only acting “heteronomously,” in which the Other curbs my freedom, is truly ethical. It becomes clear that Levinas is presenting us with a markedly different notion of freedom when he writes that “the presence of the Other, a privileged heteronomy, does not clash with freedom but invests it.” In effect, I am only really free when I serve the Other. Who exactly, though, is this “Other”? As it turns out, this question concerns not just ethics but also epistemology and metaphysics, for Levinas cannot specify who this Other is. To do so would make a claim of knowledge of the Other that neither Levinas nor any of us can (epistemologically) make precisely because the Other – in her very Otherness – always escapes our grasp (metaphysically and epistemologically). Any claims to truly know the Other are, further, unethical in that they do violence to whomever they presume to describe. So an absolute givenness (donation) or knowledge (in the sense of adequation) of the Other is out of the question. Instead, the Other appears to us as a “face” that “is present in its refusal to be contained.” Given Levinas’s religious perspective, the paradigmatic figures for the Other are the powerless, or those whose power paradoxically comes from being destituted: “The Other who dominates me in his transcendence is thus the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, to whom I am

30. Whether or not to be consistent in capitalizing “Other” is a complicated question for commentators on Levinas. For a discussion of this issue, see Adriaan Peperzak’s introduction to Levinas’s Basic Philosophical Writings, Adriaan T. Peperzak et al. (eds) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), xiv–xv.
32. Ibid., 194.
obligated. Moreover, according to Levinas, the face breaks into my world and leaves me traumatized. Naked and destitute, the face still commands my respect.

Obviously, Levinasian ethics are of a most rigorous sort. Yet he is not giving us merely an ethics but also a philosophy of religion, in which the two are closely intertwined. In effect, we encounter God by way of the human Other, who “is indispensable for my relation with God. . . . The Other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed.” In the very midst of our relation to the Other, God is revealed. Thus, the relation to the Other constitutes “religion” for Levinas. Of course, in making the Other so very much a part of our relation to God, Levinas further complexifies what – given his concept of the Other – is already complicated. How, exactly, are we to differentiate between the human and the divine Other? Levinas’s early writings provide relatively little guidance on such a question. Yet, in “God and Philosophy” (1975), he addresses this explicitly:

God is not simply the “first other,” the other par excellence, or the “absolutely other,” but other than the other, other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical obligation to the other and different from every neighbor, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of his possible confusion with the agitation of the there is [il y a].

If the human Other cannot be truly known or mastered, it must be all the much more so for the ultimate Other.

Here it is helpful to consider Derrida’s respectful although incisive critique of Levinas. While he shares Levinas’s concerns, he criticizes Levinas for providing such a hyperbolic conception of Otherness and attempting to go beyond traditional metaphysical categories. First, Derrida points out that precisely the ability to identify the Other as another ego is what makes it possible to

33. Ibid., 215.
34. Emmanuel Levinas, Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence, Alphonso Lingis (trans.) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 111.
35. Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 78–9.
36. In a later text, Levinas puts this even more strongly: “In the other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the other, I hear the Word of God. It is not a metaphor; it is not only extremely important, it is literally true. I’m not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God” (Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other, Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav [trans.] [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], 110).
perceive the human Other as “Other, and not a stone.” Derrida makes the point that recognizing the dissymmetry of the Other first requires recognizing the symmetry. While Levinas is attempting to get beyond a conception of the Other found in Husserl in which the Other is analogous to the self, the danger is that the Other becomes so undifferentiated that it loses the features that make the human Other worthy of being treated as human. Second, Derrida insists that it is the very tradition of Greek philosophy that Levinas criticizes that makes his own venture possible. “One still has to philosophize (to say it and think it),” writes Derrida quoting an ancient Greek. Further, one cannot (and here Derrida quotes Levinas himself) “arrest philosophical discourse without philosophizing.” As hard as it might be for some to imagine Derrida insisting on the need for the classical concepts of metaphysics, such is how he responds to Levinas.

However, Levinas resists any dominance by a philosophy that “compels every other discourse to justify itself” and opines that “rational theology accepts this vassalage.” He refuses to move to something like “faith,” insisting that the very dichotomy of faith and reason has been set up by philosophy so as to make reason superior to faith. In a defiant tone, he responds to Derrida by saying: “Not to philosophize would not be still to philosophize.” However, one of the complexities of Levinas’s thought is that he actually borrows from a variety of philosophers. The idea of the Good as “beyond being [epekina tes ousias]” he takes from Plato and applies to God. Here the idea is that God cannot be thought of in terms that would apply to being (an idea also found in Plotinus). Levinas finds an ally in Descartes, in one sense, when Descartes speaks of his idea of an infinite, perfect being that he discovers in his mind. In the same way that Descartes concludes that he – a finite, imperfect being – could never have conjured up an idea of such a radically different being, Levinas sees this as an example of God “breaking into” human consciousness. However, a problem emerges at this point. While Descartes seems to think that this idea of infinite perfection is an idea that all would have, many of Descartes’s readers have pointed out that it is much more likely owing to the Christian culture in which he lived. In the same way, it would seem that Levinas’s God is distinctly theological – and, specifically, Jewish. Levinas himself speaks of “the revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality” who “shows himself only by his trace, as is said in Exodus 33.”

40. Ibid., 77.
The problem that Levinas faces is twofold: On the one hand, if this trace is identifiable with God, then how can one speak “adequately” of God who is so unidentifiable? This is simply a divine version of the problem of relating to the human Other that Levinas also raises. Would a religious believer not want to be able to make at least limited suppositions about God’s identity and character in order to have something to believe? On the other hand, one could argue that Levinas has simply imported a specifically Judeo-Christian idea of God and acted as if this were a purely “philosophical” move. It is not surprising that Janicaud contends that in Levinas “phenomenology has been taken hostage by a theology that does not want to say its name.” On Janicaud’s reading, Levinas is simply doing a kind of theology, all the while claiming to do straight philosophy. But here Janicaud is claiming something Derrida had already said nearly three decades before.Speaking of *Totality and Infinity*, Derrida asks (rhetorically) “independent of its ‘theological context’ (an expression that Levinas would most likely reject) does not this entire discourse collapse?” Of course, Levinas often claims that his philosophy and his theological writings are separate, pointing out that he had separate publishers for his philosophical and theological writings. As true as that may be, what Janicaud – and much milder critics or even some friends – assert is that his theological commitments make their way into his philosophy. Janicaud puts it rather bluntly: “*Totality and Infinity* is the first major work of French philosophy in which this theological turn is not only discernible, but explicitly taken up within a phenomenological inspiration.” Certainly, it would be hard to see Levinas as anything but a theological thinker who appropriates philosophical language for a distinctly theological cause, one that – in a rather different way from Kant – makes room for faith. But of course, the question might be asked: What is so wrong with that? Are philosophers not allowed to bring their metaphysical or ethical commitments into their writing?

Yet here we come to the very heart of the phenomenological project. For Husserl, the goal of phenomenology is to leave what he calls “the natural standpoint” and move to a kind of theoretical neutrality. On this point, Husserl sounds remarkably Kantian: to be a person “who thinks for himself [Selbstdenker]” one

42. Janicaud, *The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology*, 43.
44. In an interview, Levinas insists that he keeps “separate very clearly these two types of work [Talmudic commentary and philosophy]. I even have two publishers; the one publishes my confessional texts, the other my texts which are called purely philosophical.” See Emmanuel Levinas, “Interview with François Poirié,” in *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas*, Jill Robbins (ed.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 62.
must first be freed from “all prejudices.” Husserl explicitly insists that – as part of the phenomenological method – one must “bracket” anything other than the phenomenon itself. According to phenomenological orthodoxy, one concentrates only on the object as it is immanently given to consciousness. But, of course, it is the object as constituted by the ego. Thus, the phenomenological I is central. In contrast, Levinas reverses this phenomenological structure (a reversal found also in Henry, Marion, and Chrétien): whereas the subject had in effect been in control of the object, the subject is now “subject” to the object. For Levinas, the principle “object” that reverses the gaze (so that it is not the gaze of the subject looking at the object but the other way around) is the (face of the) Other, epitomized for him by those traditionally counted as among the “least.” In effect, the organizing that was previously delegated solely to the intentionality of consciousness is now being more directed by the other.

Understandably, then, Janicaud can speak of Levinas having “shattered” the phenomenological order. But here it must be asked as to exactly who is being more true to phenomenology. Husserl’s “principle of principles” can be read as either privileging the object or the subject, depending on which phrase of it one emphasizes – either “accepted simply as what it is presented as being” or “only within the limits in which it is presented there.” Although one can argue that Levinas provides a distorted phenomenology – one that moves from a more active to a more passive subject and from phenomenological immanence to transcendence – that move could also be viewed as simply establishing the privilege of the object (noema) over the subject (ego). What is all the more remarkable about this move is that it is done in the name of ethics. Levinas would argue that the privileging of the self has been the guiding form philosophy has taken since its beginnings, whether in phenomenology or simply philosophy in general, and to do “ethics as first philosophy” requires privileging the Other and not the self.

47. Janicaud published an additional “report” on French philosophy in 1998 titled *La Phénoménologie éclatée (Phenomenology “Wide Open”: After the French Debate)*. The term “éclatée” means “to rupture” or “to shatter.” Thus, “phenomenology shattered” would be an alternative translation. In any case, that Janicaud would use such strong language gives an idea of what he think is at stake and how fundamentally he thinks Levinas disrupts phenomenology’s structure.
48. Levinas is also discussed in detail in the essay by S. K. Keltner and Samuel J. Julian in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 4*, and by Robert Eaglestone in his essay in this volume.
Although Michel Henry’s principal works on Christianity and phenomenology come after 1995 – the time frame of this volume – a brief word on his work is appropriate, if for no other reason than that Janicaud includes Henry as part of the theological turn. Although The Essence of Manifestation is ostensibly a phenomenological text, there is every reason for Janicaud to detect in it a turn toward the theological insofar as Henry makes the reversal similar to that found in Levinas (and, as we will see, also in Marion). By critiquing the privileging of the subject in both Husserl and Heidegger, Henry clearly champions the phenomenality of the phenomenon. Henry’s focus is the very phenomenon of “manifestation,” which, in effect, is revelation, as he will come to term it in his later work. For Henry, manifestation is fully immanent, so much so that “there is nothing transcendent.” But then the question is: manifestation of what? Ultimately, the answer turns out to be manifestation of manifestation itself, which turns out to be God. It is no accident that Meister Eckhart makes more than a short appearance in The Essence of Manifestation, nor that the search for the absolute leads us to a version of God that is inspired by Eckhart.

However, Henry goes beyond Eckhart, for God is life itself and, because we are alive, God is fully present to us. It is in his later writings that this theme of God as life is developed. There, Henry works out what it means to say that “living is possible only outside the world, where another Truth reigns.” Within Christianity, Henry claims, the very meaning of the word “truth” means something quite different than it does within the realm of empirical sciences. Whereas scientific truth alienates, Christianity provides a radical phenomenology that reveals the ultimate. The result, though, is not theology but phenomenology. Henry’s conception of God is considerably different from that of Levinas or Marion, who would emphasize the transcendence or “otherness” of God. Henry,

49. Michel Henry (January 10, 1922–July 2, 2002; born in Haiphong, French Indochina (now Vietnam); died in Albi, France) was educated at the Lycée Henri IV, and the University of Lille (1941–45), where he also received a doctorat du troisième cycle (1960). His influences included Heidegger, Husserl, Hyppolite, Kandinsky, Marx, Ricoeur, Sartre, and Wahl, and he held appointments at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (1956–60), the University Paul-Valéry Montpellier (1960–82), and visiting appointments at the École Normale Supérieure, Sorbonne, Louvain, University of Washington (Seattle), and the University of Tokyo.


51. See, for example, ibid., 309–35, 683.


in contrast, stresses God’s immanence to us. But in making God and revelation central to phenomenology, Henry remains nevertheless strongly linked with Levinas and Marion. We return here (and will do so again in what follows) to the question of just who is being most faithful to Husserl’s “principle of principles.” Like Levinas, Henry would consider himself to be one of the “true” phenomenologists. Yet, while Henry accepts most of the basic principles of Husserlian phenomenology, he reverses intentionality. In effect, intentionality is suspended in order to allow the object to be manifest in total immanence. What Henry thus explains is the very givenness of the phenomenological appearance. In this regard, it is no accident that Marion clearly acknowledges his indebtedness to Henry for the latter’s earlier work on givenness.  

In his later work, Henry makes a claim that is very similar to that of Chrétien: that the structure of Christianity ultimately teaches us about the structure of phenomenology. It is the question of whether phenomenology is most itself when it is thoroughly secular and naturalistic or whether it is only truly phenomenological when placed into a decidedly Christian context. Janicaud, of course, is going to side with the former option. It is also significant that Henry gives us an account of suffering and violence that turns out to be much more like that of Chrétien than Derrida. Life, according to Henry, is constituted by a comingling of suffering and joy. They are our basic Stimmungen (moods) and they are joined in such a way that they cannot be separated. Henry goes so far as to speak of “suffering and joy together and without distinction.” In seeing them as so close and without clear distinction, Henry sounds very much like Chrétien, as will become readily apparent.

V. THE PROBLEM OF IDOLATRY AND THE NATURE OF GIVENNESS: JEAN-LUC MARION

The central concerns of Levinas are certainly those of Jean-Luc Marion, although Marion’s interest in avoiding violence to the other and in reversing


56. Jean-Luc Marion (July 3, 1946– ; born in Meudon, France) was educated at the Lycée Condorcet (1964–67), École Normale Supérieure (1967–70), and University of Paris IV–Sorbonne (1970–74), and received from the Sorbonne a doctorat du troisième cycle in 1974 and a doctorat d’état in 1981. His influences include Alquié, Balthasar, Derrida, Descartes,
the structure of phenomenology are very much motivated by his Roman Catholicism. Like Ricoeur and Levinas, Marion tries to keep separate his more “philosophical” from his more “theological” works.57 Yet, as with Levinas, both critics and supporters have argued that the separation is not quite so clear as Marion maintains. Much of Marion’s work is developed in relation to the themes of idolatry and what he terms the “saturated phenomenon.” As early as *The Idol and Distance* (1977), Marion had proclaimed Nietzsche’s idea of the “death of God” to be no more than the death of a god who rightly should die, the god of the philosophers – an idol that “does not have any right to claim, even when it is alive, to be ‘God.’”58 According to Marion, such idols have taken the form of Plato’s form of the Good, Aristotle’s “thought thinking itself,” Plotinus’s One, Kant’s “moral founder,” and Hegel’s *Geist*. To Heidegger’s rhetorical question “will Christian theology one day resolve to take seriously the word of the apostle and thus also the conception of philosophy as foolishness?”59 Marion responds: “To take seriously that philosophy is a folly means, for us, first (although not exclusively) taking seriously that the ‘God’ of onto-theology is rigorously equivalent to an idol.”60

At the heart of *God Without Being* is the discussion of idols and icons. The idol is like a mirror, in which we see our own reflection. In contrast, the icon is like a window through which we look to something beyond. Whereas the idol satisfies the gaze, “the icon summons sight in letting the visible … be saturated little by little with the invisible.”61 Given that Paul speaks of Christ as the “icon” of God (Col. 1:15), Marion thinks of Christ as the model for icons, all of which are what he would term “saturated phenomena.” Whereas according to Husserl’s “principle of principles,” the object of consciousness appears “within the limits” of consciousness, Marion contends that some phenomena simply “exceed” those limits, so that intuition is overwhelmed by that which is given. It is the *subject*,


60. Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 18.

then, that makes for a lack of *adaequatio*. While saturated phenomena come in a variety of types, it is revelation that particularly concerns Marion. In effect, the saturated phenomenon is a reworking of Kant’s “aesthetic idea,” which “furnishes much to think,” so that “no determinate thought, or concept, can be adequate” to it.\(^\text{62}\) Marion likens such an experience to that of one who comes out of Plato’s cave and into the light of the sun. The experience is one of bedazzlement, in which the intuition of intentionality is simply overwhelmed by sheer excess. “Something is experienced as unbearable to the gaze because it weighs too much upon that gaze. … What weighs here is not unhappiness, nor pain, nor lack, but indeed glory, joy, excess.”\(^\text{63}\) The revelatory force of the saturated phenomenon unseats the ego, which loses control of its object (to which it, in effect, becomes subject).

Marion identifies two sorts of idolatry. The first is that of onto-theology and what he says in this regard resonates with Heidegger’s critique. However, Marion accuses Heidegger of holding God captive to “Being,” a move we noted earlier in Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism”: “Beyond the idolatry proper to metaphysics, there functions another idolatry, proper to the thought of Being as such.”\(^\text{64}\) To counter this move, Marion attempts “to think God without any conditions, not even that of Being.”\(^\text{65}\) Here one is reminded of Levinas and his desire to think “otherwise.” In place of a God “within” Being, Marion speaks of a God “without being,” a God who is *agápê*, who appears to us as *gift* and thus cannot be mastered by intuition. As we will shortly see, Marion later develops this theme of givenness (*Heidegger’s es gibt, Levinas’s *il y a*), extending it to all of phenomenology and claiming that “the phenomenon therefore manifests itself insofar as it gives itself.”\(^\text{66}\)

Strongly influenced by negative theology – *apophasis* or the “*via negativa*,” which (simply put) is a way of speaking about God by saying what God is not – Marion insists that “predication must yield to praise,” so that “faith neither speaks nor states.”\(^\text{67}\) Yet Marion is unwilling simply to accept the alternatives of assertion and negation. Instead, he postulates a “third way,” in a manner similar to Levinas’s “otherwise.” As Marion asserts, “the language of praise plays its own game.”\(^\text{68}\) In effect, Marion envisions a “language” that is beyond the true and false logic of predication. He further insists that negative theology – or at least *his* version of negative theology – “does not aim to reestablish a ‘superessentiality’,

63. Ibid.
64. Marion, *God Without Being*, 41.
65. Ibid., 45.
68. Marion, *The Idol and Distance*, 193.
since it aims neither at predication nor at Being.”

It is unclear whether Marion can successfully assert the possibility of a “third way” and, regarding this claim, Derrida has been one of his sharpest critics (as we will see shortly).

In the end, the question of exactly what Marion is attempting to accomplish can be answered in more than one way. On the one hand, in such texts as God Without Being, Marion can be said to be doing philosophical theology in a phenomenological mode. There he makes very explicit theological claims, for instance that “only the bishop merits, in the full sense, the title of theologian,” and that theology only properly takes place in the moment of the Eucharist. There, and in other such theological texts, Marion’s faith commitments are in full force and his attempt to move beyond metaphysics is distinctly theological in nature. On the other hand, his phenomenological trilogy (Reduction and Givenness, Being Given, and In Excess) attempts to move beyond metaphysics phenomenologically, as well as to open up a phenomenological space for nonimmanent (that is, transcendent) phenomena (which would include, although not be limited to, specifically religious phenomena). Thus, these phenomenological texts have very important theological implications, even though they are not theological per se. As Marion himself notes, Being Given works out the nature of saturated phenomena (including that of revelation) in a way that God Without Being could only do “bluntly” and by “direct recourse to theology.”

To move beyond metaphysics phenomenologically, Marion moves from focusing on either intentionality and intuition (Husserl) or being (Heidegger) to givenness. He makes this move by concentrating on what he takes to be even more primordial than Husserl’s “principle of principles”: “so much reduction, so much givenness” (or “the more reduction, the more givenness”), a principle that Marion invokes from Husserl’s The Idea of Phenomenology. According to this principle, the phenomenon must be (i) given intrinsically (purely from itself), (ii) irrevocably (essentially given), and (iii) radically (so that at heart it is characterized by givenness). Since phenomenological givenness is prior to consciousness, it cannot be controlled by consciousness. Instead, the I – which Marion terms the “interloqué” – is compelled to answer to the phenomenon. “Deposed from autarchy and taken by surprise,” the I experiences a reversal in that its logos is no longer in control and this “prohibits the interloqué from comprehending” in the sense of complete adequation. In effect, Marion (again, like Levinas and Henry) turns the usual phenomenological stance around.

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69. Ibid., 230 n.14.
70. Marion, God Without Being, 153.
72. Marion, Being Given, 14–15.
73. Ibid., 119–21.
74. Marion, Reduction and Givenness, 201.
autonomous subject becomes the one who is interrogated – l’interloqué (the interrogated one) – whom eventually Marion comes to term l’adonné (the gifted one). The one who is gifted is in effect called – and thus must respond.75

Although Being Given is ostensibly about phenomenology’s structure, it is telling that when Marion discusses the call, he turns to the classic call of God to Samuel, in which Samuel’s response is “here I am.” For Being Given tells the story not just of all objects that are given to us but likewise the story of the ultimate given: revelation. This raises the question of the “as such” or the hermeneutics that Marion employs. We noted earlier that Heidegger insists that phenomena must be interpreted “as” something. But Marion’s conception of the saturated phenomenon in effect derails the “as such” aspect of intuition. As he puts it, “the claim to the ‘as such’ has no right to be made.” To this claim Derrida responds: “Then would you dissociate what you call phenomenology from the authority of the as such? If you do that, it would be the first heresy in phenomenology. Phenomenology without the as such.” Marion responds by quoting Levinas: “‘Without horizon [i.e. the as such] there is no phenomenology.’ [To which Marion adds:] And I boldly assume he was wrong.”76 Hermeneutics is effectively pushed aside, becoming a moment not of the first or initial appearance but of later reflection. The question, however, is whether Marion is justified in so doing, on two different levels. On the one hand, does Marion’s account remain truer to the things themselves than the standard phenomenological “orthodoxy”? On the other hand, does the claim that the saturated phenomenon appears without any conditions being imposed by consciousness prove more truly “orthodox” phenomenologically? Not surprisingly, Janicaud thinks that Marion has a horizon, namely one imported from theology. The result is that, “despite all the denials, phenomenological neutrality has been abandoned.”77 But, again, precisely the question of whether such “neutrality” is either possible or desirable is what is at issue.

VI. THE QUESTION OF THE MESSIANIC: JACQUES DERRIDA

One can argue that the question of negative theology – or something very much like it – can be found throughout the thought of Jacques Derrida.78 Not only

75. Marion makes explicit reference to Jean-Louis Chrétien’s The Call and the Response (discussed below). See Being Given, 287.
77. Janicaud, The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology, 68.
78. Jacques Derrida (July 15, 1930–October 8, 2004; born in El-Biar, near Algiers, French Algeria; died in Paris, France) was educated at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, École Normale
does he explicitly address the notion, but even the idea of the “messianic” in his late philosophy clearly has something like the structure of negative theology. As early as the essay “Diff érance” (1968), Derrida recognizes that his thought might seem almost “indistinguishable from negative theology.” However, he goes on to point out that both difference – which encompasses both “to differ” and “to defer” – and deconstruction concern the possibility of presence to consciousness and thus thought and language in general, whereas negative theology has to do with both theological thought and language that claim a “superessentially beyond the finite categories of essence and existence.”

Derrida returns to the logic of negative theology in “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials” (1987), particularly the denial by negative theologians that Derrida argues can be read only as being an assertion. In this respect, negative theology repeats the logic of Plato’s “beyond being.” Just like Plato, Dionysius actually “asserts” that “God is the Good that transcends the Good and the Being that transcends Being.”

Yet Derrida accuses this “logic” of “going further than is reasonably permitted. That is one of the essential traits of all negative theology: passing to the limit, then crossing a frontier.” On the other hand, negative theology does not just go beyond what is permitted: it likewise proves to be kenotic. “Negative theology empties itself by definition, by vocation, of all intuitive plenitude,” becoming in effect “kenôsis of discourse.” One might say that negative theology proves to be exactly the opposite of Husserl’s adaequatio: not a “full intuition” but “an empty or symbolic intending” or “inadequation.” As to the question of Marion’s “third way,” Derrida responds: “Even if it is not a predicative affirmation of the current type, the encomium [i.e. praise] preserves the style and the structure of a predicative affirmation.” Whereas Derrida thinks that prayer might have no particular person to whom it is addressed, he insists that praise always assumes some attributes of the being or thing praised, and so it is never directionless.


Despite their differences regarding the possibility of a “third way,” Derrida in effect creates his own “third way” in the concepts of *différence* and the messianic. For *différence* is neither pure sameness nor otherness and the messianic partakes of no particular messianism – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or otherwise – but is a pure structure that has no need of any particular revelation. Although the concept of the messianic is one that Derrida adopts only in his later philosophy, he sees deconstruction as messianic in that it is always pointing us to the future – *l’avenir* – a future that is unforeseeable and thus unpredictable, and therefore never arrives. For this reason, Derrida claims that “*deconstruction is justice,*” in the sense that deconstruction is always trying to bring about justice but justice is always on the way and never present.83 “Deconstruction” is an elusive term to describe, although Derrida insists that it is not a “method.” Instead, it is the questioning, modifying, and reformulating of all formulas and beliefs that naturally takes place precisely because all beliefs and formulas are always open to question and rethinking. Deconstruction serves justice by asking whether particular laws serve justice. Since laws can never perfectly embody justice, Derrida thinks we must always be vigilant.

Yet Derrida’s concern for justice is not just ethical but also religious in nature. *The Gift of Death* brings together these two concerns. Beginning with Jan Patočka’s claim that hidden within the responsibility of Christian ethics are the secrecy and mystery of the cultic, Derrida argues that Christianity has a fundamental mystery at its heart. The problem arises in that ethical responsibility is neither simply to the singular other nor to some universal rule. Reinterpreting the French euphemism for suicide – *donner la mort*, literally, “to give death” – Derrida maintains that ethics is always a sacrificing of oneself for another. Christianity promotes such a sacrifice, but it must be done in secret. Borrowing heavily from Kierkegaard’s account of the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, Derrida emphasizes that Abraham cannot give a rational or ethical account for his action, which means he must act in secret. It is this secrecy that, for Derrida, applies to all ethical actions. If one were to explain one’s actions, then one “loses the possibility of deciding or the right to decide. Thus every decision would, fundamentally, remain at the same time solitary, secret, and silent.”84 There is an essentially aporetic quality to responsibility, then, since it is neither simply an accounting for one’s action (by recourse to the universal) nor a nonaccounting for one’s action. Further, while God does ultimately reward Abraham, there is no “payback.” Precisely the willingness to offer his son as a sacrifice without having

any expectation of reward is the reason he receives a reward. Neither morality nor faith, for Derrida, partakes in economic exchange. Instead, the logic is that of the gift – a true sacrifice – in which there is no calculation or expectation. Yet such a “gift” is not merely difficult but represents for Derrida “the impossible,” “the very figure of the impossible.”

Christianity – in its very structure of morality and faith – exemplifies this logic. Or else, and this would be Nietzsche’s view, it merely appears to do so. The Gift of Death ends with a question: when Jesus instructs his disciples to give in secret (Matthew 6), are they truly giving a gift or partaking in an even more calculating way in economic exchange?

As much as Derrida at times valorizes Christian morality, he speaks of his own religious beliefs by saying “I quite rightly pass for an atheist,” although he also says “I pray, as I have never stopped doing.”

Derrida wrestles with the question with which Augustine wrestled: “What do I love when I love my God?” The result is an interesting way of combining Kant’s making room for faith and his demand that religion remain within the bounds of reason. Admitting that reason is always interlaced with faith, Derrida is critical of “dogmatic faith” that “claims to know” and thus “ignores the difference between faith and knowledge.”

It would seem that, again like Kant, Derrida’s faith is primarily moral in nature. Derrida is uncomfortable with any concrete “messianism,” for he sees them as inherently violent and too sure of themselves. Instead, he speaks of the “messianic” in general, which is “the opening to the future or to the coming of the other” who arrives as an “absolute surprise.” For Derrida, such a general messianicity is possible by way of a “nondogmatic doublet of dogma … a thinking that ‘repeats’ the possibility of religion without religion.”

However, Derrida can be questioned in a number of respects. Certainly one danger is that Derrida’s “undecidability” could simply lead to indecision. Derrida insists that it ought not, but Derrida’s own lack of decision (regarding, say, messianism and the messianic) demonstrates this tendency. Further, a general messianicity that is derived from singular beliefs seems at odds with Derrida’s concern to protect singularity. For is messianicity not necessarily connected to some concrete messianism? Yet perhaps the most troubling aspect of Derrida’s thought is that requirements for both justice and faith seem so high that they

88. Ibid., 57.
could never be properly instantiated. Both are always avenir (to come) and thus (seemingly) can never arrive.

**VII. THE VOICE OF THE CALL: JEAN-LOUIS CHRÉTIEN**

Jean-Louis Chrétien’s “phenomenology” is difficult to characterize. That he subtitles one of his books “Phenomenology of the Promise” might lead one to the conclusion that his thought is linked to Derrida’s l’avenir. But Chrétien maintains that “the promise always already surrounds us.” The promise is both to come and yet already here. That kind of paradoxical formulation is at the heart of Chrétien’s philosophy, which often evokes that Heideggerian phrase “always already [immer schon].” Although Janicaud admits that Chrétien writes with care and nuance, he insists that Chrétien is writing against the theological backdrop of Christ’s incarnation. Of course, Chrétien does nothing to hide his influences: he cites both philosophers and theologians abundantly and frequently centers his meditations around passages from both Hebrew and Christian scriptures. Thus, although he writes on such topics as the body, the presence of the voice, and testimony, his take on them is distinctly theological, which leads Janicaud to wonder how they could be phenomenological. Indeed, that Chrétien would have essays titled “The Obliqueness of the Human and the Obliqueness of the Divine in the Christian Conversations of Malebranche” and “The I and Sin according to Kierkegaard” – in which Chrétien takes seriously the implications of sin for the constitution of the self – would only seem to strengthen Janicaud’s claim. Yet, whereas Marion would insist that his phenomenology of the “givenness” of the saturated phenomenon is “strictly phenomenological” (even though, strangely enough, it leads to a “theophany”), Chrétien would say that including theological voices actually illuminates the phenomena, resulting in what he insists is

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90. Jean-Louis Chrétien (July 24, 1952– ; born in Paris, France) was educated at the Lycée Henri-IV (1969–71), École Normale Supérieure (1971–75), and Fondation Thiers (1977–80), and received a doctorat de troisième cycle from the University of Paris IV–Sorbonne (1983) and habilitation à diriger des recherches from the University of Paris IV–Sorbonne (2004). His influences include Aristotle, Augustine, Claudel, Heidegger, Levinas, Philo of Alexandria, Plato, Plotinus, and Porphyry, and he has held appointments at the University of Paris XII–Crétteil (1981–88), University of Paris IV–Sorbonne (1988– ).


something that is “rigorously phenomenological.”94 The result is a clash between a minimal, naturalistic phenomenology and a radical phenomenology that is either somewhat secretly or quite explicitly motivated by religious concerns.

Although Chrétien writes on a wide variety of topics, the theme of a call that “wounds” is one that appears in multiple texts and can be considered a dominant motif in his thought. One might even argue that it is the heart of the theological turn not just in Chrétien but French phenomenology in general. For Chrétien insists that the call that comes to us always already precedes us and also has the effect of decentering us and constituting us. It is yet another example of the usual phenomenological paradigm being turned on its head. “We speak only for having been called,” says Chrétien, who also claims “we are entangled in speech as soon as we exist.”95 In place of a privileged, autonomous subject, Chrétien sees us as intersubjectively constituted, so that our voice is never really our own. As such, we are part of an ongoing conversation and an ever-evolving hybridity of both speech and self. Indeed, Chrétien pushes this intersubjectivity to a point where the idea of the “self” as discrete is seriously challenged. And that challenge is clearly presented within a theological context.

In that regard, when Chrétien says that “each new encounter shatters us and reconfigures us,”96 it is not incidental that the phrase appears in an essay on prayer. Yet what is remarkable about that essay is how Chrétien uses prayer – a specifically religious phenomenon – to illuminate speech and conversation in general. Whether in prayer or in conversation with a human other, one is both touched by the other and touches in return. This movement is further complicated by Chrétien’s claim that any response to a call “also calls out in turn and appeals to other calls.”97 So the structure of the call is not merely two-way but multidirectional. Speech comes to us as gift and so we both give back and give away. For Chrétien, the problem of the gift (and thus economic exchange) simply is not a “problem” for him (as it is for Derrida) precisely because of a fundamental “inequality” of gifts. As he puts it, “no response will ever correspond. The perfection of the answer will lie forever in its deficiency, since what calls us in the call is from the start its very lack of measure, its incommensurability.”98 Is there a problem, though, with this logic? That gifts cannot be measured means that there can be no reciprocity involving measurement (no “even exchange”).

94. Marion, “The Saturated Phenomenon,” 215; Chrétien, The Call and the Response, 33. Although Chrétien is particularly speaking here of “human sight” and even poses this as a rhetorical question, he undoubtedly sees himself as doing rigorous phenomenology.
98. Ibid., 23.
Yet, if the response is always deficient, then is there not some kind of measuring that must have already taken place insofar as the response is deemed to have not measured up? Chrétien does not really answer this question, although his claims about “nothingness” function as a way of at least addressing it. He claims that we possess “nothing” and so, when the gift comes to us, we cannot really possess (let alone measure) it but respond only by passing it on. Chrétien’s argument would seem to be that since none of us can possess the gift and all of us possess only nothingness, we are always exceeded by the gift.

All of this exchange is deeply connected to wounding. It is not just that anyone who speaks “opens himself to more than himself and to others,” but that every “opening up” is like a kind of wound. Chrétien is speaking particularly of prayer when he writes that it “exposes [the one praying] in every sense of the word expose and with nothing held back.”99 Prayer in particular is “always agonic” for it opens us up to God and even the act of prayer is a kind of “suffering.” Here it is helpful to remember that many encounters with God in the Hebrew Bible are ones in which the one called by God is opened up. For example, in one of the earliest, Moses hears God speaking to him from the burning bush and replies: “Here I am,” which signifies that he is willing to be at God’s disposal. When we think of “suffering,” we tend to forget that its original meaning – and its French equivalent “suffrir” – is “to submit to.” Although Chrétien also has in mind the idea of being in pain, that notion of submitting is first and foremost. We become a “subject” before God, since “all prayer confesses God as giver by dispossessing us of our egocentrism.”100 So the same reversal that we found in Levinas and Marion is likewise found in Chrétien. But this is a painful reversal and decentering, precisely because we so want to be in the center. It should be no surprise, then, that Chrétien sees prayer as an agonic struggle and Jacob’s wrestling with the man or angel or God in the book of Genesis as paradigmatic. What takes place is a violent and prolonged encounter in which there is both a wound (Jacob’s hip is displaced) and a blessing (Jacob becomes Israel). Although not all such encounters with God (or with human others, for that matter) are so agonic in nature, Chrétien sees at least something agoniac in prayer itself, since even the act of submitting to God is a struggle.

Unlike Levinas – and particularly unlike Derrida – Chrétien does not simply want to eliminate all violence or suffering (although here he is quite close to Henry, who, as we noted, sees suffering and joy as inextricably linked). So he has a very different response to the problem of violence as posed by Hegel. In

100. Ibid., 153. Chrétien clearly has this idea of the “Here I am” in mind for, elsewhere, he speaks of “the gift to which one is opened without recourse, about being the only one who can say Me voici, here I am,” in Jean-Louis Chrétien, The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For, Jeffrey Bloechl (trans.) (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 120.
one sense, Chrétien can be viewed as simply more realistic than either Levinas or Derrida, for he thinks that struggles in which there is suffering or violence simply describe the human condition. Although some might be willing to level the charge of falling into an all too easy justification of evil, Chrétien has a highly nuanced account of suffering and violence in which he maintains that “the benediction can wound.”\textsuperscript{101} Here the reference is again to Jacob’s struggle. Chrétien points out that it is hard to see in the narrative who is the victor or vanquished. Any simple interpretation of who “wins” here would be naive. So Chrétien does not provide a theodicy but a phenomenology that attempts to think “loss, wound, and passivity, as well as forgetting and fatigue” from the point of view in which “there is no philosophical parousia.”\textsuperscript{102} Precisely because there is no such parousia, thinking of loss, wound, and suffering either as wholly gratuitous or as ultimately good – or at least offset by good – is simply impossible. For Chrétien, we are left in the phenomenological middle in which good and evil come mingle, a world in which evil often masquerades as good and good is often less good than we take it to be. But it is likewise a world in which evil is not always quite as evil as guessed or feared. Chrétien is no wide-eyed optimist, but he is too nuanced as a phenomenologist to reduce the phenomena to any simple categories. The result is that the reader is left with a certain unease, for there is no real resolution or clear conclusion, just a meditation on the phenomena that leaves them in all of their complexity and paradox.

Yet Chrétien does envision a kind of parousia. In much the same way that he affirms a kind of memory beyond that remembered, so he speaks of a future that cannot be anticipated, one that “exceeds all expectation, and thereby founds anticipation.”\textsuperscript{103} Here Chrétien’s “anticipation” and a future exceeding expectation sounds like Derrida’s messianic and l’avenir. Chrétien himself says that “the unhoped for is what transcends all our expectations.”\yet, unlike Derrida, Chrétien sets this within a decidedly Christian context. As he goes on to say, “at the point where Revelation permits hope to become hope in God and confidence in God’s promise, the unhoped for is charged with a new meaning.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textbf{VIII. CONCLUSION}

With Levinas, Henry, Marion, Chrétien – and even Derrida – phenomenology both goes in a distinctly theological direction and undergoes a startling

\textsuperscript{101} Jean-Louis Chrétien, “Retrospection,” in \textit{The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For}, 122.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, 126.
\textsuperscript{104} Chrétien, \textit{The Unforgettable and the Unhoped For}, 105, 107.
phenomenological reversal. These moves have had a number of significant consequences. First, the Kantian move of “making room for faith” is put into question. Is it reason making room for faith or – as with these first four philosophers – faith being kind enough to make room for reason? Second, given this uncertainty of who is making room for whom, the very assumption of the superiority of reason over faith is put into question. No longer is it clear which truly has the upper hand. And it is Derrida, the one who “rightly passes for an atheist” – who particularly points this out. Third, whether violence is simply gratuitous and so should be minimized at all costs may be the conclusion of Derrida, but it is not that of either Henry or Chrétien. Although hardly champions of violence or suffering, they conclude that the picture is considerably more complicated. Fourth, whatever one makes of them, the challenges to phenomenology posed by Levinas, Henry, Marion, and Chrétien cannot be simply ignored. They are rigorous, substantial, and made precisely in the name of phenomenology. Fifth, all four of these thinkers provide helpful ways for moving philosophy of religion beyond its Babylonian captivity to onto-theology.

Of course, the debate is hardly over. Since 1995, there have been plenty of new works, topics, and voices. Yet one thing is clear: while once somewhat moribund, continental philosophy of religion has come back to health in a vigorous way and shows no signs of abating.

**MAJOR WORKS**

**Jean-Louis Chrétien**


**Jacques Derrida**


**Michel Henry**


**Emmanuel Levinas**


Jean-Luc Marion


Paul Ricoeur


Although the linguistic turn has been praised as the major philosophical achievement of contemporary philosophy, there is also another important “turn” that – I will argue – has been in fact more epochal and philosophically significant if considered in terms of its long-term impact across traditions and in its influence in shaping the contemporary philosophical agenda. For while the linguistic turn has been pivotal in the emergence of some trends and schools of thought within analytic and continental philosophy, the performative turn has not only created trends and schools within these traditions but has in fact challenged their boundaries, leading to the emergence of perspectives that live across traditions or in the interstices between them. Not only has the turn to performance resulted in the development of philosophical perspectives that are hard to classify and impossible to pigeonhole, but their proponents and followers have engaged in multifaceted and multilayered debates that span across traditions and even across disciplines, reshaping theoretical landscapes and challenging their most basic assumptions. In a broad range of philosophical issues concerning identity, knowledge, and values, performative approaches have flourished, transforming and enriching philosophical research and calling for interdisciplinary collaborations that reach beyond the boundaries of philosophy (especially in feminist theory, race theory, social epistemology, political philosophy, and aesthetics). But what exactly am I calling “the performative turn”? In this introduction I will briefly sketch what the philosophical turn to performance entails, setting the stage for my account of its occurrence across philosophical traditions and for my exploration of the consequences and implications of its legacy in the philosophical movements of the twentieth century and in the philosophical agenda of the twenty-first century.
The performative turn can be said to have taken place in different ways in different places: different philosophical traditions have put performance at the center of philosophical debates and have called attention to the crucial connection between philosophical problems and human actions and practices. Many would argue that in the continental tradition this turn had been in the making for centuries, culminating with the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century establishing a deep and intimate connection between subjectivity and its expressions in action. Charles Taylor, for example, has traced the development of an expressive tradition in European philosophy of language from Hamann, Herder, and Humboldt to Husserl, Heidegger, and Habermas.¹ Others have also emphasized the performative aspects of Romantic expressivism, with its emphasis on cultural practices as constituting (as well as expressing) human values, human taste, human reality, and human knowledge. In this sense Hegel himself can be seen as a major contributor to the performative turn.² But I am more interested here in highlighting how the turn to action and performance took place at the threshold of the twentieth century, reconceptualizing philosophical problems within continental thought during that century. In this sense, although we can trace its historical roots much further, the performative turn in twentieth-century continental philosophy is closely linked to the refocusing of interpretative questions in practical terms: by focusing on action and performance, traditional epistemic issues concerning human understanding became social, political, and historical issues.

We can identify three philosophical movements that made crucial contributions to the performative turn in European thought: Marxism, with its reversal of the traditional relationship of theory to practice; phenomenology, with its analysis of the lifeworld; and hermeneutics, with its dynamic and immanent approach to understanding grounded in historically situated practices of interpretation. The Marxist philosophy of praxis brought to the fore the social and political aspects of traditional epistemic questions, presenting a new methodological approach to interpretation with the critique of ideology. Interestingly enough, in the early twentieth century even phenomenological theories of subjectivity were reoriented toward the practical and the social, with Husserl himself moving the focus of his philosophy from intentional meaning-conferring acts to the lifeworld – an intersubjectively shared background that supports meaning and

². See John McCumber, *Poetic Interaction* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), and *The Company of Words* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993). If the latter book argues for an interpretation of Hegel as one of the creators of the linguistic turn, the former can be said to show Hegel's crucial contributions to the performative turn.
communication. In this way phenomenology moved from an intentionalistic semantics to a social pragmatics that re-cognizes socialization into a form of life as a prerequisite for meaning and understanding. It is this priority of the practical and the social that grounded the convergence between phenomenology and Marxist philosophy – otherwise quite different schools of thought – that we see, for example, in the early Marcuse or the later Sartre. On the other hand, hermeneutics also brought the epistemology of interpretation to the realm of concrete sociohistorical practices. From Dilthey to Gadamer and Ricoeur, the rethinking of interpretative methodologies in the human sciences resulted in the rich situating of reason in society and history and in the provocative reconceptualization of interpretative subjectivities as embodied in language and action.

The performative turn was produced rather differently in the analytic and pragmatic schools of thought within Anglo-American philosophy. I will be teasing out some parts (or threads) of this complex story in the next two sections, so here I will simply lay out the two criteria I have used to compose the story I will tell about the development and impact of the performative turn. In the first place, I want to explore the intersection between the performative turn and the linguistic turn. Therefore, I will focus on those performative theories that are also at the same time theories of language and communication. In the second place, since I want to identify those performative insights that have had an important impact across philosophical traditions, the protagonists of my story will be those philosophers whose performative approaches have influenced and shaped discussions in a wide range of philosophical schools. For this reason, I will give priority to authors such as Wittgenstein and Austin over others such as Ryle and Grice. For, although Ryle’s logical behaviorism and Grice’s pragmatics have been highly influential performative theories, they have been comparatively less pivotal in generating philosophical discussions of performance across traditions.


5. I am here calling attention to the contribution of hermeneutics to the performative turn, but perhaps this should be qualified, for, although there are performative strands in this school of thought, not all hermeneutic approaches are performative and there are indeed some idealistic tendencies within hermeneutics.

I will articulate a two-part story about the performative turn in analytic and pragmatist philosophy. In the first part of my story I will focus on some central figures in Anglo-American philosophy (Austin, Dewey, and Wittgenstein in particular), tracing the impact of their central ideas not only among their followers but also, and more importantly, among theorists of different philosophical traditions (Butler, Cavarero, and Habermas, among others). This section will already highlight the beginnings of a process of hybridization between philosophical traditions, a productive *mestizaje* that makes one hopeful about new generations of theorists who are problem-oriented and are willing to use conceptual tools from a variety of sources, without letting their allegiances to particular traditions become obstacles to their reflections or to the philosophical dialogues in which they engage. In the second part of my story I will sketch my own account of the emergence of *post-analytic philosophy* as a result of the linguistic and performative turns. I will highlight the strength of this new school of thought in reconceptualizing fundamental questions concerning normativity in performative terms. By focusing on the interrelations between language and action, problems concerning knowledge, values, and reality appear in a new light. My analysis will underscore the generative potential of the American performative turn in reconceptualizing traditional philosophical problems and creating new ones.

I will also highlight an important weakness in post-analytic philosophy: what I call the *evasion of identity*. Until recently the authors in this school of thought for the most part neglected issues of identity and thereby disregarded some of the most important ideas and cultural developments of the twentieth century. We can add to W. E. B. Du Bois’s claim that the problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the color line, that it was also the problem of the gender and sexual lines. But most post-analytic American philosophers – from Quine and Sellars to Davidson and Putnam – missed an opportunity to incorporate in their theorizing some of the most important sociopolitical and cultural movements of modern times: the civil rights movement, the women’s liberation movement, and the sexual liberation (and GLBT) movement. This suggests not only an intellectual oversight, but also an important disconnect with (and possibly a lack of concern for) some of the most central problems of the contemporary world. How can one philosophize about knowledge without taking into account issues of gender and race when women and racial minorities were being excluded from the institutions in charge of producing and disseminating knowledge? How can one theorize about human relations and disregard race, gender, sexual orientation, and class in a society in which racism, sexism, and homophobia are rampant, and economic oppression everywhere?

These criticisms against analytic philosophy have been forcefully voiced by many. But they still apply to an important degree even to post-analytic philosophy. And this lacuna becomes all the more dramatic in a school of thought that is oriented toward action and performance. But there have been some important exceptions in this respect (Stanley Cavell being perhaps the most notable) and glimpses of concern for identity issues have appeared here and there in post-analytic philosophy, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s. I will discuss how the evasion of identity in post-analytic philosophy is being addressed by some and I will argue that repairing this evasion requires a dialogue among philosophical traditions that is critical and challenging – in identifying and contesting gaps and exclusions – as well as mutually enriching – in sharing existing theoretical resources and strategies and creating new ones. There is reason for hope, I will contend, and it lies in the recently developed and ongoing collaborations across philosophical traditions and across disciplines. I will conclude with a brief note on the philosophical agenda for the twenty-first century, which must be pluralistic, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural in order to address the needs and concerns of the multicultural and globalized communities of today.

I. THE PERFORMATIVE LEGACY

I will start developing my account of the performative turn in analytic and pragmatist philosophy by calling attention to the similarities of the views of communication and action of two central figures in these philosophical traditions: Wittgenstein and Dewey. I focus on these two authors because of their unparalleled influence and their converging contributions to the performative and linguistic (or better yet, communicative) turns of early-twentieth-century philosophy. As I have argued elsewhere, Wittgenstein and Dewey share a similar contextualist view that underscores that words are inextricably interwoven with actions. The intimate bond between words and actions is precisely what the Wittgensteinian notion of a language-game is supposed to highlight: “I shall … call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the ‘language-game’”; “the term ‘language-game’ is meant to bring into promi-

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8. For an extended discussion of Wittgenstein, see the essay by John Fennell and Bob Plant in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 3*.


nence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.”¹¹ In a similar vein, Dewey understands language as a form of agency: “language is primarily a mode of action”;¹² and the inseparability of words and actions is at the core of his “naturalistic” account of language as “the tool of tools.”¹³ In short, the performativity of language is the centerpiece of Dewey’s and Wittgenstein’s contextualism. As Wittgenstein puts it, “words are deeds.”¹⁴

Wittgenstein and Dewey call our attention to the pragmatic contexts of communication; they stress that language and its contexts of use are action-oriented. As I have argued in detail elsewhere,¹⁵ both Wittgenstein and Dewey explain the contextual formation and transformation of meaning in a strikingly similar way. They both argue that the meaning of words and sentences becomes contextually determinate through the tacit agreement in action of the participants in communicative practices. This suggests that the meaning or interpretation of a speech act is not in the hands of anyone in particular, but in the hands of all speakers/writers taken collectively, that is, in the hands of the linguistic community. But this can be understood in different ways: as emphasizing the fixity of meaning established by social and pragmatic means; or as underscoring the instability of meaning that is always scattered and dispersed in a multiplicity of communicative encounters in heterogeneous pragmatic contexts. The former understanding of the semantic role of communal agreement is the one suggested by a consensus view of meaning such as Kripke’s community interpretation of Wittgenstein on meaning and rule-following.¹⁶ A nonrelativistic and nonskeptical version of the consensus view of meaning can be found in Peirce’s semiotics and in Habermas’s account of communicative action.¹⁷ On this transcendental view, what fixes meaning is not the de facto (and perhaps arbitrary) consensus of a contingent community but, rather, the rational consensus of an idealized

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¹¹. Ibid., §23.
¹³. Ibid., 134.
¹⁵. See my Speaking from Elsewhere, ch. 1.
¹⁶. On Kripke’s skeptical reading of Wittgenstein in Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language, the lack of semantic foundations is compensated by the arbitrary decisions of the community and thus, on this decisionistic view, what the community decides is the new foundation of language, the be-all and end-all of meaning and communication. It is worth noting that the Kripkean reading of Wittgenstein has been very influential although it has also come under heavy attack in recent years.
community. Semantic foundations are here found in transcendental idealizations that operate as regulative ideals: Habermas’s Ideal Speech Situation and the idealized community of all possible participants in communication; or the Peircean notion of the End of Inquiry, invoked by Hilary Putnam in *Reason, Truth, and History*. According to these transcendental views, our communicative practices are grounded in and guided by idealizations that are always implicitly presupposed and make our communicative interactions possible; and the determinacy and stability of our meanings are to be measured by their asymptotic approximation to the full determinacy and permanent fixity that would be achieved under idealized conditions. But appeals to idealizations are notoriously problematic, among other things because they are always formulated from a situated and partial perspective, and it is unclear how these appeals can overcome the contextualized relativity from which the transcendental views try to escape. Also problematic is the fact that, according to these transcendently idealized views, semantic determinacy requires a background agreement not only in action (in ways of doing things), but also in content (in ways of representing things) and, therefore, a strong semantic uniformity across speakers and linguistic communities. But it is not at all clear that, for the meanings that circulate in our communicative practices, this strong semantic uniformity should be conceived as possible, required, or desirable, even as an idealization.

There is an alternative way of understanding the semantic role of practical agreement and how semantic determinacy is communally achieved in our communicative practices. This is what I have termed – in my interpretation of Wittgenstein’s and Dewey’s semantic views – the idea of contextual determinacy, according to which meanings acquire transitory and imperfect determinacy when contextualized, that is, when situated in pragmatic contexts of communication. Even when they become sufficiently determinate for the purposes of communication, meanings remain unstable and heterogeneous: that is, they remain open to contestation, rather than fixed once and for all; and they become constituted by different perspectives and voices within them, without necessarily becoming uniform and suppressing disparities and dissent.

The instability and heterogeneity of meaning have been emphasized by a variety of contemporary perspectives on communication in analytic and continental philosophy, by theories as different as those of Donald Davidson and Judith Butler. For Davidson, all we need to share for successful communication is a passing theory (not a prior theory) of interpretation. The meanings

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19. Davidson and Butler are addressed in detail by, respectively, John Fennell and Gayle Salamon in essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*. 
that we share in successful communicative encounters are simply the result of a transitory convergence of perspectives. These meanings can be entirely *ad hoc*; there is no need for shared meanings to be previously *prepared* or ready-made. Davidson’s argument tries to establish that the interpretative task that interlocutors face is the task of *adjusting* their theories of interpretation until they *converge*. On Davidson’s view, communication is a matter of *mutual adjustment* of theories of interpretation, a process of interpretative negotiation or give and take between speakers who are constantly reinterpreting each other. For Davidson, the meanings that come first in the order of interpretation are *transient meanings*: first meanings are transitory meanings constructed for the purpose of a particular communicative exchange and there is no reason to think that they will survive that exchange. According to this view, the meanings that matter for the purpose of communication have no semantic stability whatsoever. They are the *ad hoc* constructs of *converging passing theories*.20 Davidson’s account of meaning and communication in terms of converging passing theories leads to a radical redescription of the traditional notions of language and linguistic competence. As Davidson puts it, his account gives new content to “the idea of two people ‘having the same language’ by saying that they tend to converge on passing theories.”21 But this seems to relativize and ultimately dissolve *the very notion of a language*, for “any theory on which a speaker and an interpreter converge is a language” and “then there would be a *new language for every unexpected turn in the conversation.*”22 Thus, on Davidson’s view, the notion of a shared language becomes *philosophically irrelevant*; it is simply not needed for a philosophical theory of communication and communicative competence. Thus, on this view, the notion of a shared language is replaced with that of an *idiolect*, and communication is understood as the intersection in passing of the individualistic perspective of particular interlocutors who come into contact.

The instability and heterogeneity of meaning are understood and explained in a very different way in social accounts of language and communicative interaction. It is a mistake to assume (as Davidsonians often do) that a social perspective will necessarily conceive of language as a set of stable conventions that

20. The core of Davidson’s controversial argument is that we can always bring prior theories closer and closer together until they ultimately converge in passing theories that fit one another: no matter how far apart the prior theories of two interlocutors may be, it is always *in principle* possible to tinker with them – to adjust them and transform them – in a process of self-correction, until they converge (so that the speaker intends the hearer to interpret her utterance in a particular way, and the hearer uses a passing theory that interprets the utterance in just that way).


turn meanings into reified, ready-made products that are homogenized across speakers and fixed once and for all. This is not true of all social accounts that depict language as a shared social practice. In particular, it is not true of those social accounts that conceptualize language from a performative perspective, for the focus here is language in action, that is, language as a living practice (parole) and not as an inert system of signs or code (langue). On these social and performative views, meanings emerge from the clashing and meshing of perspectives that are shared in communication through the use of signs. And given that meanings are continually tied to this interactive process of relating communicative perspectives, they display an intrinsic semantic instability and heterogeneity that cannot be fully eliminated; for, no matter how much commonality of perspective we find, no matter how successful processes of semantic homogenization and stabilization happen to be, there is always the possibility of diverse (even diverging) perspectives appearing and disrupting the semantic life of our signs. In this sense, meanings are always in the making; the process of meaning formation (and re-formation) always remains open to new perspectives; and, therefore, there is always a residual semantic heterogeneity and instability that cannot be eliminated. Different articulations of this social-performative account of the openness, fragility, and fragmentary nature of meanings can be found in the pragmatist tradition and in contemporary continental philosophy.

In the pragmatist tradition, we find a highly influential social-performative account of meaning in George Herbert Mead’s *Mind, Self, and Society*. For Mead, meanings go beyond the purely “psychical”; they belong to the interactional, that is, to intersubjective processes of communicative interaction. Mead’s interactionism yields a relational view of meaning. On this view, meaning is a relation among certain phases of social interaction: a communicative action, a reaction to it, and the resulting act that completes the interaction. As Mead explains his interactional semantic view, “the logical structure of meaning” consists in “a threefold or triadic relation between gesture, adjustive response, and resultant of the social act which the gesture initiates.” Mead emphasizes that the specifically human forms of communication that require meanings involve a very peculiar kind of cooperation. What characterizes the kind of cooperation made possible by human language, what defines communicative interaction with symbols, is that it requires reflexivity: that is, the capacity to take the attitude of the other toward oneself. All gestures are tools for the coordination of action. But what distinguishes gestures with meaning is that they carry with them an attitude that

23. In *Speaking from Elsewhere*, I have tried to offer a full account of this point, drawing on the diverse but curiously converging perspectives of Bourdieu, Butler, Dewey, Mead, and Wittgenstein.

is *mutually recognized* by sender and recipient. For Mead, symbolic interaction involves the reversibility of roles or communicative perspectives. He develops his distinctive symbolic interactionism through his theory of role-taking. The claim about the mutual recognition of communicative attitudes involved in the thesis of reflexivity or reversibility seems fairly intuitive and uncontroversial. What is far more problematic, though, is the claim about similarity of response in speaker and hearer that Mead also includes in his account of reflexivity. It seems wrong to say that meaningful gestures have the *same* effect on issuer and addressee. If I issue a verbal threat, my threatening noises do not scare me and I do not feel threatened. For, indeed, to *recognize* is not to be similarly affected. One can reply that the claim about similarity of response that Mead’s reversibility thesis makes only involves that the speaker must know (or have some sense of) what it is like to be the recipient of the address— for example, what it is like to be the object of a threat, even if she does not feel threatened. This is indeed more plausible, but still problematic in some cases: For example, must the harasser know what it is like to be harassed? Must the abuser know what it feels like to be mistreated? Do slave-holders really have an inkling of what it feels like to be dominated? Mead seems to go too far when he claims that meaningful symbolic interaction requires “an arousal in the individual himself of the response which he is calling out in the other individual, a taking of the role of the other, a tendency to act as the other person acts.”

Similar issues appear in the social-performative accounts of contemporary continental philosophy, although the emphasis here is not on mutual recognition, but on misrecognition or lack of recognition; and on the incongruity of communicative perspectives, rather than on the meshing and coordination of perspectives. In these accounts the notion of communicative interaction is articulated through the notion of a *voice* and, thus, the themes of semantic instability and heterogeneity are developed in terms of the *plurivocity* of meaning. A good example of this can be found in the work of Adriana Cavarero. By calling attention to the voice, Cavarero brings to the fore three crucial aspects of symbolic performance: its embodiment, its singularity, and its relationality. The sound of the voice is always something unique, a concrete particular. But the material particularity of a voice, its concreteness and uniqueness, can be produced and recognized only in relation to other voices. In other words, the peculiar embodied singularity of a voice can be achieved only relationally. As Diane Perpich puts it, “voices are inherently plural and relational,” for to speak is to address another, and therefore, it “presupposes the other (and still other

25. Ibid., 73.
others) by virtue of the plurivocity of language.” 27 This plurivocity of language is contained and maintained in each particular voice, in which the voices of past and future speakers resonate: “In speaking, I speak a language that was already given to me by others, a language that contains already a plurality of voices and a consequent plurality of shades of meaning.” 28 A voice always echoes other voices; and with this reverberation through chains of voices, each voice becomes performatively entangled in a network of voices. 29 As Butler puts it, combining the performative views of Austin and Althusser, the voice of an I “is an inherited set of voices, an echo of others who speaks as the ‘I.’” 30 I will come back to Butler’s influential account of plurivocity and symbolic agency, but first let us move from meaning to illocution, that is, from semantic issues about the content of our speech acts to pragmatic issues about their performative force. For we need to elucidate the role of our consensus of action not only in the formation and circulation of meanings, but also in the configuration of illocutionary forces. That is, we need to interrogate also the role of practical agreement in establishing the force of our speech acts, and ask whether there is also heterogeneity and instability in the things that we do with words, and not only in the things we say; in other words, whether performative fixity and homogeneity (either socially or individualistically achieved) are to be expected in our communicative practices. I will start by calling attention to J. L. Austin’s celebrated ideas and how his insights and distinctions have been read and used in the speech act theories developed in different philosophical traditions.

Austin famously formulated the notion of performative utterances, emphasizing that our verbal pronouncements are not only sayings, but also doings, that is, they not only convey certain contents but also perform certain acts. Austin proposed a threefold distinction for the analysis of speech acts: locutionary content, that is, the representational information conveyed by the utterance; illocutionary force, that is, the kind of strength that our words have and makes our utterances the kinds of acts that they are (e.g. promising, threatening, prohibiting, etc.); and perlocutionary effects, that is, pragmatic consequences that are not specifically linguistic or semantic but are achieved through our locutions (e.g. amusing, charming, scarring, etc.), although their achievement is not guaranteed by the locution itself – that is, by the very act of enunciation

28. Ibid.
29. Bringing together continental and pragmatist perspectives, in Speaking from Elsewhere I have analyzed this phenomenon of reverberation as the echoing that maintains meanings alive, being both the source of semantic stability and the source of semantic innovation.
– but is dependent on the reception of the words enunciated by the audience or addressees. Austin focused on the first two elements for the evaluation of speech acts. He emphasized that while the correctness of its representational content depended on the truth conditions of the utterance, the appropriateness of its illocutionary force was to be assessed in terms of its felicity conditions, that is, those conditions under which the kind of act the utterance tries to produce is felicitously achieved. Austin remarked that the kinds of acts we can perform in and through language depend on the linguistic practices and social institutions available to us. So, for example, it is because we have the particular institution of marriage that we have that under certain conditions the words “I hereby pronounce you husband and wife” produce an act of marriage felicitously, while under other conditions they do not; and it is because we have the particular linguistic practices that we have, codifying certain illocutionary forces and not others, that saying “I promise you so-and-so” is, under normal conditions, the issuing of a promise. Austin also suggested that, although they emerged socially, illocutionary forces are inscribed in the speech acts themselves, so that our utterances reflexively call attention to the kind of act they try to perform, that is, sometimes they do this explicitly (“I hereby promise you X” or “I hereby warn you about Y”) and sometimes implicitly (“I will do X” or “Beware of Y”).

This suggestion has been taken up and elaborated by some speech act theorists. It is what Habermas has termed the self-referentiality of speech acts. Habermas emphasizes that this is in fact the fundamental feature of linguistic performativity that distinguishes linguistic acts from nonlinguistic acts:

An observer can only understand a nonlinguistic action when he knows the intention that is supposed to be satisfied through it. Speech acts, on the other hand, identify themselves. Because in carrying out an illocutionary act a speaker simultaneously says what he is doing, a hearer who understands the meaning of what is said can, without further ado, identify the performed act as some specific action. ... The acts carried out in a natural language are always self-referential.31

But of course not every speech act theorist agrees with the thesis of self-referentiality, and contemporary speech act theory is in fact divided over the question of whether illocutionary forces are implicitly and internally present in the act, in its underlying structure; or whether, alternatively, they are a matter of interpretation or negotiation in which external factors also play a role. I want to call attention to two very different readings and uses of Austinian ideas in this

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31. Habermas, Postmetaphysical Thinking, 64, some emphasis added.
respect: those of Searle and Habermas, on the one hand; and those of Cavell and Butler, on the other hand. The authors in the first group underscore the reflexivity of linguistic performativity and they argue that illocutionary forces are implicit in the very structure of the speech act, whereas authors in the second group reject the idea that illocutionary forces are self-contained within the act, arguing that the force of any given speech act is always interpretable and negotiable, that it depends on its reception and on the consequences it effects, on its social uptake and its productivity within a performative chain. From this disagreement there emerge two very different kinds of speech act theories. The Searlian and Habermasian variety tries to systematize speech acts through their internal analysis, arguing that, at any given time, we can fix and catalogue the kinds of linguistic actions and illocutionary forces available to us. By contrast, the alternative formulation of speech act theory calls into question the alleged fixity and systematicity of linguistic performativity, rejecting the idea that illocutionary forces can be systematically classified, that is, that we can come up with a systematic catalogue of the speech acts that can be performed in our communicative interactions. The Cavellian and Butlerian variety of speech act theory thus underscores the instability and uncontrollability of illocutionary force.

Can speech acts and their illocutionary forces be fixed and controlled? According to the sociological reading of Austin, the answer is yes: linguistic conventions and standardized procedures and rituals fix and maintain the illocutionary force of our speech acts. But this reading (often assumed by speech act theorists) was challenged by interpreters of Austin such as Cavell and Shoshana Felman. These authors emphasized the excessive nature of linguistic performativity, that is, the fact that our performances always exceed the norms and expectations contained in established practices and institutions. On this view, while previous practice and established procedure do constrain what we can do with our words, they do not determine, fix, or fully control our linguistic performances, which are carried out through our embodied voices and writing styles in such a way that not every aspect of what is done can be anticipated and normatively domesticated. Our linguistic performativity is always producing according to established expectation, but always failing to produce as expected. And this constant failing and exceeding are directly related to the embodied nature of performativity. As Felman puts it, embodiment is “the blindspot of speech,” the point at which speaking necessarily fails to recognize itself and what it does: “language is inhabited by the act of failing through which the body is

lacking to itself: the act of failing through which the body’s doing always fails to speak itself, whereas the speaking never fails to do.”33 On Felman’s view, speakers are blind because their speaking bodies are always ignorant about what they perform and always say something they do not intend. Following Felman, Butler explains this blindness or ignorance of the speaking body as follows: “the body is the blindspot of speech, that which acts in excess of what is said, but which also acts in and through what is said.”34

Feminist theorists such as Butler and Felman have called our attention to the corporeal dimension of performativity: it is not an inner subjectivity, but a body that speaks. And this corporeal dimension of speech affects crucially our discursive agency: which body speaks (a male or female body, a racial body, an ethnic body, etc.) has a tremendous impact on the illocutionary – that is, on the kind of speech act it is and the force attached to it; on the perlocutionary – that is, on the effects or consequences of the speech act; and on the semantic and interpretative – that is, on the content of the speech act as a whole and the meanings ascribed to its components. This emphasis on the body that is characteristic of performative views informed by phenomenological perspectives is lost in analytic and post-analytic performative theories; and this is an important reason (perhaps the most important reason) why those theories have failed to address fundamental philosophical issues concerning identity that are bound up with the philosophical questions concerning the normativity of language and action. I will develop this diagnosis in the next section.

II. THE EMERGENCE OF POST-ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND THE EVASION OF IDENTITY

In the story I am developing here, I am emphasizing the crucial significance that the convergence of the performative turn and the linguistic turn had for the development of post-analytic approaches. But of course this is not the only factor that played an important role in the emergence of post-analytic philosophy. For example, naturalism has had an enormous impact on the reconceptualization of philosophical problems, and another (not necessarily competing, but perhaps supplemental) story about the emergence of post-analytic philosophy could be told with naturalism as its main protagonist.35 Not surprisingly the emergence of a philosophical movement often has many facets and

33. Ibid., 78.
34. Butler, Excitable Speech, 11.
*35. For a part of this story of the impact of naturalism on post-analytic philosophy, see the essay by John Fennell in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
it involves many components in complex interaction with one another; and all
this complexity perhaps can only be captured in the composite image offered by
multiple accounts of that historical development. So the account presented here
hopes to be a contribution to such a complex story.

As discussed in the previous section, by focusing attention on the relation
between language and performance, the performative turn raises a broad spec-
trum of issues concerning content and force, bringing together in a rich way a
host of epistemic and sociopolitical issues concerning representation and action.
More specifically, I want to emphasize as a major consequence of the legacy of
the performative turn in the last part of the twentieth century the rethinking
of normativity, that is, the reconceptualization of normativity in performative
terms from the engaged perspective of the speaker and agent participating in
communicative practices. This was done in different ways in continental philos-
ophy by, for example, Habermas and Lyotard. But it was also done in a very
particular and powerful way in the 1980s and 1990s by a group of philoso-
phers who were drawing on two philosophical traditions: the analytic tradition
informed by the performative turn and the pragmatist tradition from Peirce and
Dewey to Quine and Sellars. The philosophers who contributed to the forma-
tion of a post-analytic school of thought include, among others, Stanley Cavell,
Robert Brandom, John McDowell, the later Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty.
These philosophers draw on classical American pragmatists as well as on rebel-
lious analytic philosophers such as Davidson, Evans, Quine, and Wittgenstein.
In what follows I will briefly highlight some of the crucial contributions of these
authors to the reconceptualization of normativity in performative terms. I will
also emphasize the shortcomings of these post-analytic views of normativity, in
particular, the neglect of issues concerning embodied identity that, I will argue,
result in an evasion of the political in philosophical reflections of normativity. I
will give a separate treatment to Cavell, whose work (unlike that of other post-
analytic philosophers) brought together the normative and the sociopolitical in
a way that is highly sensitive to philosophical questions concerning embodied
identities.

It is important to note that Wilfrid Sellars (1912–89) laid the groundwork of
American post-analytic philosophy with his critical rethinking of central ques-
tions in the analytic tradition. Incorporating important insights from the prag-
matist tradition, the Sellarsian rethinking of analytic philosophy involved the
critique and rejection of central tenets or assumptions concerning “immediacy”
and the empirically “given.” Sellars taught and deeply influenced some of the
major contributors to post-analytic philosophy, especially Rorty and Brandom.
His critique of “the Myth of the Given” in the landmark essay “Empiricism and
the Philosophy of Mind” (1956) had an influence in the US (although not in
Europe) comparable to that of Quine’s “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951)
and Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. Sellars shared Quine’s and Wittgenstein’s hostility to immediacy, but the role of his critique of sense-data empiricism in challenging and revolutionizing analytic philosophy has not been recognized by historians of Anglo-American philosophy until recently. Mainly motivated by the work of his disciples, the 1990s saw a revival of Sellarsian ideas and an exploration of their implications. Sellars described his own philosophical project as an attempt to usher analytic philosophy out of its Humean and into its Kantian stage. Using as a motto the Kantian dictum that “intuitions without concepts are blind,” Sellars argued against the empiricist foundationalism that was pervasive in analytic philosophy. His critique of “the Myth of the Given” tried to show the impossibility of finding empirical foundations, that is, objects of direct acquaintance that appear “immediately before the mind.” Sellars proposed a “psychological nominalism” according to which “all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities – indeed, all awareness even of particulars – is a linguistic affair.” According to Sellars, as soon as our mental states or episodes enter in the realm of the meaningful and knowable, they are in “the logical space of reasons,” that is, in the normative space created by our sociolinguistic practices of justification. As he puts it, “in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, … we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.” For Sellars, our mental and cognitive lives are inseparable from our social justificatory practices; they are subject to the norms implicit in these practices. Insofar as it is intelligible, everything we think, say, and do is answerable to the reasons that can be mobilized by the fellow speakers and agents we encounter in our practices. The conclusion of Sellars’s critique of “the Myth of the Given” is that we cannot get outside language, that we cannot “break out of discourse,” that our rational lives are bound up with our discursive practices. Intelligibility and rationality are not governed by norms that are somehow given prior to our discursive practices; they are, rather, discursively regulated by the practices we develop and the norms underlying these practices. This immanent view of the norms of intelligibility and rationality inspired new and provocative reflections on normativity in the 1990s.

A systematic internalist account of normativity as immanent in our discursive practices was articulated by Brandom in *Making it Explicit*. This account elaborates some of the central insights of Sellars’s immanentism concerning normativity while at the same time going beyond it. As Rorty puts it, Brandom’s book “offers the first systematic and comprehensive attempt to follow up on

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37. Ibid., §36.
Sellars’s thought,” “an attempt to usher analytic philosophy from its Kantian to its Hegelian stage.” 38 The starting-point of Brandom’s view of normativity is the fundamental Kantian and Sellarsian insight that our “judgments and actions are to be understood to begin with in terms of the special way in which we are responsible for them.” 39 According to Brandom, our discursive responsibility or answerability as thinkers and agents is not to formal norms of thought and action that exist independently of our practices, but rather, to the practical norms implicit in the inferential connections among judgments and actions that are forged in our discursive practices. Thus he proposes a material inferentialism that derives conceptual contents and conceptual norms from the normative assessments that we make in our actual discursive practices, rather than the other way round, that is, rather than our normative appraisals being derived from and grounded in conceptual norms and contents that are somehow given prior to and independently of our practices. Brandom rejects the formalist idea that every inference is based on the logical form of the propositions involved and hence on content-independent rules of logical syntax. Instead, his inferentialism focuses on relations of material inference that are based on the content of the propositions involved. On this view, semantic content derives from what we actually say and do in our discursive practices; more specifically, the content of a proposition derives from its “circumstances of application” and its “consequences of application.” 40 Brandom’s inferentialism offers an alternative to representationalism, 41 that is, to the view that contents are somehow given prior to and independent of the inferential relations in which they enter in our discursive practices. Brandom describes the justificatory practices that create the normative space of reasons as the practices in which we “keep score” of the normative correctness of our actions and utterances. On his view, these “score-keeping” practices have to be harmonized following the normative desiderata and principles that emerge from the practices themselves and from the normative orientations of their agents toward the world and toward each other. Brandom concludes his material-inferentialist account of normativity with the “social self-consciousness” that a community of “score-keepers” can reach through the expressive practices of making things explicit, a “social self-consciousness” that involves “the complete and explicit interpretive equilibrium exhibited by a community whose members adopt the explicit discursive stance

40. Ibid., 116–32.
41. Brandom divides philosophers into “representationalists” (such as Descartes and Locke) and “inferentialists” (such as Leibniz, Kant, Frege, the later Wittgenstein, and Sellars).
toward each other.”

Brandom’s unified and Hegelian picture of normativity contrasts with the fractured view of normativity that seems to emerge from Davidson’s account of interpretation. On the Davidsonian view, language is inevitably splintered into idiolects and the only unification of semantic and normative assessments we can have is local and ephemeral, achieved through mutual adjustments of our theories of interpretation in fragile and transient encounters in discursive practices. Building on this Davidsonian account, Rorty has elaborated a thoroughly pluralistic and relativistic view of normativity based on a deflationary theory of truth. In a number of essays published in the 1980s and 1990s, Rorty interprets Davidson’s view as a radical deflationism about truth that explains agreement with the world in terms of agreement with each other, thus reducing objectivity to solidarity. With this problematic interpretation, Rorty wants to assimilate Davidson’s view to the social-practice approach to truth inaugurated by Dewey, Heidegger, Sellars, and Wittgenstein. Against the representationalist paradigm that views truth as correspondence with a language- and mind-independent

42. Brandom, Making it Explicit, 643.
43. Ibid., 4.
44. Among contemporary analytic philosophers, Davidson is perhaps the one who has had the deepest impact on post-analytic philosophy of the 1980s and 1990s, either by inspiring his followers – such as Rorty – to develop the normative implications of his views, or by inspiring his critics – such as Putnam – to develop alternatives.
45. In such a theory, truth is deflated of philosophical content, that is, it is not given any metaphysical or epistemic content. Instead, it is taken as something simple and indefinable that cannot be reduced to something more basic (such as the epistemic property of coherence or the metaphysical property of correspondence). Deflationary theories typically treat the notion of truth as unproblematic and intuitively understood, and they elucidate it as it operates in the assertoric attitudes of speakers, that is, in their attitude of holding something to be true (which is taken to be the most basic semantic attitude in communicative interaction).
47. Rorty’s interpretation of Davidson is problematic for a number of reasons. To begin with, Davidson himself has emphasized that his account of interpretation in terms of Tarskian theories of truth for particular languages takes truth as the most primitive semantic notion and does not provide a theory of truth – deflationary or otherwise – being in fact quite antithetical to any such theory. On the other hand, many have read Davidson’s view of interpretation and his methodological maxims (including the principle of charity) as showing that agreement with the world and with each other are inextricably interwoven but cannot be reduced to one another, so that objectivity and intersubjective agreement should be thought of as interrelated but irreducible notions.
world, the social-practice paradigm contends that the normativity of truth can be fully captured by elucidating the normative structure of the communicative practices in which truth claims are raised, challenged, and settled. Rorty emphasizes that there is always the danger of falling back into the representationalist paradigm by thinking of truth as going beyond the limits of our practices and the consensus of their participants. We are tempted to think this way when we look for an external or transcendent dimension of truth that can explain the limitations and imperfections of our current practices and the fact that they are always open to change and improvement. Any appeal to an extra dimension of validity that relates our practices to something beyond themselves is, according to Rorty, “an unfortunate slide back into representationalism.”

Rorty argues that both Heidegger and Sellars are “backsliding” social-practice theorists because the external or transcendent dimension of correctness is retained in the former’s notion of “disclosedness” and in the latter’s notion of “picturing.” Rorty praises Brandom for rejecting Sellars’s attempts to revive the “picturing” relationship between language and world that Wittgenstein formulated in the *Tractatus*, thus bringing post-analytic philosophy to a new stage.

Arguing against this tempting but regressive “backsliding,” Rorty proposes a thorough-going internalism and deflationism that eradicates the illusion of transcendence once and for all. Following Davidson, he argues that holding something to be true should not be understood as the ascription of a property that ties statements to a conceptual scheme or a set of assertibility criteria or semantic rules, but rather as the mere expression of assent and agreement, that is, the expression of harmony between our assertoric attitude and that of others with respect to particular claims.

Rorty acknowledges that there is a gap between truth and assertibility, but he argues that this gap does not take truth outside our assertoric practices, but simply reflects the fallibilist attitude in our orientation toward truth, that is, our openness to be proved wrong. Rorty emphasizes that, far from being incompatible with the social-practice strategy of explaining objectivity in terms of solidarity, fallibilism actually strengthens it, for it is indicative of our predisposition to extend agreement beyond our community, to seek more

49. As Rorty puts it, “Brandom stands to ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind’ as Davidson … stands to ‘Two Dogmas.’ Both men cultivate their respective teacher’s central insight by stripping it of accidental accretions” (Rorty, “Introduction,” 8).
50. This is explained through an elucidation of the disquotational use of the truth predicate. As suggested by Tarski’s Convention T, in disquotational contexts what the use of the truth predicate does is to express commitment to the assertion quoted and, therefore, it is equivalent to its repetition (hence the redundancy property of truth): “‘p’ is true = p.” This exemplifies the Sellarsian and Davidsonian strategy of explaining truth in terms of one’s own language, “idiolect,” or web of belief.
solidarity, rather than to transcend agreement. But this consensus view, Rorty insists, should not be assimilated to a rule-conforming view of normativity, for it is based on the Wittgensteinian insight that normativity is not a matter of obedience to codifiable standards, but rather, a matter of “give-and-take participation in a cooperative social project.”

Rorty’s neopragmatism and his consensus theory of truth have been criticized by many contemporary figures, such as Jürgen Habermas in European philosophy and John McDowell within the post-analytic movement. Both Habermas and McDowell have replied to Rorty’s relativistic approach to truth and normativity in a similar vein, arguing that Rorty’s view fails to accommodate the normative attitudes and the realist intuitions of participants in communicative practices. But while Habermas’s argument focuses on the unconditionality of truth, McDowell develops his objection through an argument about the objectivity of truth. Habermas argues that Rorty’s radical “epistemization” of truth reduces validity to coherence with current standards and therefore neglects what was right about the correspondence theory of truth, namely, the notion of unconditional validity. For Habermas, unconditionality is rooted in the everyday realism of our communicative practices: it is a formal presupposition of the participants in communication in the lifeworld that extends itself into the discourses in which their problematized claims are vindicated or “redeemed.” Habermas maintains that what Rorty’s relativistic pragmatism misses is precisely this everyday realism that provides the “normative reference point” for our truth claims and their discursive “redemption.”

McDowell, on the other hand, argues that Rorty’s relativistic pragmatism lacks realism and misses the objectivity of truth, that is, the answerability to the world of our truth-seeking practices of inquiry. McDowell warns that Rorty and other relativists try to impose a false dichotomy on us: either inquiry is thought to be answerable to a language- and mind-independent reality, or, alternatively, it is thought to be answerable to nothing but the norms of current practice. McDowell agrees with Rorty that we should reject the illusory transcendence of a language- and mind-independent reality, but he insists that we should understand the internality of truth differently. On his view, that truth is internal to our practices of inquiry does not mean that it is reducible to agreement within those practices, but, rather, that it involves an orientation to the world that is embedded in the normative standpoint of our practices. McDowell contends

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52. The rest of this paragraph has been adapted from an introduction I wrote for José Medina and David Wood (eds), Truth: Philosophical Engagements across Traditions (New York: Blackwell, 2005), 96–7.
that the norms of inquiry transcend consensus: they demand of truth-seekers that they have *the world in view*. Having *the world in view*, he argues, constitutes an “innocuous transcendence” – a harmless appearance/reality distinction – which does not require any metaphysical picture, for it is fully explicable in terms of the norms of objectivity immanent in our practices. According to these norms, inquiry is normatively beholden both to our practices and to its subject matter.\(^{54}\)

A similar *minimal* (or *commonsense*) *realism* can be found in the work of Putnam in the 1990s.\(^{55}\) Moving away from the metaphysical realism he defended in the 1960s and 1970s and from his “internal realism” of 1980s,\(^{56}\) Putnam argues that we need to dissolve the false dilemma between metaphysical realism and antirealism or deflationism about truth. On the one hand, Putnam rejects the metaphysical realist conception of truth as correspondence with a language- and mind-independent reality, which makes truth inaccessible and skepticism inescapable. But, on the other hand, Putnam argues that antirealists and deflationists go too far in the opposite direction and mistakenly deny the claim that truth can be recognition-transcendent in any sense. Against the deflationary views of truth inspired by Ramsey, Tarski, and Davidson, Putnam contends that being true cannot be identified with being verified or with being assertible. Through his interpretation of Wittgenstein, Putnam develops an alternative view of truth that supports a commonsense realism (“a second naiveté”) that avoids the metaphysical and epistemic idealizations of his earlier realist views. This view preserves the core semantic insights of deflationary views; namely, that truth is internal to language and that the face of our cognitive relation to the world is the face of meaning. However, *pace* deflationists and antirealists, Putnam argues that the *new face of cognition* must make room for the concepts of representation and correspondence with reality. Putnam rejects the idea of representation as an “interface” between two independent relata, language and

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54. See John McDowell, “Towards Rehabilitating Objectivity,” in *Truth: Philosophical Engagements across Traditions*, Medina and Wood (eds). A full discussion of the metaphysics and epistemology behind McDowell’s *realism* can be found in his *Mind and World*.
56. This is the *realism* that Putnam defended in *Reason, Truth, and History*. Trying to overcome the omniscient perspective or God’s-eye view presupposed by his former metaphysical realist view, what Putnam’s internal realism did was to internalize this ideal observer within our practices so that, instead of being judged according to an external perspective, truth was to be determined according to ideal standards of justification that can be derived from our practices (although our actual practices never reach ideal epistemic conditions). This internal realist view identifies truth with idealized consensus and is in line with Peirce’s and (the early) Habermas’s epistemic view of truth.
the world. He suggests that the notions of representation and correspondence should be internalized, that is, that they should be understood in terms of the representational activities that take place in everyday linguistic practices. This view depicts the recognition-transcendence of truth as well entrenched in the normative presuppositions of ordinary practices. According to Putnam, what this shows is that we have a symbolic access to the world, a linguistic contact with reality, which goes beyond our powers of recognition. With this neopragmatist internalism, Putnam claims to have rescued realist intuitions without metaphysical or epistemic idealizations.

Being caught up in the metaphysical and epistemic disputes of the realism–antirealism debates, the post-analytic rethinking of normativity in pragmatic terms has a very abstract flavor, which contrasts with the more historicized and politicized texture of reconceptualizations of normativity in pragmatic terms in continental philosophy: for example, in Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* or *The Differend*, or in Pierre Bourdieu’s *Language and Symbolic Power*. In European philosophy, the social and the political take center stage in the pragmatic rethinking of normative concepts – even in the most universalist and analytically minded of continental philosophers, Habermas. By contrast, although post-analytic and neopragmatist philosophers appeal to a situated speaker and agent, they still invoke or presuppose an abstract subject, namely, the speaker and agent who can become situated in *any* practice, without paying special attention to the historical and cultural specificity of that practice or to the particularity of subjects in it. By leaving the performative processes of differentiation unspecified, these neopragmatist views treat differences as empirical details that add nothing of substance to our philosophical elucidations of normativity; and by relegating differences to a secondary level of analysis that is extraneous to the structure of normativity, the subject presupposed by these views becomes (even if unintentionally and inadvertently) a homogenous and universal subject that remains uniform across all practices and agential positions within those practices.

This is what I call *the evasion of identity* (and diversity, we could add) in post-analytic philosophy, which occurs when subjectivities are not socially differentiated and do not become corporealized in historically concrete identities that are culturally specific and have been genderized, sexualized, ethnicized, and racialized. As we will see, this evasion is not equally present in all post-analytic philosophers, but it is a very common phenomenon in this school of thought, and one that often goes unrecognized or unacknowledged. This is all the more surprising given the fact that most of post-analytic philosophy is produced and discussed in the identity-obsessed culture of the US. By contrast, identity issues become unavoidable in the performative theorizing that takes place in the contemporary European context. And even thinkers who are not themselves drawn to these issues are forced to address them. Thus, for example, although issues of identity
and diversity did not take center stage in Habermas’s theory, his followers and critics have forced him to include issues of gender, race, and multiculturalism in his theorizing.

By contrast, the pressures of the intellectual milieu in post-analytic philosophy are rather different, discouraging the theorization of differences and making it difficult to address issues of identity and diversity as an integral part of the philosophical elucidation of normativity. Normative reflections on identity and diversity in this context are typically categorized as empirical discussions within social and political philosophy, without there being a presumption of a deep and intimate connection between these discussions and those of normativity in epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind, whereas there seems to be such a presumption in continental philosophy. Even the arguably most political of post-analytic thinkers, Rorty, does not seem to be capable of developing a full theoretical engagement with identity questions because his views are developed within the framework of liberalism and a difference-blind conception of justice. Many of Rorty’s readers are likely to have a different impression: a picture of Rorty as a thinker preoccupied with identity and diversity. But this is in fact a false impression, or at least a superficial one, for it is clear that Rorty’s prolific production does not contain robust discussions of race, ethnicity, and sexual difference. The appeals to identity in Rorty’s work are often appeals to formal notions of nationality, for example a difference-blind and culturally neutral notion of American identity, to vague notions of cultural identity (“we Westerners”), or to ideological notions (such as political identity or socioeconomic class – “we bourgeois liberals”), which are informed by a liberalism that claims to be above the internal differences of a multicultural society.57

The evasion of identity rests on – and at the same time reinforces and hardens – a double evasion: the evasion of the body and the evasion of the political. As discussed in the previous section, with the notable exception of Cavell and some other neo-Wittgensteinians (more on this later), post-analytic performative theories have often treated speech acts as disembodied – despite there being numerous influential arguments to the contrary within the performative legacy (from James and Wittgenstein, for example). On the other hand, post-analytic theories of normativity often exhibit a peculiar inability to put the normative aspects of language or communication in a political perspective, paying attention to power dynamics. In this way the evasion of identity brings up a more general problem: the evasion of politics. Despite having a wealth of political

thought to draw on in the American pragmatist tradition (in Dewey and his followers, for example), the kind of neopragmatism that has become most visible and influential in post-analytic philosophy seems to be less politically sensitive than contemporary European pragmatism. It is important to notice how certain normative issues that are immediately put in the context of power structures and power dynamics and are regarded as political problems concerning justice are treated rather differently when power relations and power differentials are taken out of the equation. Take for example the issue of the normative significance of *style*, of situated and embodied uses of language. Depending on how this issue is conceptualized, it may or may not appear as a crucial sociopolitical issue about the normativity of language and communication. In this respect, William James offered an interesting insight into the power dynamics of language use at the beginning of the twentieth century. In “The Social Value of the College Bred” (1907), James argues that democracy requires for its survival the normative elucidation and critique of the issue of “tone,” which is at the core of an entire machinery of social reproduction. It is the question of “tone” that is at the basis of the creation and maintenance of prestige and sociocultural power, of the power of one’s voice, that is, of one’s capacity to speak effectively and to be listened to. James calls attention to our sensibility to what counts as the “proper tone” and to the social imperative that “we ourselves must use the proper tone, which we, in turn, must have caught from our own teachers.” Linking democracy and education, he goes on to say:

It all reverts in the end to the action of innumerable imitative individuals upon each other and to the question of whose tone has the highest spreading power. As a class, we college graduates should look to it that ours has spreading power. It ought to have the highest spreading power.58

The mechanics of this “spreading power” – how it is acquired, used, and reproduced – is what Pierre Bourdieu59 explained with his notions of “linguistic capital” and “cultural capital,” and with his account of how they are accrued in “linguistic markets” and how they operate through social distinctions and the creation of “a field” in which a habitus can flourish. There is no comparable treatment of the normativity of style in post-analytic philosophy. Thus, while this Jamesian insight about “tone” has been fully elaborated in European philos-

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58. William James, “The Social Value of the College-Bred,” www.des.emory.edu/mfp/jaCollegeBred.html (accessed May 2010). I am grateful to Jeffrey Edmonds, who called my attention to this text.

*59. Bourdieu is the focus of an essay by Derek Robbins in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*
ophy (especially by Bourdieu and his followers), it has received little attention by contemporary mainstream neopragmatists in the American establishment. But of course the normative and political significance of issues of identity and diversity are not always disregarded or minimized in post-analytic philosophy. In fact, it has been receiving increasing attention in recent years, as references to these issues in their reflections on normativity have become more frequent. Robert Brandom, for example, illustrates his account of material inference with a discussion of derogatory terms such as “Boche.” The goal of inferential analysis, Brandom argues, is to make explicit the circumstances and consequences of the application of a term, thus bringing to the fore the material-inferentialist commitments underlying its use. The problem with a value-laden term such as “Boche” is that it involves descriptive circumstances of application (concerning nationality: being German) and evaluative consequences of application (i.e. being deemed cruel). Thus Brandom argues: “If one does not believe that the inference from German nationality to cruelty is a good one, one must eschew the concept Boche. … One can only refuse to employ the concept, on the grounds that it embodies an inference one does not endorse.”

Brandom remarks that highly charged words such as “nigger” and “whore” present a similar problem: “they couple ‘descriptive’ circumstances of application with ‘evaluative’ consequences.” By making explicit the normative presuppositions and implications of the use of our terms (what we are committing ourselves to with their use), we can bring our concepts under rational control. In this way Brandom defends his expressive inferentialism as a version of the Socratic method, that is, as “a way of bringing our practices under rational control, by expressing them explicitly in a form in which they can be confronted with objections and alternatives.”

It is certainly praiseworthy that Brandom illustrates his expressive inferentialism and Socratic intellectualism with a discussion of derogatory terms, thus addressing normative issues concerning identity and politics. This indeed enriches the applications of the normative apparatus of his expressive theory. But we should not conclude that the issues of prejudice, hate speech, and stigmatized identities have taken center stage. Discussions of the sociopolitical aspects of normativity and their relation to differentiated identities remain incidental. These discussions take the form of mere allusions or illustrations, without being knitted into the core of the philosophical elucidations of normativity being developed. Thus, although normative issues concerning identity are acknowledged and used in recent post-analytic philosophy, this school

60. Brandom, Making it Explicit, 126.
61. Ibid.
62. For Brandom, “thinking clearly is a matter of knowing what one is committing oneself to by a certain claim, and what would entitle one to that commitment” (Making it Explicit, 120).
63. Ibid., 106.
of thought seems to be still under the sway of what I have called the evasion of identity, even if it is slowly breaking out of it.

Stanley Cavell, however, has been the most prominent exception within the post-analytic movement in this respect. From early on, his elucidations of normative concepts that regulate our speech and action (“truth,” “knowledge,” “justice,” “authenticity,” etc.) included discussions of differentiated identities; and more importantly, these discussions were a constitutive and integral part of his neo-Wittgensteinian and Emersonian framework. This is not entirely surprising since Cavell has been one of the few thinkers in this school who has given special attention to the embodied nature of speech and to the social and cultural conditions that sustain the force and content of our speech acts. Cavell’s skepticism and perfectionism call for a constant evaluation and critique of our speech and action, which require an examination of the sociopolitical structures and institutions that shape our lives. In his normative elucidations, speakers and agents do not remain abstract subjects; they have differentiated and embodied identities. This has become particularly perspicuous in Cavell’s work on film in the last two decades, which is motivated by and structured around normative issues concerning gender (and, to a lesser extent, race\(^64\)). In *Pursuits of Happiness*, Cavell analyzes the genre of remarriage comedy in Hollywood films from the 1930s and 1940s. This analysis offers a critical commentary on the gender norms underlying the contemporary institution of marriage and on the available social scripts for gender dynamics. According to Cavell, remarriage comedies contain the normative depiction of an aspiration: a partnership between equals who are mutually appreciative as an ideal we should aspire to. These films, Cavell argues, envision a relation of equality between human beings that we may characterize in Emersonian terms as a relation of rightful attraction, of expressiveness, and of joy – a relation that is presented as rare to find, but as exemplary of the possibilities of our society. But although in these films gender relations are informed by the ideal of a conversation between equals, remarriage comedies implicitly convey the problematic privileging of the male within an apparent atmosphere of equality, for marriage and remarriage function as the vehicle for

\(^{64}\) Cavell has addressed normative issues concerning race and racial relations in a couple of places: in his reading of *Othello* in *Disowning Knowledge: Six Plays of Shakespeare*, in which he examines the racial dynamics underlying erotic and skeptical attitudes (the racial dimensions of desire and suspicion); and in his 1996 presidential address to the American Philosophical Association (“Something Out of the Ordinary,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*), and his 1998 Spinoza lectures (see Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005], esp. ch. 3, 61–82), in which he develops an analysis of Fred Astaire’s dance routines in the Hollywood film *The Band Wagon*, an analysis that is at the service of his rethinking of the Kantian notion of subjectivity in Emersonian terms.
the creation and re-creation of “the new woman” through her education by the man. In *Contesting Tears*, Cavell expands his critique of cultural depictions of gender dynamics with an analysis of another Hollywood genre: what he calls “the melodrama of the unknown woman.” These melodramas negate marriage as the route to creation, to a new and original integrity; and they explore an alternative route: metamorphosis, the radical and melodramatic change of a woman’s identity. In these films the re-making or re-structuration of identity is presented as a process of self-creation that often has tragic consequences. This process takes place outside the institution of marriage and outside the idealized conversation with men as equals. As Cavell puts it, women’s “integrity or metamorphosis happens elsewhere, in the abandoning of that shared wit and intelligence and exclusive appreciation. This elsewhere is a function of something within the melodrama genre that I will call the world of women.”65 Especially intended for female audiences, these “women’s films” or “tear-jerkers” theorize our desire and “have designs upon our tears”; they provide powerful gender scripts. As Cavell explains in Emersonian language, the melodramas problematize and call into question the relation of equality idealized by remarriage comedies, while gesturing toward self-reliance insofar as they demand that expressiveness and joy be sought first in relation to oneself. Although strongly criticized by some feminist theorists,66 Cavell’s film analyses have offered influential ways of theorizing and reflecting on the normativity of desire, education, and the process of identity formation in our society and culture. His work has certainly helped to bring discussions of normativity to a concrete level of differentiation and thus to escape the evasion of identity and difference.

III. PERFORMATIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL AGENDA OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Following Cavell’s lead, other Wittgenstein scholars have broadened contemporary discussions of normativity by addressing issues of identity and diversity. The recent post-analytic literature contains Wittgensteinian analyses of gender and sexuality67 as well as of race, ethnicity, class, and nationality.68 Among these

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scholars, it is important to mention the pioneering work of Naomi Scheman. Drawing on feminist theory and queer theory, Scheman’s Wittgensteinian analyses have addressed normative issues concerning intelligibility and agency. Her work on silence and nonsense has thematized relations of oppression in our discursive practices, focusing on the speech and action of marginalized and disempowered subjects. Scheman’s notions of “intelligible nonsense” and “meaning in spite of senselessness” suggest that certain possibilities, experiences, and actions are rendered unintelligible by the discursive norms of our linguistic practices, but that nevertheless it is conceivable and in principle possible that we will be able to find or create new discursive contexts or new practices in which those possibilities, experiences, and actions become intelligible. As many feminist, queer, and race theorists have emphasized, it is often the case that what the normative structure of our practices renders unintelligible is not simply particular experiences and actions, but entire identities and the lives they lead. Scheman, for example, shows how the identity and life of the transsexual are rendered unintelligible by heteronormativity, and how the identity and life of the secular Jew are rendered unintelligible by Christianormativity. As a result, she contends, transsexuals and secular Jews are forced to “live as impossible beings.”

As Scheman explains, “placement at the intelligible center is always a matter of history, of the playing out of privilege and power, and is always contestable.” These normative and political contestations have been explored by a new generation of Wittgensteinians influenced by Scheman, working on gender and sexuality as well as on race and ethnicity. This literature emphasizes that we have to take responsibility for marginalized or excluded possibilities, which can become critical and transformative possibilities. More generally, we have to take responsibility for the relations of inclusion and exclusion that constitute our practices and normatively shape the lives of those within them.

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70. Ibid., 132.
72. Bringing together Deweyan, Wittgensteinian, and Bourdieuan perspectives and developing a thoroughly pluralistic view of discursive practices, I have also explored the possibilities for thought, speech, and action that lie elsewhere, outside the normative centers of what is considered mainstream or normal. See my Speaking from Elsewhere.
Indeed, the rethinking of agency and responsibility – I contend – constitutes the core of the philosophical agenda for performative theories in the twenty-first century.

Judith Butler has articulated better than anyone the philosophical challenges posed for our notions of agency and responsibility by the emerging, post-sovereign views of identity and subjectivity:

Untethering the speech act from the sovereign subject founds an alternative notion of agency and, ultimately, of responsibility, one that more fully acknowledges the way in which the subject is constituted in language, how what it creates is also what it derives from elsewhere. Whereas some critics mistake the critique of sovereignty for the demolition of agency, I propose that agency begins where sovereignty wanes. The one who acts (who is not the same as the sovereign subject) acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset.73

We need a conception of discursive agency and discursive responsibility that transcends traditional conceptions of sovereign subjectivity. After overcoming abstract conceptions of subjectivity that take subjects outside the rough ground of power relations and sociocultural conditions and constraints, we need to rethink the notions of agency and responsibility in a new way.

In Speaking from Elsewhere, I have tried to contribute to this reconceptualization with my contextualist view of discursive agency and my notion of echoing responsibility: the responsibility we have to take as discursive agents for echoing voices and their speech acts (including utterances and silences). Echoing responsibility is a more robust notion than it may seem at first sight, for it concerns crucial normative issues and the mobilization of our discursive powers to tackle these issues. The issues we are confronted with as speakers are whether a legacy of use is worth maintaining and in what way, whether the received use should be modified and how. In any performative chain in which we participate, we should ask ourselves: What are the transformations that are needed in this chain, if any? And how can they be produced? These normative questions involved in the echoing responsibility of speakers reveal that although our discursive agency is not absolute or autonomous, it contains nonetheless tremendous transformative powers that often go unrecognized and unexploited. Our echoing responsibility refers to the negotiations that are constantly taking place in our communicative exchanges and discursive responsiveness to one another. Although we are

73. Butler, Excitable Speech, 15–16, emphasis added.
typically not aware of these ongoing discursive negotiations, our speech acts are nonetheless situated in them; and given the position our speech acts come to occupy in performative sequences, they make particular contributions to the implicit negotiations that animate the performative chains.

On my view, discursive agency should be conceived first and foremost as a process of negotiation. When we speak we are implicitly negotiating legacies of use with our interlocutors as well as with possible communication partners from the past and from the future. The negotiation processes through which the meaning and force of our speech acts are manufactured and reproduced, made and remade, are processes of re-signification. Whether they result in the maintenance of a legacy of use or in its transformation, our speech acts always re-signify. In any performative chain there is always a continuum of cases of possible re-signification ranging from the closest fidelity available to us (which always involves differences in the speech situation that are regarded as negligible) to radical reversals of meaning and force. As Butler puts it: “There is no possibility of not repeating. The only question that remains is: How will that repetition occur, at what site, juridical or nonjuridical, and with what pain and promise?”74 In other words, we are doomed to repeat, but how we repeat is up to us. My notion of echoing tries to broaden this notion of repetition or citation by including silences among the speech acts that re-signify in performative chains (without explicitly repeating or citing). With the proper support of the discursive context in which speakers find themselves, a legacy of use can be echoed in a silence and critical demands can be imposed on this legacy by silent speakers. When properly contextualized, certain silences can be construed as the refusal to repeat, as a kind of negative echoing; and therefore, they constitute critical interventions in our performative chains.

The reconceptualization of the notions of agency and responsibility constitutes a point of convergence in the contemporary philosophical debates across traditions, and a cornerstone of new performative theories in the twenty-first century. In a recent book, Giving an Account of Oneself, Butler has developed a powerful exploration of the intersections among identity, agency, and responsibility. Other explorations of these intersections have also been developed by contemporary authors who bring together in their approaches phenomenological, hermeneutic, and post-analytic theories.75 There are many contemporary problem-oriented approaches that resist and undermine traditional classifications. I take this to be good news and reason for hope in a future philosophical community that is not bogged down by inflexible frontiers and oppositions,

74. Ibid., 102.
75. See, for example, Linda M. Alcoff, Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and my Speaking from Elsewhere.
a community whose members can enjoy a new flow of ideas and freedom of movements across traditions and disciplines, tapping into theoretical resources wherever they may fall – although not without taking into account their history and the background in which they are rooted.

As a postscript to my account of the performative turn and its legacy, I hope to have shown in this brief, concluding section that the philosophical agenda of the twenty-first century calls for collaborations across philosophical traditions and across disciplines. To end on an optimistic note, I have also called attention to a promising process of hybridization in contemporary post-analytic philosophy, with the emergence of authors who use theoretical resources elaborated on both sides of the Atlantic and are repairing the philosophical evasion of identity, diversity, and the political that has afflicted the Anglo-American tradition. Progress in facing the theoretical challenges of performative approaches in this century are likely to come from the dialogue between these neo-Wittgensteinians and neoprpagmatists who have incorporated identity issues in their theorizing and performative theorists working within continental philosophy. This dialogue has the potential of being mutually corrective and enriching, for their participants can identity and challenge each other’s theoretical presuppositions as well as sharing and complementing their theoretical strategies and conceptual tools.
This essay is a joint venture between two thinkers who address philosophy’s multiple lives in the period 1980–95, that is to say, the time span covered by this volume, which roughly coincides with the period from which our graduate training came to an end to our mid-career. The authors, trained in philosophy, built quite a philosophical curriculum and full academic careers while always being housed outside the disciplinary quarters – one employed in rhetoric and comparative literature departments and the other in gender studies. From these relatively marginal positions, we will attempt to account for the many shifts in philosophy’s excursions towards multiple outsides, by stressing their experimental, transgressive, but also systematic and engaged character.

The essay has accordingly a triple aim. First, we aim to focus on the growth of several kinds of new philosophical practice in the period under scrutiny, by providing a synoptic overview of the most relevant developments. Second, we want to map our continuing involvement with a discipline that institutionally did not welcome the critical theories and theorists of the 1970s and 1980s, but rather tended to exclude or marginalize us. To achieve this goal, we will rely on autobiographical accounts and personal information in order to document the specific shifts of location and contextual conditions that affected the practice of philosophy in this period. As a result, this chapter will mix personal voices and individual accounts with the more standard academic tone. The sections related to the former appear in italics.

Third, we argue that the emergence of new experimental modes and venues of thinking combine to form both creative tensions and contradictions that have left a problematic legacy for future generations of philosophers. Writing about them is a way of making ourselves accountable for this legacy.
I. THE GROWTH OF NEW KINDS OF PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Throughout the 1980s, in response to both external prompts and internal dynamics, the practice of philosophy expanded toward activities that were outside the established institutions of the discipline. We will call these extramural or real-life trajectories “philosophy outside its bounds.” Concretely, this way of designating an operation of thought means that throughout the 1980s philosophical concepts burst out of their formal academic setting in modes of concrete engagement with the world, continuing in a new way the activist dispositions of the 1960s and 1970s, but also reflecting the changing conditions of culture, in ways that are both informed by, and informing, the arts and media culture.

The experience of the intense political activism of the 1970s had demonstrated not only that philosophy is capable of taking on a different role in public venues than the one traditionally accorded it within the university, but also that it could find renewed energy and inspiration in doing so. What happens through the 1980s, therefore, is not only a quantitative change in philosophy’s expansion toward the outside, but also a qualitative shift. Philosophical practice grows into and out of locations and activities that were not traditionally associated with it, and it does not remain confined to the historical venues and actors linked to political “engagement” and activist social movements. Domains into which this new kind of expansion took place include the media, the corporate world of business management, medical ethics, and popular culture. As a result, philosophy “takes place” in different times and venues, functioning as part of humanitarian efforts, as modes of popular and public culture, and as art practices. It engenders not only informed scholars, but also engaged citizens and discerning consumers.

French philosophers have a long established tradition of intervention in social, cultural, and political life, as public intellectuals, social critics, and activists. The figures of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir stand high in this tradition, lending their support to a variety of crucial causes such as decolonization, socialism and antiracism (Fanon and Césaire), feminism and pacifism. They also founded new journals and publication venues, such as Les Temps modernes, Libération, and Questions féministes. There is, however, a difference in the scale and mode of engagements of the philosophers who come after them. They intervene on questions of justice, human suffering, responsibility, economic and social sustainability, and global belonging, making use of visual culture and media and reflecting on its meaning, and they do so not in the name of an engagement with Marxist or any other ideology, but rather as an end in itself. They prioritize the critical analysis of power relations at both the macro and the micro levels as the main task for philosophers.
Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze captured both the spirit of the times and its profound ambivalence when they posited the emergence of a new type of function for the philosopher as public intellectual. If the contrast with the received Hegelian model of the universalistic philosopher as rational guardian of the moral development of mankind (the gender is not a coincidence) is easily drawn, the difference from the engaged or “organic” intellectual of the previous generation of Marxist and existential thinkers requires more cautious phrasing. As Foucault and Deleuze put it:

At one time, practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at other times, it had an opposite sense and it was thought to inspire theory … In any event, their relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalization. For us, however, the question is seen in a different light. The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. … The relationship which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance. … Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another and theory is a relay from one practice to another. … A theorizing intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. … Representation no longer exists; there’s only action – theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks.

The main legacy of “high poststructuralist” thought, therefore, is that the political and conceptual contestation of the totalizing power of the discipline of philosophy does not inaugurate a “crisis” for its own sake. It is rather an encouragement to pursue philosophy by all possible means and hence it is a sign of great theoretical vitality. Coherent in their practice, the poststructuralists conjugate philosophy in the plural and move it toward social, political, and ethical concerns. They see themselves as “specific” intellectuals, providers of critical services, analysts of the conditions of possibility of discourse, working with ideas that are also programs for action rather than dogmatic stockpiles of beliefs. This style is “problematizing” in its radical empiricism, or antiuniversalism, and in the awareness of the partiality of all philosophical statements. As a result, the kind of philosophy that emerged in the late 1980s was on the edge of institutionalization, embodying what Foucault called “permanent critique.” Because

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1. Foucault and Deleuze are discussed in essays by, respectively, Timothy O’Leary and Daniel W. Smith, in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
of this radical commitment to philosophy and its outsides, training as philosophers while being activists at that point in time actually meant having to ask fundamental questions such as: Why think? How can we connect the practice of thinking to larger social and ethical concerns? How can we resist the negative and oppressive aspects of the present? What is philosophy all about and how can it help us lead politically useful, socially productive, and morally adequate lives?3 These questions were also our entry-point into the discipline.

What attracted us both to poststructuralism is that it was one of the answers to the decline of modernist utopias, mostly Marxism and various brands of post-Marxist master narratives of politics. It was an attempt to rearticulate a radical sense of materialism, embodiment, and accountability and to redefine the question of praxis in terms of ethical agency. Last but not least it made it not only possible, but also necessary, to connect the task of philosophy to the challenges coming from the new social movements – mostly those associated with feminists, gay and lesbian rights, environmentalists and peace activists, racial and ethnic minorities in the context of postcoloniality. Critical philosophical theory challenges the dominant representation of the subject of knowledge and develops it into a critique of the hidden assumptions about who is entitled to do philosophy and to what ends.

**Early formations**

JB: The period of 1980–1995 was one in which I became trained officially as a PhD in philosophy but entered into teaching environments in which I taught the humanities more generally, including social theory. Because I was at Yale University for both my undergraduate and graduate training, and there were some very pronounced tensions between literary studies and philosophy as well as acute conflicts between traditions and styles of philosophical reflection, I was constantly aware of a number of boundaries that had to be negotiated, especially if I was somehow to “succeed” in getting a PhD and a position of employment.4 It is important to add to this autobiographical sketch my own involvement at the time with the Women’s Center in the city of New Haven, where most of the feminists were not involved with the university at all, and my engagement with an emergent movement of lesbian and gay activists, many of whom were in New York. So I did not have a single “track” that I followed, and I was aware at every turn that I would


4. For an earlier consideration of this period, see my “Can the ‘Other’ of Philosophy Speak?,” in *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
have to negotiate certain boundaries and limits if I were to “survive” within the institutional forms that were available to me. Of course, I was in an enormously privileged position as a US academic at one of the most elite schools, but my life did not center there, and I believe that when my name was called out at the graduate ceremonies for my undergraduate degree, no one there knew who I was. So I was constantly escaping: in my apartment, reading; on the train to New York; in the bars, pursuing conversations and political actions outside the academy on sexuality, rights, representation, power, coalitions, social norms, psychic life. These were sites of enormous intellectual intensity, and in many ways they prompted and informed the kinds of questions that I brought into my own academic work, especially my philosophical work.

RB: Philosophy has always been part of my life and culture. Growing up in Italy in a socialist family committed to anti-fascism, I got accustomed early on to ideas like freedom, justice, and responsibility. Besides, in Italian high schools, just like in France, philosophy was a compulsory subject of study; I delighted in it. When I migrated to Australia at the age of fifteen, I hated having to give up philosophy to embrace whatever the syllabus was in Melbourne inner city high school in the early 1970s – the period just prior to the emergence of Australian multiculturalism. Philosophy came to represent a sort of surrogate home and a vulnerable but resilient feature of my intellectual genealogy. I had taken a few of my philosophy books with me; more were sent to me by my maternal uncle, a Catholic priest who worked with Italian migrants in Switzerland. Some were his own, from his school days, and I turned those thin yellowed pages with respect and relish. They were in Italian, of course, and signified some sort of safety and a safeguard of my own cultural identity. In between attending “remedial English” classes for new migrants and doing the normal homework, I made sure to complete the Italian philosophy curriculum. This consisted essentially of the history of philosophy in chronological order, with emphasis on the great classics; Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius were among the favorites. So many of them were foreigners, exiles, displaced people – like Spinoza for instance – I felt we all shared in a radical form of non-belonging. With Pascal I confronted my adolescent self-doubts; from Voltaire I learned the powers of a relentless wit. My diaries of those days are full of references to them. It was years before I got upset by the fact that there was not a woman in sight in this philosophical canon. Because of the intimate relationship to those texts, philosophy became both a permanent feature of my mental landscapes and a private site marked by the oscillation between loss and belonging. It

both confirmed and challenged my sense of identity, of being a European migrant and an Italian-French-speaker. It was a rather classical and old-fashioned idea of European culture, modeled on an Enlightenment-based idea of human progress through the deployment of reason, truth, and justice. Later on I ended up questioning all this, of course, but for many years those philosophy texts were my most trusted friends and loyal companions. I felt we shared a secret.

JB: In the early 1970s, I discovered philosophy through reading some key texts that I found in the basement of my home – books that my parents had bought for their college education and had shelved there with the expectation that they would never be read again. It was paradoxical that I would go to the basement, lock the door behind me, to secure some distance from my parents only to find myself engrossed by their books. I would put on music, and write some in a diary, but I would also comb those shelves looking for texts that might help me to think about how to live. So as I reached for some of those books – Spinoza’s *Ethics* and Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or* in particular – I was quite literally reaching for philosophy as a kind of guide, a source of wisdom, as a book that might accompany me in my confused despair and longing in order to find a way. I certainly had not had a course in philosophy, and yet I understood that these books were about the search for wisdom – and I wanted some. I had had some exposure to philosophical thinking at my synagogue, but it wasn’t until I took the books down and started reading that I had the experience of needing these books, quite literally, in order to survive. Of course, it was in Plato that one found an explicit set of definitions for philosophy, ones that had to do with learning how to live and, more specifically, how to live or lead the good life. I wanted to be able to survive, and it seemed to me that survival was not possible unless I could secure meaning for life. I also knew that survival was not quite enough, that one had to live well, that one had to somehow identify and pursue a good life. If there was no good life to have, then why live at all?

I was operating out of a certain adolescent darkness, to be sure, but I was also quite passionate about reading. I read because I was passionate, and did not know what to make of my passions. I also read about the passions, thinking I might finally understand conceptually something about human nature or the human life that would make my own predicaments less singular and personal. So reading about passion made me a passionate reader of philosophy. And both Spinoza and Kierkegaard were nothing without the former’s emphasis on desire, and the latter’s notion of passion and faith.

RB: In 1973 I enrolled at university and read for a joint degree in literature and philosophy. It was what they called “continental” philosophy, which was marginal
in Australia, in relation to the dominant British analytic tradition. To me, this was the heart of the matter. I took to phenomenology with great enthusiasm: Merleau-Ponty's insight into embodiment and memory resonated with my experience. I was also fascinated by Freud's psychoanalysis with the emphasis on the instability, but also the stubborn, repetitive structure of identity formations. I will never forget reading Juliet Mitchell's introduction to Lacan: a true revelation! This was the high 1970s in all their impetuous intensity, of course, and I was working on Althusser just as the fast-growing women's movement and the anti-Vietnam moratorium contributed to politicize issues of identity, political subjectivity, and resistance. The Australian scene was dominated by figures of the caliber of Germaine Greer, whose passionate politics shaped both my thinking and the way I wanted to live my life. All of a sudden philosophy was all around me, literally in the streets. It provided both alternative social values and new mental spaces. With my friends the discussions centered on issues of social justice, anticolonialism, women's rights, and nonviolence. I expected philosophy to teach me about responsibility, justice, community, and how to combine theory and practice with coherence and dignity.

I was very fortunate in having as my BA supervisor a great and important teacher, whose influence will continue throughout my adult life: Genevieve Lloyd. She was just getting started then on her landmark volume *The Man of Reason* as she taught me the history of philosophy. With a PhD from Oxford, Genny Lloyd was completely acceptable to the analytic philosophers, while her heart was in continental philosophy. A most remarkable intellect, she transmitted her passion for Spinoza while she taught Foucault as part of the basic curriculum. That's how I came to choose to move to Paris in the late 1970s, to study philosophy at the Sorbonne. I did not even wait for the BA graduation ceremony.

Paris at the time was, philosophically, the most exciting place on earth. While I enrolled for my postgraduate degree in what they called “history of systems of thought,” which was related to Foucault’s Chair at the Collège de France, I savored everything the city had to offer intellectually. Foucault’s magisterial courses on biopower are forever engraved in my mind, while Irigaray held seminars in makeshift locations after Lacan threw her out of his “École freudienne” for excessive independence of mind. It was not until I started attending Deleuze’s seminars at Vincennes that I discovered what great philosophy in the making was all about. Cixous and Lyotard were also teaching there: it was like a whirlpool of activity that took my breath away.\(^6\) I became more and more intrigued by the collective character of philosophical thoughts in general and more particularly of so many utterances and knowledge claims that I had learned to call my own. Thinking seemed to happen in groups, in the company of others. Although it was formatted and framed by reason,

thinking was an outward-bound, external, and often reactive activity, driven by forces and affects which acted independently of the rational will. I experienced this insight with almost joyful relief and grew suspicious of both claims to liberal individualism from the Right and also of the identity politics that was so central to the Left theories of the time. I was increasingly critical of rigid claims to steady identities and rooted subject positions. I re-routed myself towards more fluid and multilayered understandings of what makes a subject.

JB: As I grew older, I found out that I could take a college class in this subject called “philosophy,” something that I approached with great enthusiasm. I had prepared myself in high school by reading parts of Plato and Aristotle, the tradition of classical political liberalism (some Locke and Montesquieu), and a rather large swath from the legacies of existentialism, including existential theology. At the same time, I was reading texts from the antipsychiatry movement, and starting to read feminism and texts from the Black Power movement (Eldridge Cleaver, especially). I understood myself to be a radical, even a revolutionary, although my thoughts on these subjects were somewhat confused. When I did arrive at my first university course, I could not really understand what kind of philosophy this was. The term “philosophy” became something of a category in crisis. We were reading Plato’s Republic and John Rawls’s early essays on justice, and we were asked to focus on certain kinds of semantic problems and argumentative forms in both texts. Although I learned to do this with some difficulty, I could not see at all how any of this “philosophy” was related to the question of how best to live a life, how to find and know the good life, how to secure those kinds of meanings that might make life seem livable and worthwhile.

Where was the investment, the sense of quest, the sense of existential urgency? It was one thing to ask “How do I know what the good life is, and how do I go about living it?” That question presumes that the “I” in the sentence is an existing person who has an investment in pursuing the answer to the question posed. That “person” dropped out of the picture in my first encounter with institutionalized philosophy. Instead, we thought about the meaning of the word “good.” Now, of course, one cannot simply ask what the good life is without having some sense of what the word “good” is doing in the question. There are several ways in which “good” can be used, and it seems obligatory to parse these various meanings and to offer a justification for the particular usage at issue in the question posed. And there were epistemological problems that compounded the semantic ones: Even if there is a life that we might reasonably call “good,” how might we come to know it? And do we have the appropriate cognitive capacity to know it at all? In this context, philosophy turned out to be a reflection on the confused meaning of words (ordinary people use language in a confused way, but philosophers seek to alleviate language of its confusion or to show that the confusions make impossible any substantive progress.
on a particular problem). Or philosophy turned out to be a reflection on the limits of what we can know. If we could gain a clear picture ("clear pictures" were very important) of the limits of what we can know, then we would cease to ask certain kinds of highly speculative questions and reconcile ourselves to matters that were decidedly more narrow and workable.

I was, of course, driven into a sense of embarrassment about my own philosophical passions, especially since the questions that I most wanted to ask and pursue were for the most part discredited as worth pursuing in that form. I felt that my own questions were too passionate and too large. I remember learning how to do the kind of analysis that those philosophers required of their students, and I am sure that it helped me to formulate arguments with greater clarity than I otherwise would have. But I did, from the outset of my encounter with the institution of philosophy, understand that I would have to go underground in order to pursue what I meant by "philosophy." It was only later that I came to understand that this is an institutional feature of philosophy: it helps to produce a certain underground even as it discredits the underground that it produces. In addition, it also spends a fair amount of its time showing how the kinds of questions and the modes of thinking that take place in "ordinary" life are in need of an idiomatic reduction, reformulation, simplification, and amplification.

Of course, the question of whether certain modes of philosophy have an idiom is an important one. I made the mistake, for instance, of thinking in my first philosophy course that it made a difference that Plato's *Republic* was written in dialogue form. What was the importance of counterposing voices within the text? Of interruptions? Of silences? Of the places where the text breaks off? Did the occasional belching of the interlocutor "say" something in the text? Did it draw attention to the body in the dialogue or to a dimension of language that was articulate in ways that could not be reduced to semantic content? What about the status of fables or stories in philosophical works? Were they simply ways of "illustrating" a set of philosophical points that could just as easily be offered in propositional form? Or were they important ways of sustaining "arguments" in nonpropositional modalities? Were they also ways of calling into question the centrality of argument to philosophy itself? How were we to understand irony, narrative, and voice as philosophical features of the text? Did it really not matter who was talking, and to whom, and whether or not something true was constituted and conveyed in that exchange?

RB: The core of my philosophical interest was by now set on questions of identity, responsibility, becoming a subject of both knowledge and transformative politics or praxis.

The main questions I kept asking were: How can we do justice to experiences that have no recognition in the language and practice of conventional wisdom, common sense, reasonableness? What is the appropriate language in which to
express silences and missing voices? The politics of discourse and the limits of representation became crucial concerns. So much of our collective embodied experience – as women, gays, pacifists, leftists – seemed somehow pitched against what was discursively acceptable or even sayable. Philosophy was as much part of the problem as part of a possible solution; deconstructing it seemed imperative. The existential component of my philosophical work was boosted at this time by another major event: I undertook a long personal psychoanalysis in French, with a brilliant nonaligned psychoanalyst. This was not uncommon at the time: a “slice” (as they called it then) of psychoanalytic treatment was considered an integral part of a philosophical education. Lacan’s influence on this generation was immense, of course, and I think beneficial in the long run: he recommended not working with psychoanalytic concepts unless one had actually undergone at least some practice. Lacanian psychoanalysis clearly aspires to gain philosophical credentials by highlighting the structural function of desire and inventing a suitable method to deal with it. Seven years later, I simultaneously chose to stay on in Europe, although not in Paris, and to accept a job in the margins of academia, namely in an interdisciplinary women’s studies department, which I had the fortune of founding and directing when I moved to Utrecht in 1988.

The amazing opportunity to be able to start up an entirely new program is a typically Dutch phenomenon: here I was, a relative youngster and a foreigner, and Utrecht put me in charge of creating a new academic program from scratch. In the USA, in the few places where women’s studies programs were being created at the time, it was usually senior women scholars who were appointed in virtue of their having “earned” the right to opt out of their disciplines. The reason for this comes down to two main factors: the first is the impetus and the political power of the Dutch Left throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The grass-roots movement was huge and it shared in the spirit of May ’68 that declared that we should not trust the older generation (or anybody much over thirty). This made it imperative to appoint a younger person to the job. The second reason was more pragmatic: giving a temporary (tenure came many years afterwards) albeit senior job to a relatively unknown foreign entity bypassed all the local quarrels and made it easier for the institution to assess my work on strictly objective grounds. Thus, everything was indexed on producing results quickly and efficiently. When it became clear that this was the case, the Utrecht women’s studies program received wide recognition and I earned my tenure. But that took about ten years.

Working in a feminist academic environment, which means an interdisciplinary, intellectually experimental, and politically progressive – if not downright transgressive – context, had its advantages. It made it possible to combine my feminist political passions with academic work and life, which had not happened until now. The price to pay, however, was to accept my distance from the institutional practice of philosophy. This focus allowed me to liberate my own philosophical
thought from a number of institutional habits. Not the least of these was the respect for the authority of the history of philosophy, and hence also the deferential implementation of ways of thinking that had much more to do with the past than with the actual present: for instance, the idea that philosophy should be self-referential and do justice to its own history, before it even attempts or claims to make a significant impact on that history. That's the first habit I swapped for a renewed sense of social relevance: gender, feminist, and women's studies theories became my favorite location. They functioned like navigational tools between academic practice and its “outsides” and provided much-needed theoretical focus. More importantly even, they kept me motivated to go on thinking, doing philosophy even though I had no authority, nor anybody recognizing my work as of philosophical importance. I was simultaneously on my own in the margins and stunned to see how crowded and theoretically vibrant the margins actually were.

JB: Because of my oldest interests and my newest questions, my own teaching and writing became interdisciplinary with time. But this did not mean that I “left” philosophy behind. My works engaged feminism, psychoanalysis, anthropology, law, politics, performance studies, sociology, social theory, literature, and literary theory. This range has been very important for me in my adult career; it not only produces all kinds of conversations, but it imposes the task of translating from one domain of thought into another. It also allows one to develop a critical position that belongs to no discipline, but which is quite essential to understanding the task of the university more generally. I would point to these two features of intellectual work – translation and critique – as central to my own current practices. It means that I need to draw on all kinds of work if I am to pursue some of the questions that focus my work: How do unlivable lives become more livable? How do we analyze and transform the situation in which a nation such as my own becomes wildly righteous when it openly murders some populations and madly outraged with horror when it sees other populations being destroyed, or sees itself as vulnerable to injury? The good life: Who defines it? Who controls it? Who has access to it, and what terms do we need in order to enfranchise those who are not recognized as having anything to say or claim?

Perhaps the issue here has to do with whether we understand philosophy as an enclosed and self-regulating institution that defines itself over and against other forms of knowledge, or whether we actually understand the obligation of philosophy to be open precisely to a wide domain of intellectual activities in order to engage in a knowing way with the world whose truth it claims to know. This would mean that philosophy, to be responsive to its world, has to be a decentered undertaking.
II. A CHANGING CONTEXT

Philosophy meetings in cafes, in conferences, in feminist collectives, gay and lesbian political meetings, antiwar rallies and demonstrations, editorial boards, bars, and film festivals, in transnational contexts, all move beyond the specific “sites” of legitimate institutionalization to produce the possibility of thinking philosophy in the world. This was important to us both as philosophers and feminists and gay and lesbian activists. We form an “intermediary generation” that witnessed some key moments in the history of feminism: respectively the “sex wars” in the USA and the rise of the “feminism of difference” in Paris. We may be the first generation of philosophers who did have the chance to study with great feminist thinkers such as Genevieve Lloyd, Seyla Benhabib, and Luce Irigaray. But this first-hand experience also taught us bitter lessons from the start: some feminist philosophers were traditionally not well received in philosophy departments and had to find other venues for seminar activity and collective discussions. These interrelations were only occasionally supported by institutional “sites”: most of the interesting discussions took place elsewhere. And even today, the university sites where philosophy takes place often include interdisciplinary programs outside departments of philosophy: “women’s studies,” “feminist studies,” “media studies,” “cultural studies,” as well as centers and institutes for “humanities” or “critical theory.” As these interdisciplinary programs are more developed in the USA than in Europe, this leaves many European radical philosophers as homeless as before.

The media and the publishing world, of course, have helped. The period 1980–95 saw a real explosion of alternative publication venues often within existing publishers such as Routledge in the US/UK, Suhrkamp in Germany, Éditions de Minuit in France, and Editori Riuniti in Italy. Academic publishing reflected this shift in the institutional settings of philosophy, recognizing the desire to make philosophy popular, and the demand to produce texts that travel in nonphilosophical quarters. Thus, the genre of do-it-yourself or self-help manuals in the teaching of philosophy emerged as a fast-selling sector. These new cultural forms for philosophical engagement go beyond the essay and the book, establishing broader sites of textuality and practical engagements at the same time that they continue certain modes of philosophical inquiry. It is

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*7. See Rosi Braidotti’s chapter on feminism in this volume.
9. In particular, the Routledge series “Thinking Gender,” started by philosophy editor Maureen MacGrogan and the cultural studies series supported by Bill Germano should be noted. And Suhrkamp was without question the leading publishing house for philosophical books in Germany in the period 1980–95.
remarkable, as we go through our CVs, to see how many experimental journals we published in and how many brand new – and sometimes very short-lived – publications we actually took the risk of publishing in. We are very aware, however, that taking this sort of risk by publishing in marginal journals and with nonacademic publishers may have directly contributed to many members of our generation actually not getting tenure in “first tier” philosophy departments. Considering how the political climate has changed, it may still constitute a risk today.

RB: Most of my mid-career in philosophy was built by reading and publishing in challenging and thought-provoking journals such as Radical Philosophy, L’Autre Journal, where Deleuze and Lyotard published regularly, and the Italian MicroMega and Aut-Aut.10 We were surrounded by brand new journals, magazines and printed material of all kinds: Questions féministes (1981), Sorcières (1976), La femme d’en face (1979). My very first academic publication was in Hecate (founded in 1976), the Australian radical feminist journal, where I published a critical review of the anthology New French Feminism; the second was in Penelope, the feminist history journal founded in 1979 by the Paris VII-Jussieu collective of Michelle Perrot. For years my monthly articles in the feminist magazines Histoires d’Elles (1978) and the Italian Noi Donne (1948) mattered far more than anything that may have helped me gain academic credibility. If I can name my favorites from those days, they would be the UK-based M/F (1978), Feminist Studies (1979) and Women’s Studies International Forum (1978); the newly founded Signs (1975) directed by my mentor Kate Stimpson, and the

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10. Radical Philosophy is a journal of socialist and feminist philosophy. It was founded in 1972 in response to the widely felt discontent with the sterility of academic philosophy at the time (in Britain completely dominated by the narrowest sort of “ordinary-language” philosophy), with the purpose of providing a forum for the theoretical work that was emerging in the wake of the radical movements of the 1960s, in philosophy and other fields.

L’Autre Journal is a theory and culture magazine that started publication in December 1984 with Michel Butel as general editor. It quickly acquired cult status among philosophers because of the original and clever manner in which it addressed the main philosophical questions of the day. A second series started up again in May 1990. The title exists now as a blog linked to the website of Le Monde.

MicroMega is a political, cultural, social, and economic magazine, published bimonthly in Italy. Founded in March 1986 by the editors Giorgio Ruffolo and Paolo Flores d’Arcais, it is an elite journal publishing long essays and reports by leading philosophers, scientists, and other personalities.

Aut-Aut is a leading Italian philosophy journal founded by Enzo Paci in 1951 with a strong phenomenological orientation. Between 1974 and 1976, the philosopher Pier Aldo Rovatti took a leading role in the editorial board and turned the journal into a crucial forum for discussion of Marxism, poststructuralism, and related political and ethical issues. The journal is published today as an independent critical journal.
Belgian-based Cahiers du Grif (1973), where I worked for many years alongside Françoise Collin. The first acknowledgment of my work came in an interview with Hazel Rowley in another Australian radical feminist magazine: Refractory Girl (1972). But I was not alone in this: all around me, everybody was starting up journals, magazines, and alternative publications. This was before the internet multiplied these efforts – we were still very Gutenberg Galaxy then. For instance, Paul Patton and Meaghan Morris produced the first English translations of Foucault, Deleuze, and Irigaray for the Sydney-based Working Papers in general philosophy. Colin Gordon, at the same time, was building up Ideology & Consciousness to greater heights than ever. Of course, I could not resist the temptation of starting something on my own as well, so together with my friend Alice Jardine we made a brilliant start to what would become a one-issue only hit: Copyright was the perfect manifestation of the adventurous interdisciplinary spirit of the time: smart, cutting-edge, highly theoretical, and totally broke! Almost everyone who contributed to that issue went on to an incredible academic career, but the journal did not make it past the first issue.

JB: In the US, intellectual excitement revolved around the journal differences, established by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor in 1989, but also the galvanizing work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Joan Wallach Scott. It seemed as if philosophical questions of materialism, experience, identity, and the subject were now being taken up by literary critics and radical historians, and that these philosophical concepts were being probed in order to sharpen a set of critical modes within politics. There were debates happening at the conferences for women historians (the “Berkshire” conference), the Socialist Scholars conference, the Barnard College “Scholar and Feminist” conferences, the Rethinking Marxism conferences, and very often the debates were fierce between those who saw potential in continental theory and those who did not. Rarely did anyone stop to ask whether Marx himself was a continental philosopher. Debates broke out as well in The New York Times and the Nation, and although the animus was strong against certain modes of “deconstruction,” it was also clear that such modes of thought had pervaded not only the academy, but Left intelligentsia. People worried about the end to foundations, the loss of disciplinary boundaries, and the lack of clear norms. But, in fact, all of these concepts were being rethought in light of new historical formations, and the process of change was not easy for many to accept. The experience in the US was that the explosion of new cultural venues for reflection that were contaminated by poststructuralist and other philosophies went hand in hand with a higher degree of specification of the practice of philosophy, which struck a distinctly interdisciplinary note of its own. Some early journals in this vein are: Critical Inquiry (started in 1974), Diacritics (1977), boundary 2 (1970), Glyph (1977), and others. A new generation of interdisciplinary journals also comes into being. I am thinking for
instance of media, film and art theory, and the creation of highly theoretical journals in these fields, such as Camera Obscura (1976), October (1976), Feminist Review (1979); sexuality and cultural studies also grew at an explosive rate, with journals such as Semiotext(e) (1974), SubStance (1971), and Hypatia (1986).

The extent to which the institutional practice of philosophy recognized and accepted interaction with this parallel universe of highly scientific, but transgressive, publications needs to be mapped more carefully than we can do here. Suffice it to say that, whereas the US remained more open to these boundary-breakers, the European university system, traditionally dominated by the disciplines, proved more resistant. The emergence of philosophers within mainstream culture, the arts, and the media is important to read therefore in light of this rejection, as well as a sign of the engagement of philosophers in public politics. Although the figure of the philosopher as public intellectual has deep roots in European culture, it became a more global phenomenon as the US and Australia succumbed to the “theory wars” in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. Think, for instance, of the role that philosophers play in human rights struggles, in nongovernmental organizations such as Médecins sans Frontières, in Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Greenpeace. Consider how many poststructuralist thinkers have made significant contributions to human rights discourse in recent years. By extension this means that law has become a site for the reflection on key philosophical categories such as justice, force, futurity, and the imaginary. Legal discourse also gets positively contaminated and a school of critical legal theory emerges with conferences on law, culture, and the humanities as well as journals with the same focus.

The transdisciplinary philosophical impetus is so intense and stimulating that a new classification emerges under the rubric of “critical theory.” Bookstores start to make separate sections to accommodate the proliferations of publications in a counter-philosophical philosophy. This counter-philosophy continues certain modes of philosophical inquiry, but in cultural venues and through media that establish philosophy as impure, hybrid, crossing genres and media. Although philosophical films have claims to a certain status in experimental

12. A case in point is the conference at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University in New York on “Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice” in October 1989, at which Jacques Derrida presented “Force of Law: The ’Mystical Foundations of Authority.’” Following that conference, Derrida returned to Cardozo on an annual basis.
13. “Critical Theory” here has a broader extension than writings associated with Frankfurt School critical theory, whose “third generation” is discussed by Amy Allen in her essay in this volume.
media (e.g. Jarman on Wittgenstein;\textsuperscript{14} the recent film on Iris Murdoch, \textit{Iris}; Cornell West appearing in \textit{The Matrix}; Derrida in \textit{Ghost Dance}; and more recently, Astra Taylor’s \textit{Examined Life}, with extended discussions with eight major philosophers), the evolution of the media presence of philosophers and philosophical talk shows and programs in the period 1980–95 is quite striking. Again, the change is in scale and quality, supported also by the restructuring and transformation of the old medium of television in this period. There are some important precedents of mediated philosophy,\textsuperscript{15} of course, but the pace definitely picks up in the period we are discussing. This is evidenced by the creation of new televisions channels that carry the French-German ARTE in 1992,\textsuperscript{16} the French “Apostrophes” (which ran from 1975 to 1990), and many French radio programs, including “France Culture” (which has at least three ongoing philosophy shows), “RAI Radio Fahrenheit” in Italy, and “Kulturzeit” in Germany.

The undisputed media stars of the period in France are the philosophically undertitillating group known as the “Nouveaux Philosophes,” who created the phenomenon of philosopher-writer/TV producer and film-maker Bernard-Henri Lévy. Regularly featured nowadays in the pages of glossy magazines such as \textit{Vanity Fair}, Lévy built a brilliant and controversial career by striking a conservative tone politically, while targeting the previous generation of poststructuralist thinkers for systematic attack.

The situation was no less lively in Germany,\textsuperscript{17} where the philosophical media star is Peter Sloterdijk, who has been running his successful talk show since 2002 on a range of interdisciplinary topics.\textsuperscript{18} From 1988 to 2000, the German television station Westdeutscher Rundfunk ran a very high quality and ambitious series of features on philosophical topics: “Philosophie heute” (Philosophy

\textsuperscript{14} Derek Jarman’s film \textit{Wittgenstein} (BFI, 1993). See also Derek Jarman and Terry Eagleton, \textit{“Wittgenstein”: The Terry Eagleton Script and the Derek Jarman Film} (London: BFI Publishing, 1993).

\textsuperscript{15} Tamara Chaplin’s \textit{Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television} argues that already in the 1950s French television featured regular discussions of philosophy and philosophers. See for instance the program \textit{Lectures pour tous} (1953–58), in which Bachelard and Foucault appeared, and Sartre and Camus were often discussed.

\textsuperscript{16} ARTE (Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne) is a Franco-German television network started in 1992. It describes itself as a European culture channel and aims to promote quality programming especially in areas of culture and the arts. ARTE is also available in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Canada via cable, and the Australian Special Broadcasting Service translates many ARTE programs into English for broadcast on its own television network.

\textsuperscript{17} With sincere thanks to Dieter Thoma for this targeted information.

\textsuperscript{18} Since 2002, Peter Sloterdijk and Rüdiger Safranski have been presenting on the German public television channel Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen a philosophical talk show, similar to “Apostrophes,” called “Philosophisches Quartett,” which deals with a broad range of social questions.
today). In the US, there are now philosophy talk radio shows and popular venues in which large questions in philosophy and religion are pursued. More recently, both Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Derrida have been the “stars” of feature-length documentaries: Pierre Carles’s La Sociologie est un sport de combat (2001) and Kirk Dick and Amy Z. Kofman’s Derrida (2002). The authors of this article, however, are neither immune from nor external to television, video and new media coverage and appearances, and thus the question of assessing the general impact of these mediated forms of philosophical inquiry is more topical than ever. As a generation we watched the rise of this new, alternative media culture and also saw how negatively the university reacted to it – to be a media star was equated then with shallowness and lack of scientific rigor. Thus we have to raise an issue that we find still relevant today: Are philosophers commodified cultural “spectacles” in such instances, or do they appeal to intellectual need through a popular medium? Is it the case that philosophy turns into a fundamentally different activity when it becomes a media event?

III. THE INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION

At the same time, however, philosophy as a discipline and a formal institutional space was concerned not to lose its core identity in the midst of such hybridization processes. There were clearly struggles, increasingly sectarian, over what “counts” as philosophy or, minimally, “good philosophy.” And institutions house these battles with the presumption that the walls they build will continue to stand. From 1980 to 1995, the public debate around the critical legacy of the 1970s grew more bitter and contested. The rise of Reagonomics and Thatcherite authoritarianism installed a climate of right-wing political backlash, which could not fail to attack the credibility of European and especially French poststructuralist theories. These were dismissed by the political Right as being both relativistic and a sign of wishy-washy liberalism. The debate was even more acrimonious among French philosophers, many of whom turned their backs on their youthful radicalism, especially after François Mitterrand’s election to the French presidency. It was disconcerting to say the least, although somehow predictable, to watch the oedipal struggle between the philosophers of the 1960s and the generation that followed. The media-driven nouveaux philosophes, mentioned above, turned vehemently against the very home-grown philosophical theories

19. More than a hundred features were produced, including portraits of leading philosophers and documentaries on controversial topics, many of which can be found via the website www.wdr.de. The program producer edited a volume with some of the interviews; see Ulrich Boehm (ed.), Philosophie heute (Frankfurt: Campus, 1997).
of their teachers and older poststructuralist brothers that we, the foreigners and outsiders, were both reading and drawing such inspiration from. Among a relatively older generation, born in the 1940s, philosophical revisionism set in, offering at best a reappraisal of decent neohumanism\(^{20}\) or a single-minded critique of the allegedly murderous character of communism,\(^{21}\) and at worst media-savvy glamour.\(^{22}\) On the other hand, among people of our generation, born in the 1950s, the reaction was ferocious: Alain Finkielkraut, and Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut indicted without appeal the events of 1968 as a symbol of left-wing authoritarianism and revolutionary violence.\(^{23}\) Adding insult to injury, they accused all poststructuralist philosophies of complicity with terror and mass murder. This coincided with the media revolution we discussed above and with the new media-cracy turning against both the spirit and the philosophical and political agenda of 1968. The key insights of poststructuralist philosophy survived in exile along the transatlantic axis.

Deleuze was one of the first to comment on this hasty and fallacious historical dismissal of critical radicalism in both politics and philosophy. Targeting the fame-seeking narcissism of the nouveaux philosophes, Deleuze stressed the political conservatism that results in the reassertion of the banality of individualistic self-interest.\(^{24}\) This is constitutive of the neoconservative political liberalism of our era and of the arrogance with which it proclaimed the “end of history.”\(^{25}\) Deleuze stressed instead how critical philosophers have tried to avoid the arrogance of the universalizing posture. Other leading figures of philosophical poststructuralism, such as Lyotard, Dominique Lecourt, and the gay activist Guy Hocquenghem, also took a clear stand against the trivialization and self-serving dismissal of the spirit of radical philosophy.\(^{26}\)


\(^{26}\) See Jean-François Lyotard and Jacob Rogozinski, “La Police de la pensée,” L’Autre Journal 10 (1985); Dominique Lecourt, Les Piètres penseurs (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); published
On the other hand, some modes of institutionalization have sought to take into account the subversive and transformative reach of new philosophical movements. Thus, at the same time as the backlash set in, new forms of creative institutionalization also started up. These were ways in which the corporate discipline itself both reconfirmed its traditional institutional settings and went on to occupy new and powerful institutional grounds. Examples are firstly the Vincennes University experiment with new structures of thought and scientific investigation, with high degrees of social accountability and a healthy distance from the canonical tradition of the disciplines. This radical pedagogy was supported by and central to the work of Gilles Deleuze. Second, the foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie in 1983 in France. Both authors participated in the Collège activities: one the very year of its foundation and the other in recent years. Organizations such as the International Association of Philosophy and Literature and the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP, founded in 1962) are at once outside disci-


28. The Collège International de Philosophie (Ciph), located in Paris, was cofounded in 1983 by Jacques Derrida, François Châtelet, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt in an attempt to rethink the teaching of philosophy in France, and to liberate it from any institutional authority (most of all from the university). The Collège recognizes that philosophy is better served by being located at “intersections” such as philosophy/science or philosophy/law. Attendance in seminars is open and free, just as in the Collège de France.

29. The International Association for Philosophy and Literature, founded in 1976 and directed since its inception by Hugh Silverman, is, according to its website (www.iapl.info), “dedicated to the exchange of ideas and scholarly research within the humanities. Founded to provide a context for the interplay of Philosophy, Literary Theory, and Cultural/Aesthetic/Textual Studies, the IAPL brings together scholars from the full range of disciplines concerned with philosophical, historical, critical, and theoretical issues.”

30. SPEP has its origins as an idea of Harvard University professor John Wild (1902–72) for a new professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy, and in particular the works of Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre. After Wild left Harvard in 1961 to become Chairperson of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University, he and an organizational committee including his two Northwestern colleagues, William Earle and James Edie, George Schrader of Yale University, and Calvin Schrag, a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University, founded SPEP. According to its website (www.spep.org), “SPEP is the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, a professional organization, founded in 1962 and devoted to supporting philosophy inspired by continental European traditions. With a membership of over 2500 people, it is one of the largest American philosophical societies, and strives to encourage work not only in the philosophical traditions of phenomenology and existentialism, but also in all those areas commonly associated with ‘continental
plinary settings, but also help to define the discipline on new grounds. Similar organizations formed in Canada (Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought, which later became the Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy\(^{31}\)); in Australia (Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy\(^{32}\)) and in the UK (Society for European Philosophy and Forum for European Philosophy\(^{33}\)). The emergence of a strong feminist presence in these societies philosophy,' such as animal studies, critical theory, cultural studies, deconstruction, environmental philosophy, feminism, German idealism, hermeneutics, philosophy of the Americas, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, queer theory and race theory. We foster discussion on all philosophical topics, from art and nature to politics and science, and in the classic philosophical disciplines of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. SPEP is actively committed to philosophical pluralism and to the support of historically under-represented groups in the philosophical profession.”

31. According to its website (www.c-scp.org) “The Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy” was founded in 1984 under the name “Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought.” Its broad purpose is to promote scholarship in several traditions of continental philosophy by means of an annual conference and other activities. Current members include scholars and graduate students working in such fields as German idealism, existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical theory, feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, from various disciplinary approaches within the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts.

32. According to its website (www.ascp.org.au) “The Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy” was established in 1995 as the revamped “Australasian Society for Phenomenology and Social Philosophy,” with the aim of becoming the region’s premier reference point for people working with continental philosophy. The Society endeavors to promote the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas inspired by the diverse traditions of European thought (such as phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory, hermeneutics, feminism, deconstruction, poststructuralism, and so on), and to develop productive links with other international societies and associations that share similar goals and views.

33. Since 2004, the Society for European Philosophy (SEP) and the Forum for European Philosophy (FEP) have held a joint annual meeting. Originating as an idea of Andrew Benjamin, then at the University of Warwick, in response to the unjustly poor performance of nonanalytic departments in the UK Research Assessment Exercise, the SEP held its first meeting in 1998 at Birkbeck College, establishing a venue for philosophers in the UK to present their work in the various traditions of modern European philosophy. Among its principal organizers, in addition to Benjamin (who served as Chair from 1997 to 2001), were Christine Battersby, Andrew Bowie, Howard Caygill, Simon Critchley, Peter Dews, Joanna Hodge, Peter Osborne, and Jonathan Rée. The FEP began in the spring of 1996 out of a desire to promote wider dialogue and exchange between philosophers working within and out of the different European traditions in philosophy. For its first year, the FEP was guided by an ad hoc and entirely provisional executive committee chaired by Alan Montefiore and including Lilian Alweiss, Catherine Audard, Nick Bunnin, Simon Critchley, Marian Hobson, Anthony O’Hear, and Jonathan Rée. According to its website (www.lse.ac.uk/collections/forumForEuropeanPhilosophy), the FEP, currently located at the London School of Economics, is an educational charity that organizes and runs a full and varied program of philosophy and interdisciplinary events in the UK. These include seminars, reading groups, public lectures on a range of themes and socially relevant topics, book discussions, public debates on the idea of European philosophy and an annual conference.
has changed the focus of public discourse in recent years, but feminists were also coming together in the 1970s and 1980s in organizations like the International Association of Women Philosophers. And the Radical Philosophy Association and the Society for Women in Philosophy became important venues for philosophers who were thinking and working at the juncture of new social movements and philosophical reflection. Further input came from associations that had specialized in high-profile philosophical events and took a radical turn in this period: for instance, the Cerisy Colloquia, and the critical theory meetings in Dubrovnik and later in Prague.

34. According to its website (www.iaph.org), the International Association of Women Philosophers is a professional association that aims at countering the under-representation of women in philosophy everywhere. It provides a forum for interaction and cooperation among women engaged in teaching and research in all aspects of philosophy, with a particular emphasis on feminist philosophy. Founded in 1974 in Würzburg (Germany) the IAPh has gradually grown into an international organization with 380 members from thirty-five different countries.

35. The Radical Philosophy Association (www.radicalphilosophy.org) was founded in 1982. They define themselves in the following way: “RPA members struggle against capitalism, racism, sexism, homophobia, disability discrimination, environmental ruin, and all other forms of domination. We also oppose substituting new forms of authoritarianism for the ones we are now fighting. Our efforts are guided by the vision of a society founded on cooperation instead of competition, in which all areas of society are, as far as possible, governed by democratic decision-making. We believe that fundamental change requires broad social upheavals but also opposition to intellectual support for exploitative and dehumanizing social structures. Our members are from many nations and continue a variety of radical traditions including (but not limited to) feminism, phenomenology, Marxism, anarchism, post-structuralism, post-colonial theory and environmentalism.”

36. The Society for Women in Philosophy (www.uh.edu/~cfreelan/SWIP) was founded in 1972. Although clearly not an organization devoted to continental feminism, it has nevertheless sponsored important debates and discussions in that area.

37. According to its website (www.ccic-cerisy.asso.fr) The International Cultural Centre of Cerisy-la-Salle was founded as far back as 1952 by the association of the Friends of Pontigny-Cerisy with the aim to support and organize exchanges among intellectuals, scholars, artists and concerned well-read individuals the world over. The centre organizes every year, from June to September, a number of important international conferences. Most of the significant French philosophers have attended events at Cerisy.

38. According to its website (http://www.iuc.hr/#), the Inter-University Centre Dubrovnik (IUC) was founded in 1971 at the height of the Cold War and became one of the most important venues for the exchange of ideas by scholars from both the East and West. The IUC is currently an independent international institution for advanced studies. It is a meeting ground for learning and scholarship and is cosponsored by some two hundred member universities and institutions of higher learning around the world. It is maintaining high standards of independent scholarship, but at the same time, it is looking for opportunities in bridge-building in a region of the world that must continue to rededicate itself to pluralism. Its agenda focuses on the social sciences and the humanities, with special emphasis on issues of postcommunism and European integration. The academic programme offers a full curriculum of open postgraduate courses, conferences and symposia, and residencies.
Thus, the practice of philosophy was enriched and innovated by this proliferation of new initiatives, structures and venues that ran and still run alongside the institutional academic practice of professional philosophers. The result is that two almost parallel universes emerged and contacts and cross-references between them became controlled and restricted. Our generation of philosophers and critical thinkers zigzagged in between these separate spheres, trying to connect them, translate from each other and recompose both an agenda and a community across their borders. We had to learn to cultivate and negotiate with complex and internally contradictory modes of multiple belonging.

IV. WHAT IS EUROPEAN ABOUT CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY?

The two authors stood on the opposite shores of what has become known as the great “Trans-Atlantic dis-connection.” The 1980–95 period saw the restructuring of the privileged relationship that connects the US to the French cultural and philosophical elites. The landmark date of 1989 stands as a point of reference in this context. This produced two simultaneous effects, which shaped the philosophical debates in the period. First, in the general American academic debate of the day, the discursive equation between “Europe” and “French theory” was challenged by broader, more Europe-wide perspectives. Second, as we argued before, French philosophy came under violent attack from the mainstream of the philosophical profession and the political Right, for being obscure, self-referential, radical, and, in any case, foreign. The late 1980s in Europe was a period of political hope built on the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the rise of great – albeit short-lived – expectations about the future of the European Union. In terms of philosophy, however, the backlash against the critical theories of the 1960s and 1970s gained extra momentum and was no less strong and reductive in Europe than in the US. Considering the relatively higher degree of acceptance of interdisciplinary methods in the North American universities, however, a genuine dissemination of poststructuralist and critical theories did occur there. This took place less through philosophy than comparative literature and English departments, as well as gender, cultural and postcolonial studies. If anything, considering the growth of parallel organizations and associations, more English-speaking philosophers adopted the terminology and the philosophical agenda


of poststructuralism than their European counterparts. Paradoxically enough, most of the leading French thinkers of the poststructuralist generation were awarded honorary and prestigious Chairs at leading American universities, while their work was either criticized or ignored at home.

The Franco-German philosophical relationship was also restructured significantly in this period. While analytic philosophers continued to make jokes about “the Nothing” – considered to be among the most preposterous of Heideggerian inheritances – some left-wing critics came to associate the difficulty and ostensibly obscurantism of German and French philosophy with suspect or weak political positions. Especially vehement was also the criticism and political rejection of the French philosophers on the part of the Frankfurt School and especially by Habermas, who was no less critical of the French than the analytic camp. This Franco-German hostility is also significant because at the same time Habermas’s critical theory is engaging and being engaged by Rawls and other analytic political and social theorists. This movement stood in stark contrast to the politically animating force of phenomenology and poststructuralism, including its Nietzschean variants, for feminist theory and radical philosophy in the US. Representative of this anti-poststructuralist trend is also the Institute for Human Sciences, based in Vienna and Boston, which acts as a significant relay-point toward Eastern Europe and strikes a distinctly conservative note both on moral issues and on the idea of Europe.

It was precisely the effort to get beyond certain entrenched identitarian ways of thinking that intellectuals on the Left, especially the feminist Left, turned to poststructuralism. Whereas a dominant trend in US left politics was to stake one’s claim in identity and experience, the countertrend sought recourse to

41. Kristeva has been a recurring visitor at Columbia University for years; Derrida and Lyotard held positions at Irvine; and Foucault visited California regularly. Among those who never entered this transatlantic institutional connection, Irigaray and Deleuze stand out.

42. For instance, the feminism of difference was largely ignored as irrelevant in France and sent into exile, as exemplified by the difficult career of Luce Irigaray. For a detailed account of this feminist controversy, see Claire Duchen, Feminism in France: From May ’68 to Mitterrand (London: Routledge, 1986).

43. The case of Paul de Man is emblematic of this approach, as is the “Heidegger affair,” initiated by the publication of Victor Farias’s Heidegger et la nazisme in 1987.

44. According to its own website (www.iwm.at), the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) is an independent institute for advanced study in the humanities and social sciences, founded in 1982. Seeking to bring together academics and intellectuals from Eastern and Western Europe, the IWM is linked to its North American affiliate, the Institute for Human Sciences at Boston University, and it contributes to policy and cultural dialogue between Europe and the US and Canada. Research at the institute is currently focused on five fields: “Sources of Inequality/Social Solidarity”; “Religion and Secularism”; “United Europe – Divided Memory”; Cultures and Institutions: Central and Eastern Europe in a Global Context”; and “The Philosophical Work of Jan Patocka.”
poststructuralism to ask how identity categories are constructed, how difference is effaced, and how we might think more critically about how the field of intelligible politics is established and regulated. In this way, poststructuralism offered a way out of identitarian forms of pluralism and toward the possibility of making new political subjectivities.

This transgressive but productive aspect of poststructuralism was felt strongly in Germany, where, after reunification in 1989, new philosophical initiatives flourished. Under the influence of Foucault especially, there was a turn away from sociology and back to philosophy, based on the premise that thinking is not so much about institutions or external constraints, but about interpreting everyday life and being involved as an individual.45 It renewed possible forms of “engagement” but in a less abstract sense. Since 1981 there has also been a rise of the so-called “Philosophical Praxis”46 in Germany and Switzerland, which aims at overcoming academic philosophy and turning thinking into “practice” in the social, corporate, and ethical sense of the term. Very significant was also the relaunch of the East German journal Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, which became the most important philosophical journal in the German-speaking world, with Axel Honneth as the primus inter pares of the editorial board. The journals Texte zur Kunst and Kunstforum International also have considerable philosophical ambitions, mainly in the area of postmodern thought.

The shifting philosophical landscape in the aftermath of 1989 allows for the emergence of cross-European perspectives, which alter the terms of the historical Franco-American privileged relationship. Europe emerged as a contested but highly productive forum for discussions.47 New collaborative initiatives were undertaken, often with the financial backing of the European Commission. Most notable among them are the already mentioned ARTE television, the European Journal of Women’s Studies (1994), the European Journal of Cultural Studies (1998), and the journal Lettre International, which is as pan-European as any publication could be.48

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*45. See the chapter by Dieter Thömm in this volume.
46. The leading figures of this movement are Gerd Achenbach (www.achenbach-pp.de) and Wilhelm Schmid (www.wilhelm-schmid.de). Achenbach was involved in the founding of the "Internationale Gesellschaft für philosophische Praxis" in 1982 (www.igpp.org). Schmid has been highly successful with books on the “art of living” and is a popular public lecturer.
47. For further discussion of this issue, see the essay by Rosi Braidotti in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8.
48. According to its website (www.lettre.de/english), Lettre International is an international and interdisciplinary publication that was started in France in 1984 and in Germany in 1988. It has a unique format that connects several editorial boards in Europe, rests on a transcultural worldwide network of contributors and contacts, and is published in many languages. It is a high-quality magazine that aims to promote the advancement of world consciousness by bringing together the diverse approaches of economics, politics, art, philosophy, and literature.
RB: On the issue of Europe, my existential and the philosophical lines of questioning converged and became almost synchronized. As I said, my first encounter by becoming a migrant was with Europe in exile, Europe in migration. And this was in some way a formative moment, where I became aware not only of the contingent nature of identity, but also the extreme complexity of something that we could call Europe subject positions. I think I became aware of my Europeanness in this moment of distance, of dis-identification, of loss, of taking my departure from the self-evidence of that location. Philosophically, as my work focused more on the project of decentering the subject and the practice of critical theory, I learned a great deal from race and postcolonial philosophical studies. The critique of Eurocentrism evolved as the counterpart of the rejection of the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason. The self-aggrandizing gesture that positions “Europe” as a concept that mobilizes and enhances the higher human mental faculties has to be deflated, regrounded and held accountable. More specifically it has to be read alongside the devastating historical phenomena that have been central to the alleged civilizing mission of the European “mind”: colonialism, racism, fascist denial of Otherness. It was clear to me that recognizing this corrupt historical legacy, while also acknowledging the great aspects and qualities of our culture, was the beginning of wisdom and also of historical lucidity. As Glissant and Balibar argue, it is also the end of a self-replicating sense of ignorance about those “others” who constitute such an integral part of European culture, including philosophy. The early awareness that so many of my favorite philosophers were foreigners, migrants, exiles, grew into the project of returning European critical theory to its specific location. Another Europe is possible, one that rejects the imperial posture and its arrogant pretensions and accepts its new historical role as a significant peripheral. So, becoming accountable for my Europeanness coincided with my becoming aware of the impossibility of being one, in the unitary sense of the term. Becoming nomadic seemed the most appropriate option for an antinationalist, antiracist, non-Eurocentric and Europe-based feminist philosopher. French philosophy remained an existential and cognitive travel companion in this trajectory.

JB: It seems clear that we cannot take into account our formations in European philosophy without thinking about the sense of “Europe” we were inheriting and how, politically, it becomes a certain obligation to contest and redefine Europe right now. It wasn’t until I started studying philosophy at Yale that I came to understand how conflicted the question of philosophy could become. At that time, the division was between “analytic” and “continental,” but that did not really explain very much about why people were so angry, why they wanted other people to lose their jobs, why they were angry enough to move to the other side of the country to get away
from those with whom they disagreed. But it was then that I also became involved in other sorts of activities, including the reading of literature (which I loved) and certain political activities outside the academy. In literature classes, I could think about all kinds of dimensions of language, including address, ellipsis, metonymy – many of the important contributions of structuralism and poststructuralism. These kinds of readings were difficult and demanding, and they clearly had their own rigor as well; they very often took aim at those philosophical texts that regularly dismissed the ways in which language figured so centrally to their claims of truth. Accordingly, they were dismissed as “nonsense” by some faculty in philosophy. So I also learned quickly that one could not take that kind of analysis into a philosophy course, and I learned to divide myself for the purposes of getting through those programs. Because of my political engagements and an emerging political way of thinking about the world, I had to figure out whether the kinds of questions that were raised in those political contexts could “translate” into a philosophical idiom. And sometimes my concerns made me have to break with the idioms altogether.

If we go back to the heartfelt question I posed in the basement of my parents home (my own version of Plato’s cave) – “How do I lead a good life?” – then I would say that the question has not really changed for me, although it has taken on new dimensions that are quite important. The “I” who poses the question – how are we to think about this subject, a subject who can pose a question to itself, capable of reflexivity? And this life? What do we make of Adorno’s important supplement to Socrates: how does one lead a good life in a bad life? In other words, if this life is pervaded by forms of power and domination that demean the value of life, and if only certain lives are regarded as valuable, and others not, then how do we rethink in political ways how the “goodness” of life is distributed unequally? How do I live, or how do we live in a context in which “life” itself has been brutally appropriated by reactionary forces (“pro-life”) or where certain lives, such as those my government kills in war, are not considered worthy of the name of “life”? This suggests to me that there can be no pursuit of the moral question “How do I live?” without an engagement with a social and political question: what has been made of life, and how do we understand those forms of power that differentiate between lives worth living and sheltering and lives worth neglecting and destroying?

The question of the “I” who would live, or seek to live well, became a permanent problem for my academic work. It seemed that the “I” who could speak, who could query life, could only become audible and only gain standing to the extent that the speaking subject conformed to certain gender norms, and that “the speaking I” was already a profoundly complex matter – politically saturated and textually consequential. The “I” who would speak and pose its question has to be “recognized” within those norms that make the speaking subject visible and audible. But if those norms constrain who may speak by masculinizing the position of the speaking subject, for instance, then we have to be able to ask political questions
about how established enunciatory positions depend on constitutive exclusions. Through what methods and means do we open up the sites of articulation to contest these hegemonic claims? In my early work on gender, I wondered whether there could be an “I” who was not already supported by established gender norms, but this meant only that new formations of subjectivity were crucial in order to disrupt disciplinary power in the domain of sexuality and gender.

V. PHILOSOPHY OUTSIDE ITS BOUNDS

Philosophical works are now varied in their form and argument, and they are part of a shifting landscape of unauthorized explorations that avoid blind loyalty to established institutional norms but also trace modes of belonging that are activated in the context of political and artistic engagement. Philosophy no longer belongs to a single site, but emerges as a mode of intervention that crosses time and space, forming global circuits of community as it goes. It is important to note, however, that these circuits of community are not based on sameness, but on persistent and animating differences. Indeed, “difference” is in some ways the rallying point for both a new and open mode of philosophizing and a form of political solidarity.

RB: Speaking as a philosopher who defends a materialist theory of becoming, I see my task as the passionate search for alternatives in our ideas and representations of human subjectivity. I believe that philosophy and critical theory have to be something else and possibly more than the protocol of critiques and other rules of reason. Institutional philosophy gets so technical: often little more than an elaborate mechanism of interpreting and footnoting canonical texts, it reduces intellectuals to the status of guardians of the great dead white men of Western culture. I think critical theory can be much more than that. I’m a feminist, I am a philosopher, and this double allegiance makes it imperative to go on looking for new ways of thinking about the kind of subjects we have become: not for the sake of narcissistic self-glorification, but rather for the contrary reason – in order to develop adequate cartographic accounts of the sort of subjects-in-process, in transition and in mutation, that we have already become. There is no question that we are in serious trouble understanding the world we’re living in. The deficit of representation is gigantic and it is not due to the fact that we are lazy and fundamentally stupid, but because advanced capitalism is moving so fast, and in such a schizoid manner, as to defy simple interpretations. It is a nonlinear, and fundamentally irrational, system. To make sense of this insanity and of its structural injustice and violence is something that is beyond the forces of one, single individual; therefore theory should be a collective endeavor aiming to draw adequate cartographies of
the world we’re living in. We need to compare notes on how we see these forces moving, make mappings of ideas that can be points of resistance, compare notes on these maps in a very humble, situated, and partial manner. To be aware of the power that we have as Europeans, as Americans, or Westerners, by a world plagued by the “clash of civilizations.” Critical theory is about this type of accountability that lends us the courage to go beyond the established habits and the institutional conventions. We should see mental habits even when they’re traditions of thought, as forms of legalized addictions that we need to grow out of. We have to cultivate the humble recognition of the collective nature of our utterances, that is to say, of how much we owe, theoretically and existentially, to others.

JB: My belief is that philosophy takes place any time and every time that a set of assumptions are called into question. And this is central to what we both understand as “critical” philosophy. When we go to the “root” of a problem, we exercise radicalism, which is why philosophy is only doing its job when it is radical. The exercise of critique is not a positive philosophical position, but it is a practice or, indeed, an “attitude,” to cite Foucault, that asks after the means by which truth becomes established, and the terms through which truth becomes justified. If disciplinary hermeticism is one means through which a certain regime of truth gets established, then it would only be by opening up the borders that the radical vocation of philosophy might be pursued. This means affirming the necessarily interdisciplinary context for contemporary knowledge, but also maintaining a reference to the world – to life, to lives in the plural – as they are lived and as they die. We can only ask how to live the good life if we understand that that life is shared and if we have the means for translating that complex commonality of living beings (human and nonhuman). And we can only call into question entrenched modes of living and dying (such as those that are most intensely and consequentially executed in war), if we become critical of the very ways in which our knowledge is delimited in advance. This does not mean that anything and everything is permitted as knowledge, but only that we do not take institutional prohibitions as the intrinsically wise. If we ask about how disciplines are made and enforced, we pose a set of critical questions, drawing from a philosophical tradition of critique, but subjecting the institution of philosophy to such critical questions. It is in this sense that critique is the term that calls into question whether philosophy can, or ought to be, fully identified with its institutionalized forms. This suggests as well that the “underground” to philosophy, the “philosophy” that lives and thrives outside philosophy is crucial to making sure that the critical tradition of philosophy remains contemporary and alive.

RB: The strength of philosophy as a discipline of thought is that it has codified not only its own discursive rules of argumentative reason, but also forms of profound disagreement. Philosophy is proud of both acknowledging and even rewarding the
systematic practice of theoretical disobedience and textual disrespect. Rather, this
discipline encourages us to conjure up the best way to respect traditions while
innovating on it, even by betraying it. Critical theory since Erasmus of Rotterdam
has formulated both the rhetorical schemes and the propositional content required
to sustain this balancing act. Too much of contemporary philosophy is unable to
question the authority of the past and is ever so willing to comply with it. It is as if
this discipline has accepted with resignation a sort of archival function, to become
a mausoleum of past ideas, a contemplation of inspiration lost.

It is crucial to combine critique with creativity, thinking with affectivity and
passion, theory with active social engagement in the world we inhabit. All this is
connected to the ethical impulse to really try to make a contribution in a histor-
ical time when the sense of the collective community is collapsing. I see the task
of philosophy as that of being worthy of our times by accepting complexity and
contradiction in a creative mode, so as to insert some positive energy into the
public debate. We can do this with Spinoza and Deleuze: invigorate this passion for
doing and making it into a collective enterprise. We can also do it with the feminist
Emma Goldman, who famously stated that, if it did not make her want to dance,
this was no revolution that she cared to be a part of. In this world in which every-
thing is privatized and commodified, and where individualism rules supreme, we
need to put the “active” back into activism. This is the sort of affirmative theory
that can’t be disconnected from the collective task of constructing social horizons
of hope. Which I consider as fundamental enough to make me want to take a few
chances – for the hell of it, that is to say, for the love of it.
## CHRONOLOGY

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<td>1687 Newton, <em>Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica</em></td>
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<td>1695 Bayle, <em>Dictionnaire historique et critique, vol. I</em></td>
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<th>CULTURAL EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1634 Establishment of the Academie Francaise</td>
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<td>1641 Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em></td>
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<td>1642 Rembrandt, <em>Nightwatch</em></td>
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<td>1651 Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em></td>
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<td>1662 <em>Logique du Port-Royal</em></td>
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<td>1633 English Civil War begins</td>
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**Volume 7**
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<th>PHILosophical EVENTS</th>
<th>CULTURAL EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1739 Hume, <em>A Treatise of Human Nature</em></td>
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<td>1748 Hume, <em>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em></td>
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<td>1751 Diderot and D’Alembert, <em>Encyclopédie, vols 1 &amp; 2</em></td>
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<td>1755 Rousseau, <em>Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes</em></td>
<td>Voltaire, <em>Candide</em></td>
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<td>1759 Rousseau, <em>Du contrat social</em> and <em>Émile ou de l’éducation</em></td>
<td>Goethe, <em>Sorrows of Young Werther</em></td>
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<td>1762</td>
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<td>American Declaration of Independence</td>
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<td>1774</td>
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<tr>
<td>1776 Death of Hume</td>
<td>Adam Smith, <em>Wealth of Nations</em></td>
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<td>1781 Kant, <em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1783 Kant, <em>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</em></td>
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<td>1784 Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”</td>
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<td>1785 Kant, <em>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</em></td>
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<td>1787 Birth of Arthur Schopenhauer</td>
<td>Gibbon, <em>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</em></td>
<td>US Constitution</td>
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<td>1788 Kant, <em>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1789 Death of d’Holbach</td>
<td>Adoption of <em>La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen</em></td>
<td>French Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic</td>
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<td>1790 Kant, <em>Kritik der Urteilskraft</em></td>
<td>Edmund Burke, <em>Reflections on the Revolution in France</em></td>
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<td>1791 Mary Wollstonecraft, <em>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</em></td>
<td>Tom Paine, <em>The Rights of Man</em></td>
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<td>1792</td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Creation of the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Robespierre</td>
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<tr>
<td>1795 Schiller, <em>Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Fichte, <em>Die Bestimmung des Menschen</em> Schelling, <em>System des transcendentalen Idealismus</em></td>
<td>Beethoven's First Symphony</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804</td>
<td>Death of Kant</td>
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<td>1805</td>
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<td>Publication of Diderot, <em>Le Neveu de Rameau</em></td>
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<td>1806</td>
<td>Birth of John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Goethe, <em>Faust, Part One</em> Reinstatement of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university</td>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Hegel, <em>Die Phänomenologie des Geistes</em></td>
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<td>1812</td>
<td>(–1816) Hegel, <em>Wissenschaft der Logik</em></td>
<td>Jane Austen, <em>Emma</em></td>
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<td>1815</td>
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<td>1818</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Marx</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, <em>Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</em></td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Schleiermacher, <em>Hermeneutik</em> Schopenhauer, <em>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</em></td>
<td>Byron, <em>Don Juan</em></td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Hegel, <em>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</em></td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>(–1842) Auguste Comte, <em>Cours de philosophie positive</em> in six volumes</td>
<td>Stendhal, <em>The Red and the Black</em></td>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, <em>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</em></td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Clausewitz, <em>Vom Kriege</em></td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey</td>
<td>Pushkin, <em>Eugene Onegin</em></td>
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<td>1835</td>
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<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<td>1837</td>
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<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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<td>1841</td>
<td>Feuerbach, <em>Das Wesen des Christentums</em></td>
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<td>1841 Kierkegaard, <em>On the Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates</em></td>
<td>R. W. Emerson, <em>Essays: First Series</em></td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)</td>
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<td>1844 Marx writes <em>Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts</em></td>
<td>Alexandre Dumas, <em>The Count of Monte Cristo</em></td>
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<td>1846 Kierkegaard, <em>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</em></td>
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<td>1847 Boole, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>On the Conservation of Force</em></td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td><em>Publication of the Communist Manifesto</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the French Second Republic</td>
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<td>1852</td>
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<td>Napoleon III declares the Second Empire (–1856) Crimean War</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>H. D. Thoreau, <em>Walden</em></td>
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<td>1855</td>
<td>Walt Whitman, <em>Leaves of Grass</em></td>
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<td>1856 Birth of Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>1861</td>
<td>Johann Jakob Bachofen, <em>Das Mutterrecht</em></td>
<td>Tsar Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia</td>
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<td>1863 Mill, <em>Utilitarianism</em></td>
<td>Édouard Manet, <em>Olympia</em></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>(–1869) Leo Tolstoy, <em>War and Peace</em></td>
<td>The surrender of General Robert E. Lee signals the conclusion of the American Civil War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Crime and Punishment</em></td>
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<td>1867 Marx, <em>Das Kapital, vol. I</em></td>
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<td>1868 Birth of Émile Chartier (“Alain”)</td>
<td>Birth of W. E. B. Du Bois</td>
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<td>1868</td>
<td>Creation of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)</td>
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<td>1869</td>
<td>Mill, The Subjection of Women (–1870) Jules Verne, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</td>
<td>Completion of the Suez Canal</td>
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<td>1870</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie</td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>Death of Mill (–1877) Tolstoy, Anna Karenina</td>
<td>End of German Occupation following France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Birth of Max Scheler Émile Boutroux, La Contingence des lois de la nature Brentano, Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt</td>
<td>First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Guillaumin and Berthe Morisot)</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<td>1878</td>
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<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Frege, Begriffsschrift</td>
<td>Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle Henrik Ibsen, A Doll’s House Thomas Edison exhibits his incandescent light bulb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Jaspers and José Ortega y Gasset Death of Marx Dilthey, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften (–1885) Nietzsche, Also Sprach Zarathustra</td>
<td>Cantor, “Foundations of a General Theory of Aggregates”</td>
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<td>1884</td>
<td>Frege, Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik</td>
<td>Mark Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</td>
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<td>1886 Nietzsche, <em>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</em></td>
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<td>1887 Nietzsche, <em>Zur Genealogie der Moral</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1888 Birth of Jean Wahl</td>
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<td>1889 Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
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<td>1890 William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
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<td>1892 Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung”</td>
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<td>1893 Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1894</td>
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<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>1895 Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
<td>The Lumière brothers hold the first public screening of projected motion pictures Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen discovers X-rays</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Athens hosts the first Olympic Games of the modern era</td>
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<td>1897 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1898 Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
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<td>1899</td>
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<td>Start of the Second Boer War</td>
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<td>1901 Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
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<td>1903 Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavaillès</td>
<td>Du Bois, <em>The Souls of Black Folk</em></td>
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<td>1904 (−1905) Weber, <em>Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1905 Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
<td>Law of separation of church and state in France</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Hyppolite Bergson, <em>L’Evolution créatrice</em></td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d’Avignon</em></td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. O. Quine</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article on Husserl: “Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d’une Logique pure” in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<td>1914</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Publication of Saussure’s <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Death of Durkheim</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Birth of Louis Althusser Death of Georg Cantor and Lachelier</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze, and Frantz Fanon</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>The Trial</em> First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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### Chronology

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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</table>
| 1926 | Birth of Michel Foucault  
Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl’s phenomenology: *Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse* | The film *Metropolis* by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin  
The Bauhaus school building, designed by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), is completed in Dessau, Germany |  |
| 1927 | Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*  
Marcel, *Journal métaphysique* | Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* |  |
| 1928 | Birth of Noam Chomsky  
The first work of German phenomenology appears in French translation: Scheler’s *Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l’étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle*  
Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik and Was ist Metaphysik?*  
Husserl, *Formale und transzendental Logik*  
Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*  
Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne | Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) writes *The Threepenny Opera* with composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950)  
The first television station begins broadcasting in Schenectady, New York |  |
| 1929 | Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik and Was ist Metaphysik?*  
Husserl, *Formale und transzendental Logik*  
Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*  
Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne |  | (–1942) Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*  
Levinas, *La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* |
| 1930 | Birth of Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Félix Guattari, Luce Irigaray, and Michel Serres  
Levinas, *La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* | Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems |  |
| 1931 | Heidegger’s first works appear in French translation: “Was ist Metaphysik?” in *Bifur*, and “Vom Wesen des Grundes” in *Recherches philosophiques*  
Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations* | Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*  
BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK |  |
| 1932 | Birth of Stuart Hall  
Bergson, *Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion* |  | Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany |
<p>| 1933 | (–1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études |  |  |</p>
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<td>Sartre, “La Transcendance de l’êgo” in <em>Recherches philosophiques</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1937 Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Picasso, <em>Guernica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1938 Death of Husserl</td>
<td>Sartre, <em>La Nausée</em></td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939 Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium (–1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em></td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em></td>
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<td>1940 Death of Bergson</td>
<td>Richard Wright, <em>Native Son</em></td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and US enters the Second World War</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merleau-Ponty, <em>La Structure du comportement</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lévi-Strauss meets Roman Jakobson at the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942 Death of Simone Weil Sartre, <em>L’Être et le néant</em></td>
<td>Jorge Luis Borges, <em>Ficciones</em></td>
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<td>1943 Death of Simone Weil Sartre, <em>L’Être et le néant</em></td>
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<td>1946 Adorno and Horkheimer, <em>Dialektik der Aufklärung</em></td>
<td>Camus, <em>The Plague</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the French Indochina War Establishment of the Fourth Republic</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>(–1951) Marshall Plan</td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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| **1947** Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*  
Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus” | Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus* | Creation of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) |
| **1948** (~1951) Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*  
Althusser appointed agrégé-répétiteur (“caïman”) at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, a position he holds until 1980 | Debut of *The Ed Sullivan Show* |  |
| **1949** Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe*  
Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* | Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort found the revolutionary group and journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* | Foundation of NATO |
| **1951** Death of Alain and Wittgenstein  
Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*  
Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” |  |  |
| **1952** Death of Dewey and Santayana  
Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France | Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*  
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* |  |
|  | Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (posthumous)  
Lacan begins his public seminars | Lacan, together with Daniel Lagache and Françoise Dolto, founds the Société française de psychanalyse  
Crick and Watson construct the first model of DNA | Death of Joseph Stalin  
Ceasefire agreement (July 27) ends the Korean War |
| **1954** Lyotard, *La Phénoménologie* |  | Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20)  
Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule |
| **1955** Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*  
Cerisy Colloquium *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger*, organized by Jean Beaufret | Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* | Hungarian Revolution and Soviet invasion  
The French colonies of Morocco and Tunisia gain independence |
<p>| <strong>1956</strong> |  |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Philosophical Events</th>
<th>Cultural Events</th>
<th>Political Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em></td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em>&lt;br&gt;Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community&lt;br&gt;The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Günter Grass, <em>The Tin Drum</em>&lt;br&gt;Gillo Pentecorvo, <em>The Battle of Algiers</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Death of Camus&lt;br&gt;Gadamer, <em>Wahrheit und Methode</em>&lt;br&gt;Sartre, <em>Critique de la raison dialectique</em></td>
<td>First issue of the journal <em>Tel Quel</em> is published&lt;br&gt;The birth control pill is made available to married women</td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1962 First meeting of SPEP at Northwestern University</td>
<td>Betty Friedan, <em>The Feminine Mystique</em></td>
<td>Assassination of John F. Kennedy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963 Arendt, <em>Eichmann in Jerusalem</em></td>
<td>The first artificial heart is implanted</td>
<td>Imprisonment of Nelson Mandela</td>
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<td>1963 Marcuse, <em>One-Dimensional Man</em></td>
<td>The Beatles appear on <em>The Ed Sullivan Show</em></td>
<td>US Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin</td>
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<td>1964 Lacan, <em>Écrits</em></td>
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<td>1965 Death of Buber</td>
<td>Truman Capote, <em>In Cold Blood</em></td>
<td>Assassination of Malcolm X</td>
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<td>1965 Althusser, <em>Pour Marx</em></td>
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<td>1966 Deleuze, <em>Le Bergsonisme</em></td>
<td>Jacques-Alain Miller founds <em>Cahiers pour l’analyse</em></td>
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<td>1966 Lacan, <em>Écrits</em></td>
<td><em>Star Trek</em> premieres on US television</td>
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<td>1967 Derrida, <em>De la grammaïologie, La Voix et le phénomène, and L’Ecriture et la différence</em></td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em></td>
<td>Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall to the US Supreme Court</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968 Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition, Spinoza et le problème de l’expression</em></td>
<td>The Beatles release the White Album</td>
<td>Events of May ’68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike</td>
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<td>1969 Death of Jaspers and Adorno</td>
<td>Woodstock Music and Art Fair</td>
<td>Assassination of Martin Luther King</td>
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<td>1969 Deleuze, <em>Logique du sens</em></td>
<td>Neil Armstrong is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
<td>Tet Offensive</td>
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<td>1970 Paulo Freire, <em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em></td>
<td>Stonewall riots launch the Gay Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>1970 Adorno, <em>Ästhetische Theorie</em></td>
<td>Millet, <em>Sexual Politics</em></td>
<td>Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Foucault elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>Shootings at Kent State University</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>Lyotard, <em>Discours, figure</em></td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>Irigaray, <em>Speculum: De l’autre femme</em> Kristeva, <em>La Révolution du langage poétique</em></td>
<td>Creation of the first doctoral program in women's studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Resignation of Nixon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Death of Arendt</td>
<td>The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales</td>
<td>Death of Francisco Franco Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War First US–USSR joint space mission</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Death of Ernst Bloch</td>
<td>240 Czech intellectuals sign Charter 77</td>
<td>Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Death of Kurt Gödel <em>Arendt, Life of the Mind</em> Derrida, <em>La Vérité en peinture</em></td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>Death of Barthes and Sartre <em>Deleuze and Guattari, Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 2. Mille plateaux</em></td>
<td>Lacan officially dissolves the École Freudienne de Paris Murder of John Lennon Cable News Network (CNN) becomes the first television station to provide twenty-four-hour news coverage</td>
<td>Death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito Election of Ronald Reagan Solidarity movement begins in Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Death of Lacan <em>Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns</em> Bourdieu is elected to the Chair in Sociology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>The first cases of AIDS are discovered among gay men in the US Debut of MTV Madonna’s first album becomes the highest selling recording by a female artist in UK singles-chart history</td>
<td>Release of American hostages in Iran François Mitterrand is elected as the first socialist president of France’s Fifth Republic</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Foundation of the Collège International de Philosophie by François Châtelet, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt</td>
<td>Michael Jackson releases <em>Thriller</em>, the world’s best-selling album Debut of the Weather Channel</td>
<td>Falklands War</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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| 1984 | Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*  
First complete translation into French of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* | Don Delillo, *White Noise*  
Donna Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* | Assassination of Indira Gandhi |
| 1985 | Death of Beauvoir  
Establishment of the Archives Husserl de Paris at the École Normale Supérieure | Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale*  
The Oprah Winfrey Show debuts | Mikhail Gorbachev is named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
| 1986 | David Held, *Models of Democracy*  
Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds* | Toni Morrison, *Beloved*  
Discovery of Paul de Man’s wartime journalism damages the popularity of deconstruction in America | Chernobyl nuclear accident in USSR  
Election of Corazon Aquino ends Marcos regime in Philippines |
| 1987 | Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*  
Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* | Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* | Benazir Bhutto becomes the first woman to head an Islamic nation  
Pan Am Flight 103, en route from London to New York, is destroyed by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland |
Tim Berners-Lee submits a proposal for an information management system, later called the World Wide Web | Fall of the Berlin Wall  
Students protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing |
| 1989 | Death of Althusser  
Butler, *Gender Trouble*  
Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* | The World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its list of diseases  
Beginning of the Human Genome Project, headed by James D. Watson | Nelson Mandela is released from prison  
Reunification of Germany  
Break-up of the former Yugoslavia and beginning of the Yugoslav Wars  
Lech Walesa is elected president of Poland |
| 1990 | Deleuze and Guattari, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* | Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*  
The World Wide Web becomes the first publicly available service on the internet | First Gulf War |
| 1991 | Death of Guattari  
Guattari, *Chaosmose* | Rebecca Walker, *Third Wave Feminism* | Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union  
Dissolution of the Soviet Union |
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<th>YEAR</th>
<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Gilroy, <em>Black Atlantic</em></td>
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<td>Dissolution of Czechoslovakia; Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>Death of Karl Popper</td>
<td>The Channel Tunnel opens, connecting England and France</td>
<td>Genocide in Rwanda</td>
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<td>Braidotti, <em>Nomadic Subjects</em></td>
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<td>End of apartheid in South Africa; Nelson Mandela is sworn in as president</td>
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<td>Grosz, <em>Volatile Bodies</em></td>
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<td>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1992, goes into effect</td>
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<td>Lingis, <em>The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common</em></td>
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<td>Stiegler, <em>La technique et le temps I.</em></td>
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<td>Publication of Foucault’s <em>Dits et écrits</em></td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>Death of Deleuze</td>
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<td>End of Bosnian War</td>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>Vandana Shiva, <em>BioPiracy</em></td>
<td>Death of Mitterrand</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Death of Lyotard</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
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<td>Introduction of the Euro</td>
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<td>Antiglobalization forces disrupt the WTO meeting in Seattle</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>Death of Quine</td>
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<td>The Second Intifada</td>
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<td>Negri and Hardt, <em>Empire</em></td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>Balibar, <em>Nous, citoyens d’Europe? Les Frontières, l’État, le peuple</em></td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Death of Bourdieu and Gadamer</td>
<td>Completion of the Human Genome Project</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>Death of Davidson</td>
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<td>Beginning of conflict in Darfur</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Death of Derrida</td>
<td>Asian tsunami</td>
<td>Madrid train bombings</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Death of Ricoeur</td>
<td>Hurricane Katrina</td>
<td>Start of the Second Gulf War</td>
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<td>Bombings of the London public transport system</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Death of Jean Baudrillard and Rorty</td>
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<td>Bombings of the Mumbai train system</td>
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THE HISTORY OF
CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
THE HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

General Editor: Alan D. Schrift

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    TODD MAY

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“Continental philosophy” is itself a contested concept. For some, it is understood to be any philosophy after 1780 originating on the European continent (Germany, France, Italy, etc.). Such an understanding would make Georg von Wright or Rudolf Carnap – respectively, a Finnish-born philosopher of language and a German-born logician who taught for many years in the US – a “continental philosopher,” an interpretation neither they nor their followers would easily accept. For others, “continental philosophy” refers to a style of philosophizing, one more attentive to the world of experience and less focused on a rigorous analysis of concepts or linguistic usage. In this and the accompanying seven volumes in this series, “continental philosophy” will be understood historically as a tradition that has its roots in several different ways of approaching and responding to Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy, a tradition that takes its definitive form at the beginning of the twentieth century as the phenomenological tradition, with its modern roots in the work of Edmund Husserl. As such, continental philosophy emerges as a tradition distinct from the tradition that has identified itself as “analytic” or “Anglo-American,” and that locates its own origins in the logical analyses and philosophy of language of Gottlob Frege. Whether or not there is in fact a sharp divergence between the work of Husserl and Frege is itself a contested question, but what cannot be contested is that two distinct historical traditions emerged early in the twentieth century from these traditions’ respective interpretations of Husserl (and Heidegger) and Frege (and Russell). The aim of this history of continental philosophy is to trace the developments in one of these traditions from its roots in Kant and his contemporaries through to its most recent manifestations. Together, these volumes present a coherent and comprehensive account of the continental philosophical tradition.
that offers readers a unique resource for understanding this tradition's complex and interconnected history.

Because history does not unfold in a perfectly linear fashion, telling the history of continental philosophy cannot simply take the form of a chronologically organized series of “great thinker” essays. And because continental philosophy has not developed in a vacuum, telling its history must attend to the impact of figures and developments outside philosophy (in the sciences, social sciences, mathematics, art, politics, and culture more generally) as well as to the work of some philosophers not usually associated with continental philosophy. Such a series also must attend to significant philosophical movements and schools of thought and to the extended influence of certain philosophers within this history, either because their careers spanned a period during which they engaged with a range of different theorists and theoretical positions or because their work has been appropriated and reinterpreted by subsequent thinkers. For these reasons, the volumes have been organized with an eye toward chronological development but, in so far as the years covered in each volume overlap those covered in the subsequent volume, they have been organized as well with the aim of coordinating certain philosophical developments that intersect in a fashion that is not always strictly chronological.

Volume 1 begins with the origins of continental philosophy in Kant and the earliest responses to his critical philosophy, and presents an overview of German idealism, the major movement in philosophy from the late eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. In addition to Kant, the period covered in the first volume was dominated by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and together their work influenced not just philosophy, but also art, theology, and politics. This volume thus covers Kant’s younger contemporary Herder, and his readers Schiller and Schlegel – who shaped much of the subsequent reception of Kant in art, literature, and aesthetics; the “Young Hegelians” – including Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss – whose writings would influence Engels and Marx; and the tradition of French utopian thinking in such figures as Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Proudhon. In addition to Kant’s early critics – Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon – significant attention is also paid to the later critic of German idealism Arthur Schopenhauer, whose appropriation and criticism of theories of cognition later had a decisive influence on Friedrich Nietzsche.

Volume 2 addresses the second half of the nineteenth century, in part as a response to the dominance of Hegelian philosophy. These years saw revolutionary developments in both European politics and philosophy, and five great critics dominated the European intellectual scene: Feuerbach, Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche. Responding in various ways to Hegelian philosophy and to the shifting political landscape of Europe and
the United States, these thinkers brought to philosophy two guiding orientations – materialism and existentialism – that introduced themes that would continue to play out throughout the twentieth century. The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the emergence of new schools of thought and new disciplinary thinking, including the birth of sociology and the social sciences, the development of French spiritualism, the beginning of American pragmatism, radical developments in science and mathematics, and the development of hermeneutics beyond the domains of theology and philology into an approach to understanding all varieties of human endeavor.

Volume 3 covers the period between the 1890s and 1930s, a period that witnessed revolutions in the arts, science, and society that set the agenda for the twentieth century. In philosophy, these years saw the beginnings of what would grow into two distinct approaches to doing philosophy: analytic and continental. It also saw the emergence of phenomenology as a new rigorous science, the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the maturing of the discipline of sociology. Volume 3 thus examines the most influential work of a remarkable series of thinkers who reviewed, evaluated, and transformed nineteenth-century thought, among them Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It also initiated an approach to philosophizing that saw philosophy move from the lecture hall or the private study into an active engagement with the world, an approach that would continue to mark continental philosophy's subsequent history.

The developments and responses to phenomenology after Husserl are the focus of the essays in Volume 4. An ambiguity inherent in phenomenology – between conscious experience and structural conditions – lent itself to a range of interpretations. While some existentialists focused on applying phenomenology to the concrete data of human experience, others developed phenomenology as conscious experience in order to analyze ethics and religion. Still other phenomenologists developed notions of structural conditions to explore questions of science, mathematics, and conceptualization. Volume 4 covers all the major innovators in phenomenology – notably Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and the later Heidegger – as well as its extension into religion, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, and science.

Volume 5 concentrates on philosophical developments in political theory and the social sciences between 1920 and 1968, as European thinkers responded to the difficult and world-transforming events of the time. While some of the significant figures and movements of this period drew on phenomenology, many went back further into the continental tradition, looking to Kant or Hegel, Marx or Nietzsche, for philosophical inspiration. Key figures and movements discussed in this volume include Adorno, Horkheimer, and the Frankfurt School,
Schmitt, Marcuse, Benjamin, Arendt, Bataille, black existentialism, French Marxism, Saussure, and structuralism. These individuals and schools of thought responded to the “crisis of modernity” in different ways, but largely focused on what they perceived to be liberal democracy’s betrayal of its own rationalist ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity. One other point about the period covered in this volume is worthy of note: it is during these years that we see the initial spread of continental philosophy beyond the European continent. This happens largely because of the emigration of European Jewish intellectuals to the US and UK in the 1930s and 1940s, be it the temporary emigration of figures such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, and Jakobson or the permanent emigration of Marcuse, Arendt, and Gurwitsch. As the succeeding volumes will attest, this becomes a central feature of continental philosophy’s subsequent history.

Volume 6 examines the major figures associated with poststructuralism and the second generation of critical theory, the two dominant movements that emerged in the 1960s, which together brought continental philosophy to the forefront of scholarship in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines and set the agenda for philosophical thought on the continent and elsewhere from the 1960s to the present. In addition to essays that discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray, Habermas, Serres, Bourdieu, and Rorty, Volume 6 also includes thematic essays on issues including the Nietzschean legacy, the linguistic turn in continental thinking, the phenomenological inheritance of Gadamer and Ricoeur, the influence of psychoanalysis, the emergence of feminist thought and a philosophy of sexual difference, and the importation of continental philosophy into literary theory.

Before turning to Volume 7, a few words on the institutional history of continental philosophy in the United States are in order, in part because the developments addressed in Volumes 6–8 cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing some of the events that conditioned their North American and anglophone reception. As has been mentioned, phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch, and other European continental philosophers such as Herbert Marcuse and Hannah Arendt, began relocating to the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of these philosophers began their work in the United States at the University in Exile, established in 1933 as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research for displaced European intellectuals. While some continental philosophy was taught elsewhere around the United States (at Harvard University, Yale University, the University at Buffalo, and elsewhere), and while the journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* began publishing in 1939, continental philosophy first truly began to become an institutional presence in the United States in the 1960s. In 1961, John Wild (1902–72) left Harvard to become Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Northwestern University. With a commitment from the provost of the university
and the Northwestern University Press to enable him to launch the Northwestern Series in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, Wild joined William Earle and James Edie, thus making Northwestern a center for the study of continental philosophy. Wild set up an organizational committee including himself, Earle, Edie, George Schrader of Yale, and Calvin Schrag (a former student of Wild’s at Harvard, who was teaching at Northwestern and had recently accepted an appointment at Purdue University), to establish a professional society devoted to the examination of recent continental philosophy. That organization, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP), held its first meeting at Northwestern in 1962, with Wild and Gurwitsch as the dominant figures arguing for an existential phenomenology or a more strictly Husserlian phenomenology, respectively. Others attending the small meeting included Erwin Straus, as well as Northwestern graduate students Edward Casey and Robert Scharff, and today SPEP has grown into the second largest society of philosophers in the United States. Since those early days, many smaller societies (Heidegger Circle, Husserl Circle, Nietzsche Society, etc.) have formed and many journals and graduate programs devoted to continental philosophy have appeared. In addition, many of the important continental philosophers who first became known in the 1960s – including Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Habermas – came to hold continuing appointments at major American universities (although, it must be mentioned, not always housed in departments of philosophy) and, since the 1960s, much of the transmission of continental philosophy has come directly through teaching as well as through publications.

The transatlantic migration of continental philosophy plays a central role in Volume 7, which looks at developments in continental philosophy between 1980 and 1995, a time of great upheaval and profound social change that saw the fruits of the continental works of the 1960s beginning to shift the center of gravity of continental philosophizing from the European continent to the anglophone philosophical world and, in particular, to North America. During these years, the pace of translation into English of French and German philosophical works from the early twentieth century as well as the very recent past increased tremendously, and it was not uncommon to find essays or lectures from significant European philosophers appearing first in English and then subsequently being published in French or German. In addition, the period covered in this volume also saw the spread of continental philosophy beyond the confines of philosophy departments, as students and faculty in centers of humanities and departments of comparative literature, communication studies, rhetoric, and other interdisciplinary fields increasingly drew on the work of recent continental philosophers. Volume 7 ranges across several developments during these years – the birth of postmodernism, the differing philosophical traditions of France, Germany, and Italy, the third generation of critical theory, and the so-called
“ethical turn” – while also examining the extension of philosophy into questions of radical democracy, postcolonial theory, feminism, religion, and the rise of performativity and post-analytic philosophy. Fueled by an intense ethical and political desire to reflect changing social and political conditions, the philosophical work of this period reveals how continental thinkers responded to the changing world and to the key issues of the time, notably globalization, technology, and ethnicity.

The eighth and final volume in this series attempts to chart the most recent trends in continental philosophy, which has now developed into an approach to thinking that is present throughout the world and engaged with classical philosophical problems as well as current concerns. The essays in this volume focus more on thematic developments than individual figures as they explore how contemporary philosophers are drawing on the resources of the traditions surveyed in the preceding seven volumes to address issues relating to gender, race, politics, art, the environment, science, citizenship, and globalization. While by no means claiming to have the last word, this volume makes clear the dynamic and engaged quality of continental philosophy as it confronts some of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

As a designation, “continental philosophy” can be traced back at least as far as John Stuart Mill’s *On Bentham and Coleridge* (1840), where he uses it to distinguish the British empiricism of Bentham from a tradition on the continent in which he sees the influence of Kant. Since that time, and especially since the early twentieth century, the term has been used to designate philosophies from a particular geographical region, or with a particular style (poetic or dialectical, rather than logical or scientistic). For some, it has been appropriated as an honorific, while for others it has been used more pejoratively or dismissively. Rather than enter into these polemics, what the volumes in this series have sought to do is make clear that one way to understand “continental philosophy” is as an approach to philosophy that is deeply engaged in reflecting on its own history, and that, as a consequence, it is important to understand the history of continental philosophy.

While each of the volumes in this series was organized by its respective editor as a volume that could stand alone, the eight volumes have been coordinated in order to highlight various points of contact, influence, or debate across the historical period that they collectively survey. To facilitate these connections across the eight volumes, cross-referencing footnotes have been added to many of the essays by the General Editor. To distinguish these footnotes from those of the authors, they are indicated by an asterisk (*).

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INTRODUCTION

Todd May

There is a nostalgia in recent French philosophy for the glory years surrounding May ’68 and its aftermath. The early writings of Jacques Derrida, the genealogical works of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and his subsequent work with Félix Guattari, much of the most influential work of French feminists such as Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva: these writings are rooted in that turbulent period. Of course, the turbulence was not restricted to France. The Prague Spring, the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, and the Six-Day War and the beginnings of the Israeli occupation were all expressions of a time in which nothing seemed stable and everything appeared to be up for grabs.

It seems that turbulent times often produce great culture. This is the lesson of the Renaissance, and seems to have been repeated in the late 1960s. Moreover, for continental philosophy there is another period that exemplifies this lesson, one that has its own nostalgia. This is the existentialist period of the 1940s, when Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty led a movement that responded to the Second World War and postwar period with a body of work that remains powerful to this day. (One might also cite the emergence of the Frankfurt School in Germany in the 1930s.)

If the rise of important philosophical thought is associated with times of change and instability, however, this nostalgia may be misplaced. The period covered by this volume, roughly the 1990s to the present day, is perhaps as great a period of upheaval as that of either the 1940s or the 1960s. In order to verify this, let us canvass a few of the changes during our recent history.

First, and most obviously, one might point to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. This collapse marked the definitive end of traditional Marxism as a theory of resistance to capitalism. Of
course, Soviet Marxism had long been discredited in continental philosophy. The turning point for this change could indeed be marked with the date of May 1968. However, until the demise of the Soviet Union, the world in which philosophy took place remained a bipolar one. At the macropolitical level, if not the micropolitical one, the alternatives that presented themselves were American capitalism and Soviet (or Chinese) Marxism. With the demise of this bipolar world (or at least, in the Chinese case, its Marxist aspect), a global structure that had remained intact for the entirety of the post-Second World War period disappeared. No longer could American policy be justified by and strategized around countering communism, and no longer could opposition to the US look for support to a relatively stable bloc of communist states. Developing countries (or, in some cases, their corrupt leaders) could no longer hope to develop or enrich themselves by playing off one side against the other. What the first President George Bush called the New World Order is not necessarily an order at all.

The end of Soviet communism is said by some to have resulted in a unipolar world. But this does not capture the complexity of the times. Consider a second change: the rise of the virtual electronic world. Of course, during the twentieth century electronic communications and media developed by leaps and bounds. Radio, television, the telephone: all these changed the way people interact with one another. But no form of media communication has raised the questions of how we do and should interact with one another as urgently as the rise of the internet, and with it email communication and its subsequent forms of texting, and so on. The 1990s was the decade in which virtual communication became a primary, if not the primary, mode of business and social communication. Proximity in space and time was eclipsed by forms of interaction that allowed people to communicate across times, and especially places, that had previously been inaccessible. Moreover, this communication could be far richer (or, depending on one’s viewpoint, far more impoverished) than was previously possible. These changes raised the questions of what it is to be human and what human interaction could – and should – consist in.

These two changes have been inseparable from a third one: economic globalization. The fall of the Soviet Union removed any barriers from the spread of global capital, and the rise of electronic communication has facilitated that movement as well as the coordination of diverse activities by transnational corporations. Economic globalization has integrated national economies and fostered a neoliberal approach to economic production. This approach, which has in many ways replaced the previous welfarist approach to economics, emphasizes deregulation, privatization, and the removal of trade barriers. The dominance of neoliberalism can be explained by the rise of economic globalization. Capital likes deregulated markets and the ability to flow easily from one market to another, and so will tend to drift toward those markets that foster deregulation and trade,
while capital will be disinvested from other markets. With the rise of electronic communication, the movement of capital away from welfarist states and toward neoliberal ones becomes much easier. And thus welfarist states all tend to drift toward neoliberalism in order to keep capital from fleeing their countries.

Neoliberal economic globalization is related to another change, one that has largely affected developing countries. It is a particular kind of postcolonialism, one that has not only political but economic roots. Postcolonialism is not a new phenomenon. One might say that postcolonialism has been around since the end of colonialism, which began its major decline in the early 1960s. The postcolonial period has been a difficult one. Corrupt totalitarian states in Africa, failed Marxist projects in Latin America and Asia, and the intervention of the US and the former Soviet Union, as well as the devastating legacy of colonialism, have left many developing countries bereft. However, the rise of economic globalization has presented a new set of challenges to postcolonial states. Rather than political colonialism, they face an economic imperialism that is distinct in nature but not perhaps in effect from the previous colonial projects. The current postcolonial period is one of economic integration as well as exploitation. This period presents new obstacles to those who seek to understand and to change the developing world. These obstacles can be seen in sharp relief, particularly when we understand the contemporary urbanization of much of the developing world. More people now live in cities than in the countryside (although, ironically, in the US a plurality of people now inhabit the suburbs). This urbanization, or mega-urbanization, intersects with economic exploitation in explosive ways.

Related to but distinct from postcolonialism is a fifth change: the emergence, particularly in the 1990s, of identity politics. Feminist politics, black politics, and gay and lesbian politics all staked their claim to recognition during this period. One might date the birth of identity politics as early as the late 1960s and early 1970s. During that period, Marxist thought, which had previously held sway on the Left, began to give way to more decentered ways of conceiving oppression. Rather than reducing all oppression to class exploitation, thinkers and activists began to conceive of various oppressions as having their own character and history. To be sure, it was recognized that there were relationships among these oppressions. But they resisted reduction to a single type of oppression or domination that would ground or explain them. Since the 1970s, universities have begun to offer courses, and then minors, and finally majors in areas such as black studies and women’s studies. By the 1990s, such thought became perhaps the dominant mode of conceiving progressive politics. Although identity politics has come under increased scrutiny and faced much skepticism in the past five to ten years, it remains an important element in the current intellectual and political context.
The sixth change, one that intersects with most of the others, is the change in the biosphere, especially global warming and the increasing demand for fossil fuels. Awareness of environmental degradation and the limits of natural resources has been with us for some time. The first Earth Day took place nearly forty years ago, in 1970. However, for many people environmental concerns have been, until recently, removed from everyday life. This is no longer the case. From the devastations of Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami of 2004 to the leaps in food and gasoline prices, the role played by the biosphere in limiting and determining our lives is very much in evidence. Moreover, there is a complex interaction between neoliberal economic globalization and environmental concerns. It is difficult, for instance, to reconcile a free and unregulated market with the preservation of energy sources or with the reduction of greenhouse gases. Of course, neoliberal theorists have offered market solutions to these issues, but the failure of those solutions is blindingly obvious.

These changes – the collapse of the Soviet Union, the pervasion of electronic media, economic globalization, the emergence of postcolonialism, the rise of identity politics, and the urgency of the environment – have combined to create a world that is very different from the world of twenty or twenty-five years ago. If upsurges in cultural creativity are fostered by turbulent times, we certainly live in a time that is propitious for such creativity. Rather than engaging in nostalgia for earlier thought, it would perhaps be better to ask ourselves whether there are types of thought that are equal to our times. Although there remains much to be learned from the thinkers canvassed in the previous volumes in this series, we should not remain content to look back wistfully at selected periods at the expense of seeking to understand and utilize our own historical situation for further thought and reflection.

As the essays in this volume demonstrate, there is much current creative work that seeks to grapple in one way or another with our time. Cut loose from the moorings of traditional Marxism, liberalism, linguistic thought, transcendental ethics, or other constraints that seem anachronistic in this period of upheaval, current continental thought is focused on giving voice to our time and the possibilities it offers. It does not reject longstanding philosophical questions of who we are, what we know, and how we should live. But it asks those questions with an eye to our current context. There is, for many who write continental philosophy, an urgency that stems from a recognition of the importance of what is happening today. The essays here cover a variety of perspectives within current continental philosophy that do not shirk the task of thinking ourselves and our tasks within the context of our situation.

Because of this orientation, contemporary continental philosophy is marked by normative concerns, that is, concerns about how we are called to take up our context or how that context calls on us. This normativity might be overlooked,
since there is no single thinker devoted to ethics in the way, for instance, that Emmanuel Levinas was. However, this is not because there are no ethical concerns at play in the work of the thinkers considered here. To the contrary, many of the philosophers whose names appear in the following pages assume the significance of ethics specifically and normativity generally in their writing. They see normative concerns so woven into the fabric of our lives and our situation that they find no need to offer a distinct and isolated *ethical* position. Whether it is a question of feminism and the concerns of patriarchy, the environment, art and aesthetics, the politics of postmodernism, or even science studies, the normative impact and consequences of one’s thought and one’s views are inseparable aspects of many of the philosophers whose work is canvassed throughout this volume.

In the opening essay of the volume, “Rethinking Gender,” Gayle Salamon traces the recent history of feminist thought, particularly as it appears in the work of Judith Butler. Butler’s has been one of the most influential voices in recent years, particularly in feminist and queer theory. Her identity politics, however, is not essentialist in character. In fact, it is precisely the opposite. As Salamon points out, “Butler rethinks gender by casting it as a performative, a doing rather than a being.” Rather than being the products of an inescapable essence, our gender identities are largely constructed by our social and historical circumstances. This type of thought cuts against both more conservative views that seek to justify a woman’s subordinate role by reference to her sexual identity and, at the same time, essentialist feminisms, such as that of Irigaray, that seek to ground resistance to patriarchy in the nature of being woman.

If gender is a performative, then resistance can take the form of alternative performances, performances that are outside the recognized gender roles. Both Butler and Monique Wittig call for such alternative performances, although they differ on the role of language in these performances. Can the traditional language used to describe sex and gender be shaped to new use, as Butler often seems to believe, or must we, with Wittig, abandon sexual categories altogether?

Gabriel Rockhill takes up the question of the place of aesthetics in recent continental thought, particularly as it appears in the writings of Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière. He argues that Badiou and Rancière offer us novel ways of conceiving aesthetics. For Badiou, art is one of the four procedures of truth he outlines in his major philosophical works, works that are discussed in Bruno Bosteels’s essay in this volume, “Thinking the Event.” In keeping with the tradition of high modernism, Badiou offers art a privileged place in human activity. Badiou’s notion of truth, however, is a unique one. A truth brings an event that had previously been foreclosed by a situation into the situation. So truths, including artistic truths, do not just reveal or discover; they also resist the situation in which they take place.
Rancière, in contrast to Badiou, refuses to recognize art as a more or less trans-historical category. There is no art in general; rather, there are regimes of artistic practices. These different regimes have different themes associated with them. Modern artistic practices, in contrast to those characteristic of artistic regimes up until the early to mid-1800s, are characterized by a particular egalitarianism. They are not egalitarian in the sense that they promote political equality. Rather, they reject the idea of higher and lower themes and plots, and treat all aspects of life as equally worthy of artistic treatment.

The political side of Rancière’s egalitarianism, as well as that of several other thinkers coming from the Marxist tradition, is taken up in Emily Zakin’s essay “Rethinking Marxism.” She shows there that although many contemporary political theorists reject any form of orthodox Marxism, they nevertheless remain influenced by it, and in particular by the structuralist Marxism of Louis Althusser. Rancière was a student of Althusser’s, as was Badiou. Rancière broke with Althusser, however, in the wake of the events of May ’68, in order to think a more egalitarian political view than was characteristic of his teacher.

Rancière and Badiou are not the only thinkers whose work engages the Marxist tradition. The Slovenian thinker Slavoj Žižek has combined a Lacanian view of psychoanalysis, a Hegelian view of the movement of history, and a Marxist sensitivity into a combination that seeks to understand the self-undermining way people carry out their political projects. For their part, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe see the gaps that Žižek cites in political projects to be the very stuff of politics. A democratic politics is always centered on the antagonisms inherent in any social order. Where Žižek finds the futile project of restoring a seamless order, Laclau and Mouffe find the place in which the hierarchy of a given social order is contested. Finally, for his part, Giorgio Agamben concerns himself with the rise of a particular biopolitical order, one in which the state claims for itself unlimited power in the “state of exception,” and people are treated as nothing other than sheer life, to be disposed of as befits state interests.

Bruno Bosteels’s essay focuses on the work of Badiou as a whole. Badiou’s thought has, in keeping with much of recent French philosophy, focused on the event. The concept of the event is an important one in recent French thought, particularly in the philosophy of Deleuze. In general, invoking the concept of the event marks a change in or break with a particular situation or configuration. It announces, or is, something novel, something that cannot be captured in the terms of the situation or configuration within which it arises. As such, the event has a positive valence. It is a moment of creativity. Badiou gives the idea of the event his own inflection, drawing from mathematics and particularly from set theory. For Badiou, set theory reveals a positive ontology, since it allows us to think pure multiplicity. Within that pure multiplicity, an event is that which inheres in the multiplicity but has not been represented in the situation. For
Badiou, Bosteels writes, “The event is this something, which is almost nothing, but which suffices to trigger a radical transformation of the situation as a whole.” Events, in short, are revealings of truth in the sense that Rockhill captures in his discussion of Badiou and art. As such, Badiou’s sense of events is distinct from that of Deleuze, for whom truth is not the issue in events. For Badiou, truth and the event are coextensive, while for Deleuze the idea of truth is on the hither side of the event: events do not reveal truth, but instead, as Nietzsche would also have it, they are indifferent to truth.

Badiou’s recent thought has departed somewhat from the path that characterizes his earlier work. He introduces the concept of appearing, which seeks to keep the materialism of his dialectical materialism intact. In both his earlier and later thought, however, Badiou sees himself as renewing the Platonist tradition. Philosophy is a matter not of creation or of relativism, but of truth. And while philosophy does not create truths – only the “truth procedures” of politics, science, art, and love can do that – philosophy seeks to think the character of truth and of the compossibility of the truths of the distinct truth procedures.

John Fennell’s “Rethinking Anglo-American Philosophy” reminds us that Anglo-American philosophy, particularly in recent years, is much richer than many continentalists recognize. Among continental philosophers, there is a tendency to think of Anglo-American philosophy as encompassing a narrowly analytic focus. The work of Donald Davidson, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom belies this view. They offer more encompassing accounts of who we are that provide important points of intersection with recent continental thought.

Drawing from the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Wilfrid Sellars, and W. V. Quine, the three Anglo-American figures who form the focus of Fennell’s essay resist the easy reductionism of earlier analytic models of thought. Each of them finds a rich normative dimension to human thought and language, a dimension that cannot be explained in purely physical terms. Whether it is Davidson’s appeal to interpretation, Brandom’s inferentialism, or McDowell’s concept of second nature, the antireductionism of these thinkers allows their thought to intersect with the wider social concerns of many continental philosophers. In particular, as Fennell notes, these thinkers can be seen as “continuing the breakthrough to hermeneutics and phenomenology (already begun by Wittgenstein and Sellars) within Anglo-American philosophy.”

If Anglo-American philosophy is widening its scope to include concerns traditionally associated with continental thought, so too continental thought is increasingly embracing the concern with science often associated with analytic work. Dorothea Olkowski’s “Rethinking Science as Science Studies” shows how science, considered as a human practice, is something other than a calculative and alienating project of the kind criticized by Martin Heidegger and those who follow him. Instead, it is a type of engagement with the world that has complex
relationships with both its own theories and methods and the society in which
it takes place.

Science often provides idealized models of reality. However, those models
are themselves intertwined with conceptual frameworks that are present in the
surrounding society. Therefore, rather than thinking of science as an insular
and ahistorical project, thinkers like Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, and Ilya
Prigogine are returning an understanding of science to the social conditions with
which it interacts. In addition, Stengers and Prigogine re-engage science with
the complexity of the world, showing that the world is far more complex than
earlier, simpler models would have us believe. This, in turn, intertwines science
with notions of chaos and complexity that are also current in the surrounding
social context.

That surrounding social context, particularly in its European mode, is
the topic of Rosi Braidotti’s “European Citizenship.” Braidotti notes that the
Eurocentric orientation of much European political history has come under fire
and has recently been abandoned by many of the thinkers who seek to under-
stand Europe's current standing and role. The current European scene is both
postcolonial and posthomogenous. It can no longer hold itself up as a model of
human development and thus intervene (and exploit) other cultures; and the
internal character of each of its countries is no longer monolithic. Immigration
and globalization raise questions for Europe that cannot be answered by appeal
to older nationalist models.

These questions are occurring across a variety of registers. Some, such as
Jürgen Habermas, argue for a new cosmopolitanism that sees members of Europe
as world rather than national citizens. Others, such as Étienne Balibar, seek to
turn reflection on Europe toward its own history and struggles, with an eye both
on seeing its failures and on recognizing the process of struggles against those
failures that can be seen as part of a trajectory of liberatory thought. Still others,
for example Derrida, urge Europe to take up an engagement with its Others,
an engagement that will bring its own concepts into permanent instability and
self-critique.

Eduardo Mendieta’s “Postcolonialism, Postorientalism, Postoccidentalism”
stays on the political register, but shifts the focus from Europe to the developing
world. He considers the rise of postcolonial thought, particularly in the wake
of Edward Said’s seminal book Orientalism. In that work, Said argues that the
West has projected onto the East the notion of the Other, an Other against which
it then identifies itself. This idea of self and other and the play of identifica-
tion has been taken up by more recent thinkers who are grappling with the effects of
colonization and the attempt to form identities in the wake of its decline.

Gayatri Spivak takes up the critique of the West’s representation of non-
Western populations. She shows how the West, by representing itself as universal,
assumes an ahistorical, paternalistic, and often racist orientation toward non-Western countries and cultures. Homi Bhabha, by contrast, sees a more fluid process at work, one in which identification takes place, in a Lacanian fashion, by seeking to assume a position that is barred to one. As Mendieta writes, “Bhabha's work combines productively Lacanian psychoanalysis with Foucaultian genealogy, in order to make more nuanced Said's and Spivak's analyses of the discourses of imperialism and colonialism.” For their part, Enrique Dussel, Fernando Coronil, and Walter Mignolo expand Said's view in different directions, particularly in light of the experience of colonization and postcolonization in Latin America.

In recent years, environmental concern has generated environmental thought and reflection in both the Anglo-American and continental traditions. Jonathan Maskit's “Continental Philosophy and the Environment” takes up recent continental thought as it grapples with issues that have arisen over the course of the past several decades. Rooted in the ontological considerations of Heidegger and the critiques of capitalism tracing back to the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, recent environmental thinking seeks to intertwine both an ontology of the relationships of humans with nature and the politics of capitalism that has destroyed those relationships.

Maskit notes that in Germany, where environmental issues have played an important role in public politics – Germany has long had a strong Green Party – theoretical reflection has, unexpectedly, been less developed than in the US or France. In France in particular, the work of Michel Serres, Latour, and especially Félix Guattari has undercut the opposition between humanity and nature. Drawing on both Heidegger's reflections on the relation of human to Being and Deleuze's antihumanist ontology, French theorists have engaged in a rethinking of social, environmental, and intra-subjective relationships.

My own contribution turns to the ways in which thinkers have directly confronted globalization, and to a lesser extent US hegemony. Taking up a number of thinkers whose work has already been canvassed, it divides the responses to globalization into four categories: critiques of media and the spectacle; proposals for a renewed vision of democracy; a conception of the rise of the multitude; and a renewal of the anarchist tradition. These categories are not exhaustive, nor do they necessary conflict with one another. However, they provide a framework within which to consider how recent continental thought has reflected on the time in which we live. Are we dominated by the media we have created to the point where we have become its creatures? How should we think democracy under new, more globalized conditions? Can we conceive of the globalized world as being sustained by a multitude whose energies can also liberate it from its oppressive aspects? Does the decline of the Marxist tradition open the way for a more egalitarian, anarchist-oriented conception of politics?
These are the questions that drive many of the thinkers who want to understand – and to change – a world whose geographical borders seem increasingly irrelevant.

All of the essays in this volume confront, in one way or another, the turbulent times in which we live. They take up one or more of the six themes I alluded to earlier. They are driven, although from different angles, by concerns about what is happening to us and what can be done about it. In that sense, the authors of these essays demonstrate that continental philosophy need not be nostalgic. It has risen to the task of thinking the present, and probably in ways that will yield thinkers to be read long into the future. Who, among the current crop, will be our next Heidegger, our next Merleau-Ponty, our next Foucault? Or will it be that, in the complexity of our time, none will assume a dominant position, but instead reflection will become a more collective effort? Maybe there will be no superstars, but rather a constellation that makes sense when seen as a pattern.

One figure who is currently on the horizon, and who should be mentioned even if only in passing, is François Laruelle. Laruelle’s books have yet to be translated into English, but he has been influential in recent French thought. His “nonphilosophy” challenges traditional philosophy by accusing it of positing an identity between thinking and reality, an identity that is ultimately an idealism. His project is to abandon this positing in favor of a thought that experiments with new conceptual possibilities that he sees as previously barred from philosophy.

These considerations bring us to the question of the future of continental philosophy. Is there anything we can say about where continental thought will head, given its current situation? Prediction, of course, is a hazardous business. Nevertheless, even with limited predictive ability one can read a few current trends that might have a future. Among these, one of the most salient is interdisciplinarity. Contemporary continental philosophy is not only engaged with its time; it is also, and partly because of this, engaged with other areas of study and research. We can see this in the essays for this volume. The philosophical positions discussed here are in conversation with science, art, political science, the media, literature, and environmental studies. This, I believe, stems both from philosophy’s engagement with the world and from an internal development of philosophy – both continental and Anglo-American – over the course of the twentieth century. The latter has to do with the demise of philosophical foundationalism, perhaps last seen in a full-blown way in the thought of Edmund Husserl.

The story behind this demise is a longer one than can be told here. It concerns the end, or perhaps exhaustion, of philosophy’s attempt to be a foundation for all knowledge. The upshot of this end or exhaustion is that philosophy takes itself to stand no longer behind or beneath other areas of study, but rather alongside them. This, in turn, opens the door to conversation with other areas of study. When philosophy’s task is no longer to stand outside other disciplines,
it can borrow from them without a loss of its own integrity. We have seen this happening over the course of the latter part of the twentieth century, and it will likely continue.

Just as the boundaries between philosophy and other disciplines are beginning to break down, so is the internal boundary between Anglo-American and continental philosophy. For several decades, continental philosophers have referred to Anglo-American ones: Wittgenstein, John Austin, Saul Kripke, and more recently Brandom have found their way into continental thought. Conversely, Anglo-American philosophers have taken an interest particularly in the thought of Heidegger, Habermas, Merleau-Ponty, and Foucault. We can expect these borrowings to continue, especially since Anglo-American philosophy has in some quarters become more synoptic in its vision. Rather than being content with addressing small, specialized problems, many Anglo-American philosophers, chief among them those discussed in Fennell’s essay, are attempting to build larger philosophical visions.

Alongside internal and external interdisciplinarity, one might expect that continental philosophy will seek to speak to a larger audience. There are several reasons for this. First, interdisciplinarity requires that those from other traditions can understand what one is saying. Interdisciplinary conversation, by its nature, cannot remain specialized. Second, in seeking to address the world in which we live, continental philosophy will have to find a way to address that world in terms people can understand. The turbulence of our times needs reflective understanding. Only by reaching out to a larger audience can philosophy provide that understanding. Finally, philosophy, like many of the liberal arts, is struggling against its marginalization by the corporatist mentality that has become dominant in many universities. As universities, partly driven by financial constraints, throw their resources into money-making ventures like the applied sciences, the humanities often find themselves under academic siege. The resort to arcane language and self-absorption will only reinforce the image of the humanities as irrelevant to students’ concerns. Alternatively, when philosophy uses its resources in the service of reflection on people’s lives and their situation, it struggles against the forces of marginalization. That struggle may, in fact, be threatening to the powers that be. After all, philosophy has always been a form of critical reflection. However, if critical reflection remains a part of university life, it is the task of philosophy as much as any discipline to contribute to it.

These are only a few of the directions continental philosophy may take. I would not want to hazard anything more fine-grained than that. However, as the volumes previous to this one have shown, the twentieth century was a rich one for continental philosophy. And as this volume demonstrates, recent continental thought retains a strength and vitality that allows it to keep asking important
questions in the context of the time in which those questions are asked. Who we are, where we are, and what we might be remain its concerns; in a world fraught with uncertainty, there can be no greater intellectual task than to reflect rigorously on them.
1

RETHINKING GENDER: 
JUDITH BUTLER AND FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Gayle Salamon

The historically fraught relationship between gender and philosophy has sometimes served to obscure the mutual necessity that has bound them together. Gender is that without which philosophy could not proceed, and yet it has historically evaded notice as a philosophically significant concept. Luce Irigaray has demonstrated the extent to which the feminine has haunted philosophy all along, unincorporated and unacknowledged but central to its projects. If philosophy has been silently marked by gender, it is equally true that gender is in some sense marked for philosophy. Monique Wittig describes the relation between gender and philosophy as a question of ownership, and has framed their connection thus: “As an ontological concept that deals with the nature of Being, along with a whole nebula of other primitive concepts belonging to the same line of thought, gender seems to belong primarily to philosophy.” Wittig makes this assertion about gender in something of a disparaging mode, chastising philosophy for its unthought and reflexive conflation of gender with the natural order of things while also consigning gender to philosophy as a way of dispensing with it as yet another “primitive concept” relegated to irrelevance. The problem with gender in philosophy, according to Wittig, is that its putative self-evidence has rendered it invisible, and philosophy has become the end point at which gender transforms from a speculative question into an unnoticed fact.

*1. For a discussion of Irigaray, see the essay by Mary Beth Mader in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.

Despite this lack of sustained attention – or perhaps because of it – gender persists as a question in and for philosophy. Even outside the domain of philosophy proper, some of the most influential feminist discourses have been those that take gender seriously as a philosophical problem, from the robust critique of ontology and neat Cartesian inversion offered by the “Am I?” of Denise Riley’s *Am I That Name?* to the epistemological critique incited by Joan Scott’s reading of the power of gender as a category of historical analysis. Both the concept of gender and feminist discourse as a whole have been given an explicitly philosophical genesis by at least one author: Donna Haraway has argued that “all the modern feminist meanings of gender have roots in Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that ‘one is not born a woman.’”3 This genealogy understands gender, in any conceptual deployment, to already be engaged in a mode of critique, and offers gender as a way of questioning and challenging the naturalization of the social and identity formations that accrue around sex. This critical and interrogative relationship need not go by the name of “gender” at all, and indeed does not in Beauvoir’s case. Locating the birth of gender with Beauvoir’s philosophical critique asserts a kind of deontologization of gender from the start, since the essence of gender is then located in the relationship between “sex” and a critique meant to unseat presumptions of its naturalness or givenness.

Gayle Rubin’s essay “The Traffic in Women” (1975) is often cited as the moment when the distinction between “sex” and “gender” became codified in feminist thinking, primarily because of her introduction of the phrase “sex/gender system,” which she defines as “the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied.”4 Rubin holds that sex, sexuality, and gender are unthinkable apart from the culture that gives them meaning, and elsewhere describes the relationship between biology and sexuality, paraphrasing Claude Lévi-Strauss, as “Kantianism without a transcendental libido.”5 Rubin’s phrase soon began to circulate to support the idea that sex and gender were two different kinds of things that worked in concert as a system, and “The Traffic in Women” is often cited as the origin of the theorization of sex as biological raw material overlaid with a something nonmaterial called gender. However, this is a misreading: although Rubin’s piece was indeed the first in this area to use the term “gender” to refer to identity and behaviors that are culturally tied to sexual dimorphism, it was clearly not her intent to formulate sex as biological

and gender as cultural, since she is clear in her assertion that “sex as we know it – gender identity, sexual desire and fantasy, concepts of childhood – is itself a social product.” Rubin does not always distinguish between sex and gender; indeed, there are moments when the slash between sex and gender in the sex/gender system functions as a sign of collapse or dissolution rather than a marker of disjunction. Nor does she parse gender and sex and sexuality, although she will argue for their conceptual and methodological separateness a decade later in “Thinking Sex” (1984).

The work of Judith Butler (1956– ) has a singular place in this genealogy. Butler completed her PhD in philosophy at Yale University in 1984, where she worked with phenomenologist Maurice Natanson, and has spent most of her career to date in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley. All of Butler’s work might be described as an exploration of the conditions of possibility of the subject, where the condition that has received Butler’s most sustained attention is gender. Butler rethinks gender by casting it as a performative, a doing rather than a being, and her theory of gender performativity can be read as a continuation of a tradition in twentieth-century French philosophy that finds its point of germination in Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, although Beauvoir serves as an explicit interlocutor only in Butler’s earliest work. In tracing the genealogy of Butler’s reconceptualization of gender within and beyond its philosophical context, we will not ask what Butler’s concept of gender does, less still what it is. We will ask instead after the conditions of gender’s emergence and the possibilities of its subversion, psychically and socially, and suggest that a tension between legibility and possibility, between the structuring force of that which is given and the yet unseen horizon of the possible, motivates Butler’s engagement with the philosophical tradition in her articulation of gender performativity.

True to Haraway’s assessment, Beauvoir’s dictum also functions as a point of departure for Butler, particularly in the kinds of speculation it invites about choice and situatedness in relation to gender. Beauvoir is also a temporal starting-point for Butler’s work, in that Butler quickly leaves the existential and phenomenological paradigm in which Beauvoir writes in favor of more psychoanalytic terrain, although some have asserted that the importance of her earlier phenomenological and, in particular, existential engagements has been overlooked. Butler reads Beauvoir’s assertion as an invitation to use insights about the formation and acquisition of gender as a kind of critique, with the aim of social transformation

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7. Butler’s account of performativity is discussed in some detail in the essay by José Medina in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.
and change. In her earlier work, Butler’s emphasis on gender as a doing rather than a being is a critique of ontology similar to Beauvoir’s: a counterargument against fixed, essential, or materialist understandings of sex and gender. Butler offers this critique of gender determinism as given alongside a critique of gender as a free choice, and this dual critical impulse – the desire to deny gender and sex as essential or inevitable while at the same time rejecting a conception of gender (or sex) as a project freely chosen by a willful subject – is a persistent refrain in Butler’s work and present in her earliest writings on the subject. These critical impulses are mobilized through her engagement with different philosophical figures, where Jean-Paul Sartre comes to stand in for the willful agent who would choose gender (“a ‘project’ in Sartrean terms”9) and Beauvoir’s “become” is read sometimes as echoing that Sartrean project and sometimes as challenging it. Butler’s conception of gender is a challenge to certain ideas that have long preoccupied philosophy: the possibility of universalizability; the metaphysics of substance; the relation between spirit and flesh. If the challenge that she poses to traditional conceptions of sex proceeds by arguing against a metaphysics of substance in thinking sex and gender, this challenge does not proceed through rejecting the language of philosophy or leaving its domain, but rather by reassembling its terms elsewhere. Butler offers Beauvoir as the progenitor of an “act” theory of gender, reading her formulation of woman’s becoming as establishing gender as a “stylized repetition of acts,” and the language of “acts” as Butler deploys it borrows from both speech act theory and phenomenology.10 Butler has recently defined gender as “a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint,” and for Butler the question of gender involves two different kinds of inquiry.11 The first is a description of the limits of intelligibility that constitute the borders of gender, and attention to how that constitution designates some subjects as livable and marks others as abject. Butler emphasizes the mutually constituting nature of these different positions, where that which is unassimilable to the domain of proper gender must still persist as a necessary and structuring ideal, giving coherence and boundedness to the category that excludes it. Her discussions of gender melancholia, most fully explicated in *The Psychic Life of Power*, describe just this structure, whereby those homosexual attachments that must be repudiated in order for the subject to achieve normative sexuality (and also gender) remain alive and stubbornly held at the heart of heterosexuality. The proximity and persistence of these repudiated

identifications or objects do not persist despite the subject; they are rather what form the subject:

My sense is that it is always the case that the subject is produced through certain kinds of foreclosure – certain things become impossible for it; certain things become irrecoverable – and that this makes for the possibility of a temporarily coherent subject who can act. But I also want to say that its action can very often take up the foreclosure itself; it can renew the meaning and the effect of foreclosure. For instance, many people are inaugurated as subjects through the foreclosure of homosexuality; when homosexuality returns as a possibility, it returns precisely as the possibility of the unraveling of the subject itself: “I would not be I if I were a homosexual. I don’t know who I would be. I would be undone by that possibility. Therefore, I cannot come in close proximity to that which threatens to undo me fundamentally.” Miscegenation is another moment …

Now I think it’s possible sometimes to undergo an undoing, to submit to an undoing by virtue of what spectrally threatens the subject, in order to reinstate the subject on a new and different ground. What have I done? Well, I’ve taken the psychoanalytic notion of foreclosure, and I’ve made it specifically social. Also, instead of seeing that notion as a founding act, I see it as a temporally renewable structure, and as temporally renewable, subject to a logic of iteration, which produces the possibility of its alteration.¹²

This then is the first kind of inquiry that Butler follows regarding the nature and operation of the psychic and social norms that constitute us as sexed and gendered subjects. Butler is committed to keeping a number of tensions in play with this formulation, most significantly the tension between the seemingly fixed norms of sex and gender, which always come to us from elsewhere, and the ability to style one’s life in opposition to or to the side of those norms. This tension is inherent in her definition of gender, with its unresolvable pull between “improvisation” and “constraint.” That conceptual balance requires a methodological tension as well, a pairing of the psychic with the social, so that the weight of the symbolic determinism of the socially enforced norm might be met with the possibility of choosing otherwise that iterability affords. The result is an undoing at the level of the subject as well as the symbolic; it is not only the

subject that is undone in this instance, but also some of the rigidity of the structure of the Lacanian symbolic.13

The notion of the “otherwise” occupies the second kind of inquiry Butler pursues: an interrogation of that “we” who are constituted as sexed and gendered subjects and an asking after the conditions of life on the sexual margins. Butler is interested in expanding the domains of legibility for those who violate the norms of gender and sexuality, and doing so without appeal to a shared sense of identity. That expansion cannot be achieved by simply enumerating a list of gender configurations that might supplement male and female, since such a list would quickly become proscriptive or positivist. Butler wants to secure gender as an open site of as yet unarticulated possibility in order to resist the kind of foundationalism or ontological thralldom that would restrict the realm of the possible to its normative iterations. The task of recognizing gender as it is lived outside norms necessarily entails a holding open or a suspension of the position, thus supplanting a description of norms with what might be considered a speculative project in a Hegelian sense. Describing gender becomes a matter of describing the way that it is done and the way that it is undone, and if gender is a doing, that doing is accomplished in several different modes at once.

There have been attempts to divide Butler’s early work on gender from her later work in various ways: psychic versus political, normative versus ethical.14 It could be suggested that the first decade of her work has been concerned with doing, and the second with undoing, evidenced by her recent works *Undoing Gender* and *Giving an Account of Oneself*, in which she poses the question: what does it mean to become undone by another? One of the limitations of such pairings is that they reinstall just the sorts of binaries that Butler’s work seeks to undo. She uses Michel Foucault, for example, not only oppositionally to a Sartrean view of the relation between subject and world, but augmented with feminist theory at the same time as it is used in conjunction with more psychoanalytic or intrapsychic models. Butler asks that we attend to the constrictions and the violence wrought in the service of gender norms and the unequal distribution of that violence onto bodies depending on their markers of race, class, ethnicity, and ability, while at the same time insisting that we not misrecognize genders lived on the margins as necessarily marked by fatality. This paradox is central to Butler’s theory of gender: to recognize the power of norms, to understand that there is no way to live outside the grasp of that power, and yet to affirm

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13. For a more detailed discussion of the symbolic, see the essay by Charles Shepherdson in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
that such power can never be fully constituting, and that the future iterations of gender possibility cannot be mapped or predicted. We must both expand the bounds of what is recognized as a livable life, as fully human, yet must not understand legibility to be the sole precondition for a livable life. It is to this end that Butler has focused on undoing, in her most recent work on gender, using the term not in the sense of relinquishing or dismantling gender, but rather as a way to describe a more reflexive movement, a moment of vulnerability or openness that comes about in the face of my encounter with the other. If she is not quite calling for gender to be dismantled when she speaks of undoing, she is writing in favor of a partial dismantling of the conditions of its legibility, a disruption of its taken-for-granted signifying practices.

There are other paradoxes in the relation between sex and gender as Butler outlines them. Through an explanation of the ways in which girls are socialized into women, and her attention to the efforts and labors of becoming a woman, Beauvoir’s reconception of sex as a series of acts provides the ground for what is for Butler a still more trenchant question: how can an understanding of gender as a stylized repetition of acts, where those acts come to materialize as something called sex, help us resignify gender itself as something that might have a slant on or critical relationship with the norms of both sex and sexuality? Although she is often described as a theorist of gender rather than of sex, Butler has been consistently committed to frustrating the distinction between those two terms, from before Gender Trouble to her most recent work. In her 1987 essay “Variations on Sex and Gender,” she asks if Beauvoir’s insights about sex as chosen rather than given ought to make us conclude that “the very distinction between sex and gender is anachronistic.” That distinction between sex and gender had been parsed in various ways within the tradition of feminist philosophy. It at first seems that what Beauvoir calls “sex” maps rather neatly onto the meaning that “gender” will have a few decades later, particularly her description of sex as a “project.” Butler reads Beauvoir as eventually making the distinction between sex and gender in her description of the body as a “situation,” which effectively circumvents the possibility of understanding sex as either essential or a simple bodily attribute.

Butler has said that her decision to use the term gender rather than sex or sexual difference was influenced by Gayle Rubin’s use of the term in “The Traffic in Women.” Butler makes clear that gender is more than simply the contemporaneous name for sex, arguing that such a conflation has the effect

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of denying decades of feminist scholarship challenging the presumptions of sex and the unequal relations of power that rely on those presumptions. That feminist scholarship has insisted that while differences of sex have historically masqueraded as natural, an understanding of gender difference necessitates attention to relations of power and the unequal distribution of its material effects. The use of “gender” as a deliberate replacement for sex has a political and historical importance that becomes erased if gender is understood merely as a stand-in for sex. In figuring gender as a form of address, Butler is making gender do something specific that sex had not. The feminist distinction between the two made a point similar to Beauvoir’s by insisting that women are such by virtue of social processes and cultural norms rather than a natural unfolding of a biological process that determines sex. In this frame, gender does its work by exposing both the conditions of possibility and the material effects of sex. Insisting on their conceptual distinctness secures the critical edge of gender, and helps denaturalize the binary of sex, whose “constitutive ambiguity” can be covered over or lost by a distinction that would understand gender as cultural and sex as natural, or gender as a behavioral role and sex as a material fact.17

However, that critical edge can also be dissipated to the extent that gender retains its conceptual distinctness, particularly its difference from sexuality. Butler has advanced both of these positions in “Against Proper Objects,” claiming that if we are to understand “gender” to mean something other than simply “sex” and avail ourselves of its potential to disrupt binary notions of sexual difference that are commonly understood to be inevitable – and inevitably dimorphic – then we must allow the category itself to become corrupted. The imbrication Butler asks us to attend to there is not an ambiguity between sex and gender, but rather the ambiguity between gender and sexuality, with the denotative slipperiness of the category of “sex” shuttling between them. This is a disciplinary as well as conceptual problem; studies of sexuality that struggle to emphasize the difference between the domains of gender and sexuality can end up advocating a lesbian and gay studies that cannot attend to the kind of gender diversity represented by, for example, transsexuality. Gender then loses its critical edge to the extent that it remains a “proper object” acting as a heteronym for sex. Importantly, though, this distinction between sex and gender is conceptual rather than material. It points to a political and discursive history rather than a bodily fact. In other areas of her work, Butler makes clear that sex and gender cannot be separated, even if they are not entirely reducible to one another. Indeed, her challenge to traditional ways of thinking gender lies precisely in her insistence that their distinctness at the level of the body is a

myth, that parsing gender as behavioral (social and immaterial) and sex as bodily (biological and material) is to misconstrue them both. Butler sees sex as only retroactively installed as the purportedly material cause of the effect of gender, and asks “whether sex was not gender all along.”18 At the level of the body, there is no significant distinction between sex and gender.

Butler’s theory of gender is also deeply engaged with other philosophical sources whose own legacies are not primarily concerned with gender, and the philosophical influences on her articulation of gender performativity are many. Although she occasionally engages analytic philosophy – her use of J. L. Austin’s concept of performativity is one example – most of her interlocutors are from the continental tradition, from the engagement with Hegel that characterizes all of her work to the theories of deconstruction and iteration popularized by Jacques Derrida. She also works with less canonically philosophical figures, making much use of the reconfiguration of the relation between inside and outside, the psychic and the social offered by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Jean Laplanche, and the question of power and its effects on bodies and subjects as articulated by Foucault. Butler often theorizes by using works that do not themselves address the question of gender as a philosophical problem. Foucault’s analyses of bodies and power, for instance, emphasize sexuality and have little to say about gender; Butler’s reworking of his insights about the productive capacities of power are used in the service of gender. And the theory of the materialization of sex offered in Bodies that Matter’s “The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary” uses Freud to articulate a queer morphological imaginary, but it is the Freud of The Ego and the Id discussing pain and narcissism to which she turns, rather than the Freud of sexual difference. The project of rethinking gender as articulated in Butler’s work is thus both deeply rooted in philosophical antecedents and heterodox in its approach to the question of gender.

These antecedents are clear in Butler’s use of language, since gender, as she demonstrates, is always a matter of language. This does not mean that gender is disembodied or nonmaterial, since the effects of discourses of gender are inevitably and emphatically embodied. Gender performativity takes part of its logic from Austin’s notion of the performatory utterance, in which language has a creative rather than a descriptive function. For Austin, a performatory utterance is one in which the speaker enacts that which he or she describes through that speaking. Butler enlarges the scope of the concept of performativity beyond the exclusively linguistic framing of Austin’s examples and also the explicitly contractual force of performative utterances, replacing Austin’s

contractual emphasis with a less defined and more expansive capacity: what she has referred to, using a phrase of Pierre Bourdieu’s, as the “social magic” of performativity. One does not vow gender, or ever articulate it fully or finally; this would be to misunderstand performativity as merely performance, the willed and staged acts of a choosing subject. Rather, gender is an embodied kind of belief. We speak and are spoken by gender at once, able to exert some control over its manifestation even as we are unable to choose the ways our acts signify, or who might receive them, or the conditions under which that performance is legible. Austin makes the distinction between felicitous and infelicitous conditions for a performative utterance, noting that certain conditions must be met in order for a performative to “succeed” and enact itself. So too for the performance of gender, in which the subject is constrained by categories that exceed her even as she may struggle to remake them in the shape of her own life. Butler suggests that gender is a constant navigation between these straits: one’s ability to choose, on the one hand, and the constriction of that from which one is able to choose on the other.

Butler’s challenge to binary categories, her disinclination toward intentionality, the careful attention to ambiguity in language that marks her close readings, and her adamance that there is no outside to the text, or the textual, would seem to mark her methods as deconstructionist. In one account, Butler offers Derrida’s reading of Franz Kafka’s “Before the Law” as the impetus for her theorization of gender performativity:

I originally took my clue on how to read the performativity of gender from Jacques Derrida’s reading of Kafka’s “Before the Law.” There the one who waits for the law, sits before the door of the law, attributes a certain force to the law for which one waits. The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object. I wondered whether we do not labor under a similar expectation concerning gender, that it operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. In this first instance, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual which achieves its effects through its natural-

rethinking gender

ization in the context of a body, understood in part as a culturally sustained temporal duration.20

We can note the traversal of disciplinary boundaries at the very origin of Butler’s theory of gender, so that Butler’s rhetorical reading of a philosophical reading of a literary text gives rise to a theory of gender. Both philosophically grounded and disciplinarily itinerant, Butler moves between the literary, the philosophical and the rhetorical, less to establish multiple origins for her theory of gender than to unmoor all of them.21 Her account of performativity replaces a proper and singular origin with an iterative chain where each iteration is different from the last, and none of those iterations ought to be taken for a cause. Gender and language are both representational practices that work through self-referential citation; language, according to poststructuralist accounts, achieves its effects through its references to other language, rather than reference to the material world of nonlinguistic things that it purports to represent. Gender, too, achieves its effects through its approximation of certain impossible idealizations of dress, comportment, desire, and behavior, and its performances are citations of these idealized norms rather than the precipitate of a material origin called sex. Also marked here are the ways in which both gender and language are bound to, even driven by, a kind of inevitable failure: the impossibility of a full or final performance that would finally settle the question of gender, thus requiring the performance to be endlessly repeated.

In Kafka’s tale as retold by Derrida, the supplicant waiting before the law attributes an authority to the law, but the law’s authority does not precede the attribution. Butler suggests that gender, too, works by this same logic: gendered acts, behaviors, and even a felt sense of gender are mistakenly assumed to emanate from an internal essence called sex, but that essence is in fact produced retroactively, posited as the necessary cause for the acts that come before it. She has applied the same argument to sexuality as well, noting that heterosexuality, when it is understood to be the origin against which homosexuality mimetically fashions itself, is only retroactively installed as a response to the challenge of the putative copy, thus reversing the terms that would understand the origin as necessarily prior to the copy.22

At stake is the question of language and its relation to gender: the way language both describes and enacts gender. If Beauvoir offers a conception of


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sex unmoored from the biological ground of the body and the necessity of determinism, Wittig offers a framework for understanding the discursive means by which this becoming occurs. For Wittig, as for Butler, sex happens through gender: Wittig understands that one becomes a woman through being captured by the linguistic sex that is gender. Language is thus the site and the mechanism for the reproduction and dissemination of sex. Butler’s and Wittig’s positions have many similarities on the question of the power of language, although they eventually part ways on the question of whether norms can be resisted, or only resignified. Can we offer resistance through language, or only by refraining from it? Is resignification possible? Butler does seem to suggest that Wittig has keenly understood something about the way that gender becomes materialized into sex: “if gender itself is naturalized through grammatical norms, as Monique Wittig has argued, then the alteration of gender at the most fundamental epistemic level will be conducted, in part, through contesting the grammar in which gender is given.”

Butler’s position on Wittig is not singular; in her later thought, she takes some distance from Wittig’s stance on the bodily and conceptual violence engendered by language and naming. Wittig’s response to the power and coercive violence of naming (a response that itself changes over the course of her own writing) is to refuse to name, to insist that a disidentification with the terms “man” or “woman,” and a resistance to the terms “boy” or “girl,” necessitates a refusal to use those terms either as markers of identity or even as tools of description. For, according to Wittig, these terms are always enactors rather than just descriptors.

If the lesbian is not a woman, nor for Wittig can she exactly be masculine: she is that which is and must remain oppositional to both of those categories. For Wittig, the lesbian is “beyond the categories of sex” because woman is a concept that draws its meaning exclusively from its relation to man, whether “economically, or politically, or ideologically.” That relation is servitude, and to the extent that the lesbian embodies and lives a refusal of men, she exists outside this servitude and therefore outside the system of gender altogether. Wittig’s fierce oppositionality is articulated systemically at the level of class, in that the lesbian is described as an “escapee” from women as a class, and the goal of this escape is nothing less than the destruction of heterosexuality as a governing system.

The Butler of Gender Trouble has much in common with Wittig (or at least the early Wittig) on the question of naming, and Butler considers Wittig distinctive among the French feminists for her trenchant critiques of heterosexism and its linguistic dissemination. But in her later work Butler is reluctant to affirm the

23. Butler, Gender Trouble, xix.
possibility of a safer space outside of the violent power of language that Wittig appears to demand. In recasting the terms of language and in her project of focusing on the iterability of gender rather than the grammar of gender, Butler is in effect refusing to refuse to name. In describing her position on questioning presuppositions through careful deployment of language and the limits of what that deployment can achieve, Butler describes the change in her ideas on language and intentionality. She writes:

The qualification I would like to add now, seven years later [after the publication of *Bodies That Matter*], is that although one can very often take a term like “masculine” and dislodge it from its metaphysical moorings – one can say, for example, that “masculine” does not necessarily apply exclusively to ostensibly anatomically male bodies and that it can function in another way, like, let’s say, in the way that Judith Halberstam talks about “female masculinities” – it is important to question what of the prior context is brought forward as a kind of residue or trace. It is also important to question what new ontological effects the term can achieve, because to liberate it from its prior moorings in an established ontology is not to say that it will not acquire a new one.

Spivak understood this when she reneged on her notion of “strategic essentialism.” She at first thought she’d be able to use a term like “Third-World woman” and just have it be strategic rather than metaphysically grounded. It didn’t have to describe her (or anyone else) fully or exhaustively; it could be relieved of its descriptive function. But, of course, it does begin to describe, because the author who strategically intends it as “X, Y, or Z” has also to recognize that the semantic life of the term will exceed the intention of the strategist and that as it travels through discourse, it can take on new ontological meanings and become established in ways that one never intended. So, I guess I would be a little less optimistic about the possibility of a radical unmooring than I was in 1993.26

Butler’s conception of gender shares much with Wittig’s, perhaps surprisingly, on the question of materiality. She has been taken to task for failing to attend to materiality, perhaps because what finally interests her most are the ways in which our bodies come to be through discourse, where that discourse is not always easy to disentangle from the body that it engenders. Gender and gesture become indistinguishable. For Butler and Wittig alike, there is an immensely

generative power in language, a power that, in true performative fashion, brings about that which it names. But Wittig understands both gender and sex – as concepts, as categories, as linguistic practices – to be damaging for women, so to utilize the terms is to perpetuate the hierarchical division with inevitably dangerous consequences. Indeed, the theory behind Wittig’s refusal to name can be understood as a kind of performativity, where the term “woman” works like a sovereign performative, materializing itself into reality through its incantation, its enaction in language.

For Wittig, sex and gender are distinct and distinguishable. Gender happens in language and sex is bodily. Yet they can each produce the other, and gender is complicit in the dissemination and perpetuation of distinct sex. But this does not mean that sex is simply bodily and gender is discursive and by contrast immaterial. Wittig describes gender as the enforcement of the law of sex through language, where the effects of that enforcement are bodily effects, and not merely linguistic ones. She writes, in a phrase that Butler cites: “Language casts sheaves of reality around the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it.” This is not merely an alignment of culture against nature, flesh against the word. This body is not blank and unsignifying before submitting to the violent shaping of language; it is a “social body” from the start. When describing the origins of this phrase, Wittig explains that she had acting specifically in mind, once again making the act – an event that is bodily, that is temporal, but gestural rather than material – central to the relation of thinking gender.27

Wittig insists on a certain kind of categorical purity, rejecting the term “woman” for its ideological complicity with heterosexism. Refusing the conventional way that language is given, she uses the powers of neologism and refusal to recraft the categories of sex through deployment or withdrawal of grammatical gender. This same chiasmic relation to the categorical and attention to the conditions both of its constitution and its contamination can be seen in Butler’s articulation of gender. For Wittig, the solution to heterosexism lies in creating new language, as in the experimental grammatical and pronominal structures of her novels L’Opoponax and Les Guérillères, or utterly refusing the common parlances through which gender is given, as she does when she calls for abandoning, and ultimately destroying, the term “woman.” Gender as a grammatical problem gains its solution through abdication. Butler proceeds by different means, taking her distance from Wittig on the issue of conceptual purity within gender, and the question of contamination within language. For Butler, as for Derrida, there is no outside position from which we might utterly refuse the terms of language. She has described Gender Trouble as a text whose genealogy is philosophical, feminist, and political, and whose aim is the subversion of the

category of sex precisely through use of the term, rather than through its refusal. Critical subversion for Butler necessitates the use of the contested term or structure in order to change it, rather than a radical or revolutionary break with that term or structure.

It is in dealing with subversion and otherness that Butler’s Hegelian legacy is most profoundly manifest, both conceptually and rhetorically. Hegel appears in Butler’s work as a way to reckon with radical alterity and subjectivity. It has been suggested that Hegel’s greatest importance for Butler’s theorization of gender is seen in her reading of Hegel’s Antigone in Antigone’s Claim, because the figure of Antigone is, for Butler as well as for other feminists, “the crucial point of encounter between feminists and Hegel.”28 Useful as the protofeminist Antigone is for Butler’s discussions of gender, kinship, and the state, other aspects of Hegel’s philosophy are still more influential for her thought. Hegel’s influence can explicitly be found in her discussions of his account of the relation between the lord and the bondsman of Phenomenology of Spirit,29 but his legacy is also apparent in the ways Butler understands recognition and desire to constitute subjects, or her insistence that the subject is never self-identical, and this in social, psychic, and relational terms. A less attended to but perhaps still more pervasive Hegelian influence is rhetorical. Butler has this to say on the issue of linguistic difficulty and the work of speculative grammar in Hegel:

For instance, when Hegel talks about the “speculative sentence,” he is trying to work against the propositional form as it’s been received. When he says, “The subject is spirit,” the first inclination, the one that received grammar in some sense prepares us for, is to establish the subject as the subject of the sentence, and then “spirit” becomes one way of determining or qualifying that subject. But, of course, what he wants us to be able to do is to reverse that sentence, to recognize something about how the “is” functions: it doesn’t just point linearly in one direction; rather it points in both directions at once. He wants us to be able to experience the simultaneity of that sentence as it functions in its double directionality. Now that’s a very hard thing to do given how profoundly inclined we are by what Nietzsche called the “seductions of grammar” to read in a linear way.30

*29. See, in this regard, the essay by Terry Pinkard in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1.
Butler’s reading bears some similarity to her reading of Nietzsche’s assertion that there is no “doer behind the deed”31 when explaining that there is no pregendered subject who performs individual acts of gender and thus collects the attribute of gender to add to an already established personhood, but rather the subject becomes a subject only through those acts. Hegel enacts this unexpected reversal at the level of the sentence, so that the very grammar is made to enact its concept, a different iteration of performative language. The relation between subject and object, cause and effect, becomes, in Butler’s terms, doubly directional. The task she enjoins us to when thinking about gender is to become keen readers of what kinds of gendered possibilities language prepares us for, the normative constraints on what is possible that are wrought by our habitual practices of language. She also demonstrates how we might learn to read in excess of this preparation.

For Butler, language in this speculative mode, with all of its difficulty, can be a way of helping us think otherwise. The speculative mode, a kind of conceptual unfolding enacted through a confounding of the propositional form, is what Butler invites us to enter when thinking about gender. Thinking gender otherwise means attending to transsexuality, transgender, intersexuality, and as-yet-unarticulated others: what Butler calls the “otherwise gendered.”32 It is vital to note that this expansion of possibility is not quite the same as radical invention, and thinking about gender in a speculative mode does not mean musing about gender in an entirely fictive or futural way, or dreaming up wholly new genders, although this might have its own pleasures. It is rather about making those lives currently lived on the perimeters of gender and sexual legibility more recognizable and thus more livable. Expanding the horizon of possibility of gender is the task that Butler enjoins us to in both Gender Trouble and Undoing Gender. The last paragraph of Gender Trouble concludes: “The task here is not to celebrate each and every new possibility qua possibility, but to redescribe those possibilities that already exist, but which exist within cultural domains designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible.”33 The linguistic work of redescription is undertaken in order that we might apprehend the world more clearly as it is, an effort that sounds unmistakably phenomenological in its method. The task is undertaken, though, not just so the world might be seen with greater clarity, but also so that it might be changed. The seemingly esoteric mode of speculative grammar thus marries with the ethical imperative to articulate a future of open possibility, in order to increase the livability of those “otherwise gendered” subjects whose lives are most precarious:

32. Butler, Undoing Gender, 28.
33. Ibid., 148–9.
How do drag, butch, femme, transgender, transsexual persons enter into the political field? They make us not only question what is real, and what “must” be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted. ... Some people have asked me what is the use of increasing possibilities for gender. I tend to answer: Possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread. I think we should not underestimate what the thought of the possible does for those for whom the very issue of survival is most urgent.34

34. Ibid., 29.
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AESTHETICS: 
BADIOU, RANCIÈRE, AND THEIR 
INTERLOCUTORS
Gabriel Rockhill

The following examination of the most recent developments in French aesthetics requires two preliminary remarks. First, the framework of analysis will be largely philosophic in nature, meaning that it will focus on the work of two major thinkers who have provided novel accounts of aesthetics: Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière. Unfortunately, this means leaving aside extremely significant developments in the work of lesser-known thinkers such as Yves Michaud and Christian Ruby, art historians such as Georges Didi-Huberman, sociologists of the likes of Nathalie Heinich and Eric Macé, literary critics such as Antoine Compagnon, and film theorists such as Raymond Bellour. Second, it is important to note that what is sometimes perceived by the English-speaking world as a significant generational gap between “recent developments” in the French intellectual avant-garde (the work of Badiou and Rancière) and the writings of their predecessors is partially an effect of parallax in transatlantic visibility. Indeed, it is true that Badiou (1937– ) and Rancière (1940– ) were the junior faculty members at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes-St. Denis and were largely in the shadow of the founder of the philosophy department, Michel Foucault (1926–84), and prestigious faculty members such as Jean-François

1. Jacques Rancière (1940– ; born in Algiers) was a student at the École Normale Supérieure in the early 1960s. He began teaching at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes-St. Denis in 1969, and occupied the Chair of Aesthetics and Politics from 1990 until his retirement in 2000. He was an active participant in the journal Révoltes logiques from 1975 to 1986, and he was a Director of Programs at the Collège International de Philosophie from 1986 to 1992. For biographical information on Alain Badiou, see the essay by Bruno Bosteels in this volume.
Lyotard (1924–98) and Gilles Deleuze (1925–95). However, they are not far in age from Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) and are of the same generation as Jean-Luc Nancy (1940– ), Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1940–2007), and Etienne Balibar (1942– ). The massive importation of “poststructuralist theory” into the anglophone world, often at the expense of other intellectual developments, has created the unfortunate illusion that nothing else of great importance has been going on in France since the 1960s.

I. ALAIN BADIOU

Unlike many of his French compatriots, Badiou is a self-proclaimed systematic thinker. Although his position on aesthetics has developed since his early writings, I will focus on the more detailed description and systematized account of art he has provided since Being and Event (1988) and particularly Manifesto for Philosophy (1989). In these works, art, and more precisely “the poem,” is identified as one of the four truth procedures that – along with science, politics, and love – constitute the conditions of philosophy. Truth procedures are not, according to Badiou, founded on the encyclopedic accumulation of knowledge. Properly speaking, knowledge (le savoir) exists when correct statements are made about a given state of affairs, and nothing occurs that is not in conformity with the rules that regulate this state of affairs. Knowledge can therefore allow us to make veridical (véridique) statements through a process of discernment and classification, but it cannot attain truth (la vérité), which means that knowledge is fundamentally about “situations.” Truth for Badiou is a “post-evental” process dependent on a pure event that supplements the situation, an event that can neither be named nor represented by the resources available in the situation. As a process or procedure, truth introduces an immanent break by tracking the effects of the supplementary event within the situation itself.

Badiou’s examples of events include the following: the various instances of what he calls “modern poetry,” Galileo’s scientific revolution, the French Revolution, and Plato’s theorization of love in the Symposium. For each of these events, the same basic process occurs: an undecidable event arises at the edge of the situation; a subject proclaims its existence and decides to relate to the situation from the point of view of the supplemental event; the truth procedure undertaken by the subject attempts to reconfigure the situation in relation to the


3. For reasons of space, the current analysis focuses on Badiou’s theoretical, as opposed to literary, writings.
truth of the event, which requires resisting the doxa or “knowledge of the situation" in the name of the evental truth of the Idea.\(^4\) This means that, at least at one level, Badiou has an interventionist, process-oriented conception of truth: “There is only authentic truth under the condition that we can choose truth.”\(^5\)

If truth is an evental hole in our situational knowledge produced via poetry, science, politics, or love, what, then, is philosophy? First of all, Badiou rejects what he takes great pleasure in castigating as modern sophism and historicist philosophizing. Against the modern sophists, which include the vast majority of his French predecessors, he maintains that there is indeed a definition of philosophy that is a historical invariant (since its inception in ancient Greece). “Philosophy,” he writes, “is a construction of thought in which it is proclaimed, against the art of the sophists, that there are truths.”\(^6\) It is important to add, however, that philosophy is not itself a truth procedure, which means that it does not produce truths. The role of philosophy is to track down and stake out truth procedures in order to group them together in a unified conceptual space. It provides a systematic framework – a “shelter” – for the protection of artistic, scientific, political, and amorous truths. There is, moreover, always the danger of suturing philosophy to one of these truths and putting at risk its role as the neutral guardian of truth procedures. According to Badiou, this has been the case in recent history: philosophy was sutured to science under the reign of positivism; it was sutured to politics in Marxism; and it has been sutured to poetry since the time of Nietzsche.\(^7\) For the philosophic renaissance advocated by Badiou to be successful, philosophy has to be de-sutured from the four truth procedures.

In relation to his immediate predecessors in France, Badiou’s most notable difference is his stalwart emphasis on Platonism. In the realm of aesthetics, this

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4. For the sake of concision, I am primarily drawing on Badiou's more schematic account of events in books such as Manifesto for Philosophy and Ethics. For a more detailed account, which introduces the important distinction between the “situation” and the “state of the situation” (as well as between presentation and representation, count-as-one and the count of the count, structure and metastructure, etc.), see Being and Event, Oliver Feltham (trans.) (London: Continuum, 2005).

5. Alain Badiou, Petit manuel d’inesthétique (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), 86; all translations of French works are my own. See also Handbook of Inaesthetics, Alberto Toscano (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 54. Badiou rejects, however, what he calls “speculative leftism,” which imagines that interventions are founded solely on their own iconoclastic desire for new beginnings instead of being temporally inscribed in the circulation of events that have already been decided on. Strictly speaking, it is the event that founds the possibility of an intervention even though it is only through an intervention that an event “exists” by circulating in the situation.


means that art for him does indeed have an essence that is a historical invariant: it is a singular thought process of Ideas that traces the ephemeral event in the real. This is illustrated by the art form that Badiou openly identifies, in rather Heideggerian fashion, with the very essence of art: the poem. At its core, a poem is an act of naming, for all time, an undecidable evental presence at the limit of the situation. Moreover, as an act of naming the disappearance of that which is presented, “every poem is an interruption of language, conceived as a simple tool of communication.” In short, a poem is a nominal trace of the event in the sensible that displaces the parameters of the given aesthetic situation. This is precisely what distinguishes true art from false art: the former introduces an immanent break by bringing Ideas into the situation, while the latter simply capitalizes on possibilities already inventoried within the situation. Art is only true art, and truly acts on an event, if it is an event of thought.

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8. It is, of course, open to debate whether this is Plato’s own view of art or, more precisely, poiēsis.
9. The influence of Heidegger is readily visible in Badiou’s work on aesthetics. However, it would be a mistake to hastily identify their positions without being attentive to the points on which they diverge. Although a detailed comparison of their work goes well beyond the framework of the current analysis, it is nonetheless possible to highlight a series of similarities and differences. Regarding the points of convergence, both Heidegger and Badiou agree that: (i) art has an essence; (ii) the essence of art is the becoming or occurrence of truth; (iii) art can be distinguished from non-art based on its relation – or lack thereof – to truth; (iv) great art, which is the only true art, is clearly distinguishable from entertainment and other forms of non-art; and (v) poetry constitutes the very essence of art. Among their points of divergence, the following list can serve as a starting-point: (i) art is only one truth procedure among four according to Badiou, whereas it becomes one of the central, privileged avenues for truth in Heidegger; (ii) truth is defined as an evental hole in the situation for Badiou, while it is understood as alētheia or unconcealedness by Heidegger; and (iii) Badiou explicitly rejects Heidegger as a romantic and accuses him of suturing philosophy to poetry. At a more general level, one of the clear dividing lines between Badiou and Heidegger is their interpretation and evaluation of Platonism. Badiou repudiates what he labels Heidegger’s “poetic ontology” and the latter’s critique of the Platonic retreat from poetic alētheia due to his interpretation of Being as idea. Against Heidegger’s conception of the history of metaphysics, Badiou valorizes Platonism as an essential part of the originary moment of philosophy insofar as it participates in the birth of “mathematical ontology.”
11. Badiou spurns the “Christly [christique]” vision of truth inherent in the idea that the work of art is both a truth and an event (Badiou, Petit manuel d’inesthétique, 24; Handbook of Inaesthetics, 11). However, he nonetheless states: “Since the poem is an operation, it is also an event” (Petit manuel d’inesthétique, 51; Handbook of Inaesthetics, 29).
12. Badiou appears to be remarkably close to Deleuze on this point and, in particular, to the position outlined in his two-volume analysis of film. Among his numerous objectives, Deleuze wanted to demonstrate that the great film directors had thought with images in much the same way as great thinkers (see Cinéma I: L’Image-mouvement [Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1983], 7; Cinema I: The Movement-Image, Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam [trans.] [Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986], xiv). This explains, moreover, the centrality of Henri Bergson in his analysis, whose philosophical thinking on movement and
It is important to highlight in this regard that Badiou rigorously maintains the “principle of genericity,”\textsuperscript{13} which he inherited in part from Sartre’s \textit{What Is Literature?}, and ultimately from Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics}. The opening sentence of the latter work clearly announces the first two axioms of this principle. Aristotle proposes to discuss: “both poetic art in itself and its forms [\(peri\ poie\text{tik}\text{e}\ aut\text{e}s\ te\ kai\ ton\ eido\text{n}\ aut\text{e}s]\).” This means that: (i) art – more specifically \(poie\text{tik}\text{e}\) – exists as a distinct entity in and of itself; and (ii) art or \(poie\text{tik}\text{e}\) is naturally divided into a set of distinct forms or genres. A third axiom is added later that, in the case of Badiou, has been only partially systematized: (iii) the forms or genres of art are arranged according to a natural hierarchy. As we have seen, the essence of art in general is defined by Badiou as “a thought whose works are the real.”\textsuperscript{14} He believes, moreover, in the universality of great works of art, which in striving toward the infinite bear eternal witness to the existence of events.\textsuperscript{15} Regarding the delimitation of the arts, Badiou states that “there is in reality no way to move from one art to another. The arts are closed. No painting will ever change into music, no dance into a poem.”\textsuperscript{16} We have already seen, concerning the hierarchical organization of the arts, that the poem is the acme of art because it names the undecidable event in a language that extracts itself from the standard situation of language. Dance, to take an example from the opposite end of the spectrum, is not even properly speaking an art. Since it lacks words, and therefore the possibility of naming the event, it is only “the sign of the possibility of art, such as it is inscribed in the body.”\textsuperscript{17} Theater, while not occupying the imperial place

\textsuperscript{13} Although I am borrowing this expression from Rancière, I am not using it in the exact same sense that he does in \textit{La Parole muette}.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{15} See Badiou, \textit{Petit manuel d’inesthétique}, 75; \textit{Handbook of Inaesthetics}, 46. A similar idea is developed in “Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art”: “Art is not the sublime descent of the infinite into the finite abjection of the body and sexuality. It is the production of an infinite subjective series through the finite means of a material subtraction” (103–4).

\textsuperscript{16} Badiou, \textit{Petit manuel d’inesthétique}, 127; \textit{Handbook of Inaesthetics}, 82.

\textsuperscript{17} Badiou, \textit{Petit manuel d’inesthétique}, 109 (see also 97, 107); \textit{Handbook of Inaesthetics}, 69 (see also 61, 67–8). Seven years later, in \textit{Le Siècle} (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), Badiou writes that dance is, since the Russian ballets of Isadora Duncan, “a major art [\textit{un art capital}]” (224; \textit{The Century}, Alberto Toscano [trans.] [Cambridge: Polity, 2007], 159). As with the example in note 11 of the relationship between Badiou’s stance on truth and his critical comment regarding the Christly vision of truth, it is unclear whether this is an oversight on his part, a
of the poem, is nonetheless the positive obverse of dance: it is the arrangement of a near physical presentation of an Idea, which does have recourse to words. To return to the lower end of the spectrum, film is classified as the lowest art form because it is “an impure art.”\(^{18}\) Whereas painting is the art of donation that provides an integral presentation of the Idea, and music invents the pure time of the Idea by exploring the configurations of the movement of the thinkable, film combines allusions to the more mimetic arts and can only serve, at best, as an art of visitation where Ideas pass by but are never fully embodied.\(^{19}\) For film to properly act as an art, it therefore appears to have only one path open to it: it has to show that it is only film and that “its images only bear witness to the real insofar as they are manifestly images.”\(^{20}\) The principle regulating the hierarchy of the arts is the Platonic principle of the proximity to the Idea. The poem is closest to the Idea and therefore comes first, followed apparently by theater (Badiou has yet to systematize these relations). Painting and music seem to be the median arts, whereas film is clearly the lowest and dance is excluded (the precise position of some of the other arts remains unclear). The delimitation of the arts is not strictly speaking based on their media or empirical characteristics but on the very being of each individual art. This is why Badiou delimits his claims regarding the principles of dance in the following way (a delimitation that could be generalized to all art forms): “Not [the principles] of dance thought out of itself, its technique and its history, but dance such as philosophy receives and protects it.”\(^{21}\) Ultimately, just as the distinction between art and non-art is founded on the existence or nonexistence of thought, the arts are themselves delimited philosophically according to an aesthetic ontology, and they are placed in a hierarchy based on their proximity to the Idea.\(^{22}\)

contradiction in his work, an element easily clarified within his system or, in this particular case, the sign of an evolution in his thinking.

20. Alain Badiou, “Dialectiques de la fable,” in Alain Badiou et al., Matrix: Machine philosophique (Paris: Ellipses, 2003), 120. While it is true that all art forms, according to Badiou, have their own limit where they alienate themselves from “true art,” it is clear that film is the lowest of the arts because it runs the greatest risks, especially when compared, for instance, to the risks of literature: “Film, that great impurifier, always runs the risk of pleasing too much, of being a figure of debasement. True literature, which is rigorous purification, runs the risk of getting lost in a proximity to the concept in which the effect of art is exhausted itself and prose (or poetry) is sutured to philosophy” (Petit manuel d’inesthétique, 135; Handbook of Inaesthetics, 88).
21. Badiou, Petit manuel d’inesthétique, 99; Handbook of Inaesthetics, 62–3. In another statement that could be generalized for all of the arts, Badiou asserts, regarding film, that formal elements must be invoked only to the extent that they contribute to the passing of the Idea (Petit manuel d’inesthétique, 131; Handbook of Inaesthetics, 85).
22. Strictly speaking, Badiou claims that his delimitation of the arts is not based on genres but on “configurations.” A configuration is an identifiable sequence that produces a truth for a
In the opening essay of his major work on aesthetics to date, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (1998), Badiou provides an account of the relationship between his own project and what he sees as the three preexisting schemas for thinking the connection between art and philosophy. According to the *didactic schema*, to begin with, “art is incapable of truth, ... all truth is exterior to it.” As “the charm of a semblance of truth,” art must, therefore, either be condemned or used in a purely instrumental fashion. The *romantic schema* takes the opposite approach by asserting that art alone is capable of truth. Finally, the *classical schema* follows the didacticians in maintaining that art is incapable of truth, but it redefines the essence of art as mimetic. Art’s distance from truth is thereby no longer worrisome precisely because its destination is not truth. On the contrary, art qua mimetic semblance has a therapeutic function, and the rules of art are to be deduced from this function. When Badiou inquires into recent developments in the arts and art theory, he concludes that the twentieth century has not introduced any new schemas. Identifying the three major dispositions of twentieth-century thought as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and hermeneutics, he asserts that: “Marxism is didactic, psychoanalysis is classical, and Heideggerian hermeneutics is romantic.” The avant-garde movements (from Dadaism to the Situationists) only added a mediating schema, the *didactico-romantic schema*. It is against the backdrop of this account that Badiou proposes a new, fourth, schema for thinking the relationship between art and philosophy. What is lacking in all prior work, according to him, is a way of thinking art’s relation to truth as being both immanent and singular: truth is immanent in art and art is a singular form of truth irreducible to other such forms. It is this very simultaneity that Badiou wants to defend in claiming that art is in and of itself a singular truth procedure. He baptizes this new schema “inaesthetics.”

Badiou has developed his account of contemporary art in *The Century* (2005). Throughout this book, artwork from the twentieth century is marshaled to bear witness to the subjective nature of the century, which Badiou defines as the “passion for the real [passion du réel].” The works cited are not used, particular art, and it is philosophy’s role to outline such configurations. As examples, Badiou cites “Greek tragedy,” “classical music,” and “the novel” (*Petit manuel d’inesthétique*, 26-7; *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, 13). His rejection of the term “genre” for these art forms is an additional indication that the delimitation of the arts is of a deeply philosophic nature.

26. “Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art” is an equally good example that focuses on art in the era of “globalization.”
27. In addition to the criticisms of Badiou’s work that will be highlighted in the conclusion, it is worth noting that his personification of “the century” is rife with historiographical problems, including those poignantly described by Henri Focillon: “We have trouble not conceiving a
properly speaking, as historical documents, but rather as forms of testimony (témoignage) that attest to the subjective commitments of the century. Badiou thus remains faithful to the idea that art thinks in and of itself, and he is primarily interested in how the century has thought itself through art and the three other truth procedures. His central claim is that all four truth procedures became impassioned with the real in the twentieth century. They attempted to bring the Idea – qua real – into reality by radical acts of foundation aimed at new beginnings, which were disjunctively synthesized with acts of destruction. The entire century, he argues, was structured by nondialectical battles, which manifested themselves in the art world through the constant avant-garde struggles to overcome preexistent, classical forms in the name of an Idea. At the very end of the book, Badiou gives “less esoteric” names to the war of the century, which the reader will easily recognize as a battle between Badiou’s major philosophic concepts: the Idea and reality; the event and the situational state of affairs; truth and opinions; and so on.28

It is therefore not difficult to reconcile Badiou’s references to historical developments with his more systematic, ahistorical work on aesthetics: even though circumstances might change with time, the very essence of art nevertheless remains the same.29 This central idea is perhaps best illustrated in the preface to Logiques des mondes (2006), where Badiou claims that in spite of all of the circumstantial differences separating Picasso from the creators of the cave paintings at Chauvet-Pont-d’Arc, their respective renderings of horses nonetheless attest to the same fundamental truth: the eternal Idea of a horse. The multiplicity of worlds does not preclude, according to Badiou, the existence of universal truths.

II. JACQUES RANCIÈRE

While it is true that Rancière’s early work on politics and history shows signs of a longstanding interest in aesthetics, it is primarily since the 1990s that he has

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presented what has become a general account of the arts. Unlike Badiou, who has written relatively few books dedicated exclusively to art, Rancière’s publication record over the past twenty years constitutes a veritable tour de force in the field of aesthetics. It might be said that whereas Badiou is more interested in establishing a totalizing philosophic system in which aesthetics plays a significant role, Rancière has dedicated his intellectual energies to making a singular intervention in the field of aesthetics, in much the same way as he has done in the fields of history and politics. He obviously does not share Badiou’s penchant for grand theories, and his philosophic strategies owe more to guerrilla warfare than to epic frontal offensives à la Badiou.

This difference in scope and strategy is at least one of the reasons that the Badiou–Rancière debate has largely been a dialogue de sourds, that is to say, an exchange in which they talk past one another. In spite of running in the same intellectual circles, they have had little or no public debate on the two common areas of interest that seem to provide natural points of discussion: aesthetics and politics. On the one hand, Badiou’s major essays on Rancière all deal with the question of politics (with only a few passing comments on aesthetics), and the latter has not provided a developed response to Badiou’s account of their fundamental dissensus in this area. On the other hand, Rancière’s articles on Badiou are all dedicated to the question of aesthetics, and his former colleague has yet to reply to Rancière’s detailed criticisms of his faulty methods and interpretations.

In one of the rare passages where Badiou explicitly engages with Rancière’s aesthetics, he tries to situate him within what he calls the “subjectivity of the century” by suggesting that some of his work is a “sophisticated echo” of what he sees as the Tel Quel thesis, that is, that the formal mutations of art are more political than politics itself. Whether or not one agrees with the orientation Rancière has taken in his recent writings, it is important to avoid restricting


his work – as Badiou appears to be doing in this passage – to the opposition in postwar France between content-based commitment and formal commitment. Successful or unsuccessful, Rancière clearly wants to take a decisive step in aesthetics by breaking with both the Sartrean notion of prosaic commitment and the Tel Quel claims regarding the political potential of aesthetic form. To take but two representative publications, it might be said that what Rancière wants to reject is the simplistic choice between following Sartre’s work in What Is Literature? (1948) and Barthes’s formalist reworking of Sartre’s thesis in Writing Degree Zero (1953). Rather than looking for the political dimension of art in the content of prose or in the third dimension of form (what Barthes calls l’écriture, distinct from both la langue and le style), Rancière wants to shift the conceptual tectonic plates on which this opposition is based. The very notion of “politicized art” presupposes that art and politics are distinct entities that can be joined, either by prosaic content (Sartre) or through writing as a social function (Barthes). However, it is precisely this presupposition that Rancière wants to reject. Art and politics, he claims, are in fact consanguineous insofar as they are both distributions of the sensible (partages du sensible), that is, ways of organizing the field of sensory experience by determining what is visible and audible, as well as what can be said, thought, made, or done. As a distribution of the sensible, art is inherently political precisely insofar as it presents a common world of experience (replete with a set of shared objects and recognized subjects), which distinguishes what is possible from what is impossible.

Rather than the Tel Quel group, the most obvious predecessor to Rancière’s work is Foucault. Although Foucault was occasionally close to the Tel Quel group, his understanding of literature in his early writings goes beyond the framework of formal commitment. Literature was seen as a unique discourse born with the emergence of the modern epistēmē and the appearance of the human sciences around the end of the eighteenth century. In negating the existence of man and resisting the instrumentalization of language, it was properly speaking a “counter-discourse” aimed at bringing language back to its brute being, which had been buried since the Renaissance. The historical appearance of literature is thus structurally equivalent to the return of the repressed at the end of the classical age: the brute being of nonrepresentational language in its open relationship with madness (and after the “death of God”). All said and done, literature “compensates” European culture for its repression of madness by abandoning the strict Cartesian delimitation between reason and unreason, thereby allowing language to escape from the imperial mastery of the rational human subject.34

34. Literature also acts as the rabbit hole that allows Foucault to go through the looking glass of the modern epistēmē, as is evident most notably in the role played by Borges in the preface to The Order of Things.
Although Rancière does not share Foucault’s preoccupation with madness and collective repression, the latter’s historical approach to literature is essential to Rancière’s project: “The genealogy of the concept of literature that I have attempted in La Parole muette [Silent speech], or in my current work on the systems of art, could be expressed in terms close to Foucault’s concept of episteme.” Like Foucault, Rancière takes art to be a historically constituted practice that is always situated within a framework of possibility. This framework, which Rancière calls a regime instead of an epistêmê, has undergone significant transformations through the course of history. These changes vaguely follow the historical delimitation outlined by Foucault in his early work between the classical age and the modern age. However, Rancière’s regimes differ from Foucault’s epistêmès in a few important ways. First, regimes are not mutually exclusive chronological blocks. Unlike epistêmès, the chronology of regimes conforms to Augustine’s description of the temporality of human souls in The City of God: although they are created in time, they will never perish in time. The ethical regime of images, which was born in ancient Greece, and the representative regime of arts, which dominated the classical age, both persist in the modern age, that is to say, the age that has been marked by the emergence of the third major regime: the aesthetic regime of art. Rancière thereby rejects the idea that structural blocks hegemonically dominate a given epoch until being cataclysmically replaced, through a discontinuous event, by another structural block. Although Foucault’s position was more nuanced than this since he did allow for the possibility of a “counter-discourse” such as literature, it is nonetheless clear that, for Rancière, the “modern” era is characterized by conflicting regimes and that there are no tragic events separating historical epochs. To borrow from one of André Robinet’s criticisms of Foucault, which perfectly applies to Rancière’s reworking of Foucaultian epistêmès, the conflict is not between time periods but within them.

These differences in historical methodology lead to a divergence in hermeneutic practice. At least in his early work, Foucault tended to interpret individual works of art as signs of their times that reveal structural conditions of

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possibility. Rancière is more interested in showing how individual works of art make choices within and between conflicting regimes by actualizing certain potentialities and ignoring others. Works of art can still be held up as indices of their historical conjuncture, but Rancière tends to focus on the ways in which each individual work carves out a unique space between the axioms of various regimes. He wants to avoid monolithic accounts of art-historical epochs in favor of a more detailed analysis of the specificity of individual works. In methodological terms, this amounts to saying that Rancière resists one of the working assumptions of what is called “structuralism,” namely that there is a single set of determinants behind the totality of phenomena. At the same time, he is generally allergic to the “poststructuralist” reflex that consists in claiming that every structure is fissured and de-centered.37 In short, Rancière rejects the simplistic choice between a totalizing structure and a de-centered structure by postulating that competing frameworks and axioms are at work within the same time period.

This being said, the backdrop to all of Rancière’s recent studies in aesthetics is never difficult to discern: the three regimes of art, which are so many “distributions of the sensible.” The ethical regime of images, to begin with, is best exemplified in the work of Plato. Within this regime, images are arranged and distributed according to their origin and their *telos*, based on how they can best educate the citizenry and contribute to the *ethos* of the community. The representative regime of arts, rooted in Aristotle’s critique of Plato, liberated “the arts” from the communal *ethos* by redefining them as fictional imitations of action. This amounted to isolating an autonomous domain of fiction founded on a series of axioms of representation: the hierarchy of subject matter and genres, the principle of appropriateness by which modes of expression and action are to conform to the subject matter and genre, and the privileging of speech over action. The aesthetic regime of art abolishes the autonomous domain of fiction by blurring the lines between art and life. It also dismantles the axioms of representation by dissolving the hierarchy of subject matter and genres, promoting the indifference of style with regard to content, and privileging writing over the present truth of speech.

Since Rancière’s work concentrates primarily on the contradiction between – and within – the representative and aesthetic regimes of art, it will be helpful to elucidate one extended example of this conflict. In the representative regime, which dominated the classical age, there was a strict hierarchical distinction between subject matter worthy of representation and subject matter that was best left outside of the artistic frame. Since around the end of the eighteenth

37. I use the categories “structuralism” and “poststructuralism” as purely heuristic tools. Since this is not the place to assess their explanatory power, let it suffice to say that I think they should be used with the utmost caution in discussing developments in postwar French thought.
century, this hierarchy has been widely contested in the name of the egalitarian principle that anything can become the subject matter of art. Rancière cites the example of Flaubert’s decision to write an entire novel on the adulterous affairs of a promiscuous, bourgeois woman prone to novelistic fantasy: *Madame Bovary*. However, he traces this “aesthetic revolution” back to the later Kant and German Romanticism, where he finds an attempt to overcome the representative hierarchy between intelligent form and sensible matter (which is perhaps most visible in Schiller’s concept of *Spiel*).

It is precisely this egalitarian principle of the aesthetic regime that would later allow for the emergence of the mechanical arts of photography and film. Rancière argues, against Walter Benjamin, that in order for these to be recognized as arts, it was first necessary that it be recognized that anything could become the subject matter of art, including the recording of brute reality devoid – in principle – of all aesthetic hierarchies. In other words, photography and film became possible only after the artistic revolution that introduced the aesthetic regime of art. The technological revolution, for Rancière, came after the artistic revolution. He makes a very similar argument concerning the historical emergence of psychoanalysis, which only became possible after the breakdown of the representative hierarchy between consciousness and the unconscious, *logos* and *pathos*.

Rancière refers to art within the aesthetic regime in much the same way as his American counterpart, Arthur Danto: the art of the commonplace (*l’art du quelconque*). Since there is no longer any hierarchy of subject matter in the aesthetic regime, anything – any commonplace object or occurrence – can in principle become art. This is, of course, what Danto has argued in his more recent analyses of the art world since Andy Warhol’s 1964 *Brillo Box* project. In producing objects that were visually identical to industrially produced Brillo boxes and lacked the artist’s signature, Warhol definitively dissolved the borders between art and commonplace objects. Although the Danto–Rancière debate has yet to occur, it is nonetheless easy enough to underscore one inevitable point of contention. For Rancière, unlike for Danto, the postmodern era is not a separate historical sequence; it is only the unfolding of possibilities inherent in the aesthetic regime of art since approximately the late eighteenth century. In other words, Warhol’s *Brillo Box* project is nothing more than a

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*38. Schiller is discussed in the essay on aesthetics by Daniel Dahlstrom in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*.  
contemporary variation on a theme going back to Flaubert, Schiller, and other artists of the aesthetic regime. As with Foucault’s discontinuous events, Rancière rejects the idea of a “postmodern break.”

In spite of this difference in historical analysis and in historiographical method, Rancière and Danto both at least partially agree on the fundamental contradiction of the art of the commonplace. We can take as an example here Joseph Beuys’s 7000 Eichen project, which he began in 1982 for Documenta 7 by planting oak trees in Kassel, Germany, and which he hoped would be extended throughout the world as a global mission to effect social and environmental change. In Rancière’s terms, the contradiction of such art of the commonplace can be expressed in two ways: (i) “Art of the commonplace” is only commonplace by losing its status as art (in the case of Beuys, the artist is confounded with the urban planner or forester); (ii) “Art of the commonplace” must not be entirely commonplace in order to remain art (the artistic gesture of planting trees is maintained only by its link to Beuys’s name as an artist, implicitly manifest in the columnar basalt markers accompanying the trees). Danto privileges the first formulation of this contradiction by arguing that the distinction between art and non-art is no longer guaranteed by a systematic historical narrative: “today there is no longer any pale of history. Everything is permitted.” In the contradictory era of the “end of art,” it is up to the philosopher to distinguish between what is properly art and what is not. Rancière emphasizes both formulations of this contradiction and maintains that there is no way of resolving it. In fact, he views it as a “productive contradiction” insofar as the search for solutions has been the driving force behind two centuries of artistic production.

III. CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Although there is much more that could be said about Badiou and Rancière, it should at least be clear to what extent their positions on aesthetics differ. First of all, Rancière rejects Badiou’s Platonic essentialism in favor of a historical approach to artistic regimes. It is not surprising, therefore, to see him castigate Badiou for talking about Plato’s theory of art, reminding him that for Plato and the ethical regime of images, “art” in the singular did not exist, but only images properly distributed for the good of the ethos. According to Rancière, there is no art in general: there are only aesthetic practices and theories within historical regimes. In conformity with his explanatory and synthetic polemics, by which his criticisms of authors simultaneously serve to situate these exact same authors within his own theory, Rancière perceives behind Badiou’s anti-aestheticism an

41. Danto, After the End of Art, 12.
odd mixture between the ethical regime of images and the aesthetic regime of art. On the one hand, Badiou aligns himself with the modernism born out of the aesthetic regime, that is, the attempt to embrace the singularity of art while refusing its forms of dis-identification (where the limits between art and non-art dissipate). On the other hand, Badiou’s “ultra-Platonism” – which is ultimately indebted to the romantic Platonism of the aesthetic age – reveals his adherence to one of the axioms of the ethical regime: art is of value only insofar as it serves to instruct us on the Idea. Both of these positions have a common goal, which is to construct a philosophic bulwark against the aesthetic regime’s dissolution of the “proper” of art. If this bulwark is destined to failure, it is precisely because the proper of “modern” art, according to Rancière, is to be improper, to disturb and unsettle hierarchical distributions of the sensible such as the one that elevates art above the commonplace.

We can add to Rancière’s primary criticism of Badiou a list of additional problems that are visible in his work on aesthetics. To begin with, his theorization of art is largely dependent on a historically specific conception of art that is unique to the modern age. By assuming that art is an iconoclastic gesture refusing the norms of the day in order to venture beyond the givens of the situation, Badiou’s working understanding of art is clearly rooted in a romantic ideal proper to the modern age. However, this historical specificity is not recognized and assumed as such, and the iconoclastic conception of art is hegemonically imposed as a universal on the entire history of art. Second, Badiou relies on a simplistic distinction between true art and entertainment that he unquestioningly inherits from a hierarchy operative in the social field, which has been analyzed in detail by Pierre Bourdieu in *La Distinction*. Third, Badiou – much like Sartre – doggedly adheres to the principle of genericity while focusing on an era (the past two centuries) in which the distinctions between the arts have been regularly called into question, both in theory and in practice. Finally, Badiou’s approach to art is largely dependent on what might be called *illustrative hermeneutics*. Like many of his fellow admirers of Jacques Lacan, he tends to “discover” in art an illustration of his own philosophic concepts. It is true, of course, that he has gone to great lengths to try to show that this is not the case.


43. Another essential question for Badiou is whether his work in *The Century* has served to supplement his illustrative hermeneutics with a form of *illustrative historiography*: is the supposed “passion for the real” simply a projected illustration of Badiou’s concepts in terms of a century-long battle over them? For an extremely pertinent sociological analysis of these illustrative strategies in philosophic discourse, see Pinto’s *Les Philosophes entre le lycée et l’avant-garde* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1987).
He repeatedly affirms, for instance, that art *thinks for itself* and that the philosopher cannot think in its place. However, if we follow Badiou’s logic through to the end, we cannot help but wonder if he has done anything other than philosophically colonize the art world. As we have already seen, the distinction between art and non-art, as well as the delimitation and hierarchization of the arts, is based on defining art strictly in terms of thought and reifying the Platonic distinction between Ideas and opinions. In claiming that art *thinks*, has Badiou not already commandeered the very essence of art by making it coterminous with the privileged material of philosophy (thought)? Is the apparent elevation of art (art *thinks* like philosophy) not simply a disguised denigration (art is only of value, and therefore only truly art, if it is elevated – by the philosopher’s act of recognition – to the supposedly superior level of philosophy by thinking)? Is art not always secondary to philosophy since artistic practice is of value and interest only insofar as it produces thoughts, which are then humbly welcomed by philosophers into the palace of Ideas? Is this not why assiduous readers such as Rancière cannot help but recognize which artistic “thoughts” actually make it into the realm of Ideas, which are always more or less subtle translations of Badiou’s own ideas? If these questions are answered in the affirmative, then Badiou can be legitimately criticized, like his fellow traveler Slavoj Žižek, for using art as an illustration of his own concepts while feigning an illuminating process of discovery. It is important to remind ourselves in this regard that the *illustration* of a philosophic idea in a work of art no more *explains* the work of art than it *proves* the philosophic idea; it simply *extends* a preexistent theory through a rhetorical logic of transubstantiation by which philosophic ideas are translated more or less cunningly into artistic practices.

Rancière’s project is equally open to a series of criticisms. To begin with, his descriptive account of the regimes of art is thus far devoid of any developed genetic account that explains *why* these regimes emerged. Part of this is due to his allergy to the social sciences and to “externalist” accounts of the arts that directly engage with the transformation of institutions and artistic practices.

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44. In “Esthétique, inesthétique, anti-esthétique,” Rancière writes, concerning Badiou: “The poem only says what philosophy needs it to say and what it feigns to discover in the surprise of the poem” (in *Alain Badiou*, 491).


46. For a detailed critique of Rancière on this point, see my “Démocratie moderne et révolution esthétique”, in *La Philosophie déplacée*, Cornu and Vermeren (eds).
in the modern era. Second, the scope of Rancière’s description of the three major artistic regimes needs to be qualified. From the ancient Greeks down through the present, these are apparently the only regimes that have existed, and yet Rancière has still not provided any detailed account of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Moreover, although he occasionally makes reference to the “Western tradition,” it is unclear to what extent these regimes are unique to a particular geographic or cultural region. Third, his affirmation of the consubstantiality of art and politics is justified only as a historical claim demonstrated through the analysis of specific artistic and intellectual communities. When this assertion is transformed into an ontological constant, it is in dire need of proof in order to be validated. It is arguable that, as things stand, the ontological affirmation of the consanguinity of art and politics is simply based on defining them tautologically as distributions of the sensible. If this is the case, nothing can preclude anyone else from defining art and politics in different ways and drawing alternative conclusions. Affirmation and proof are only equivalent within arguments of authority.

This last problem in Rancière’s work points to one of the fundamental issues – and problems, I would argue – that links Rancière and Badiou: the ontologization, or meta-ontologization, of aesthetics. Although Rancière goes to great lengths to show that art is a thoroughly historical phenomenon, his readers cannot help but be struck by at least one level of ontologization. He affirms that works of art have a politics inherent in their very being, which is independent of any explicit political intention on the part of the artist and distinct from the gradual constitution of a work of art through its circulation in the social field. Works of art are produced as a combination of the various “objective politics” inscribed in the distribution of the sensible and manifest in the plastic and narrative field of possibilities at a given moment. As a philosopher of art, Rancière

47. Foucault’s break with his early position on literature is enlightening in this regard (see Roger-Pol Droit, Michel Foucault, entretiens [Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2004]).
49. See Rancière, “The Janus-Face of Politicized Art:” “Commitment is not a category of art. This does not mean that art is apolitical. It means that aesthetics has its own politics, or its own metaphysics. That is what I was saying earlier regarding Flaubert and microscopic equality. There are politics of aesthetics, forms of community laid out by the very regime of identification in which we perceive art (hence pure art as well as committed art). Moreover, a ‘committed’ work of art is always made as a kind of combination between these objective politics that are inscribed in the field of possibility for writing, objective politics that are inscribed as plastic or narrative possibilities” (in The Politics of Aesthetics, Gabriel Rockhill [trans.] [London: Continuum, 2004], 60).
appears to be the only one who has access to this objective political being of art. While it is true that he highlights the historical constitution of this political being, there is little or no room for a veritable account of the circulation and reception of works of art in the social field and how this social dimension relates to the political potential of works of art. The very being of art is fixed in relation to the possibilities inherent in the regimes of art. Since Badiou lacks Rancière’s historical sensibilities, his theorization of art is founded on a much more explicit aesthetic ontology. As we have seen, the very being of art is defined in terms of an unchanging structural relationship between situations and events: art is a truth procedure that bears the trace of the passage of the event and interrupts the representational situation in which it occurs by naming “the un-nameable.” This mode of being of art is precisely what qualifies it – and what has ostensibly always qualified it – as art proper. The discrepancy between these respective forms of aesthetic ontology allows us to conclude by returning to one of the most fundamental differences between Rancière and Badiou: whereas the latter disdains historicism as a sophistic flight from the mighty heights of Platonism, the former insists on the need to situate art theory and practice within the flow of time, including the theory and practice of his Platonist colleague.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50} See Badiou’s revealing comments on his relation to Rancière at the end of Logiques des mondes: L’Être et l’événement, 2 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2006), where he claims that they have a common philosophic fidelity to the “red” sequence (1965–80) in spite of their different relation to history (ibid., 586–7).
In “The Logic of Totalitarianism,” Claude Lefort assesses the failure of “the Marxist or quasi-Marxist Left”¹ in France to formulate a concept of totalitarianism, allocating the entirety of its theoretical elaboration to the (ostensible) Right and thus leaving its portrayal vulnerable to development and appropriation by the liberal and the conservative movements. Lefort argues that this breakdown of critique can be attributed to a number of interrelated factors, among them the traumatizing effect of Stalinism, an “opposition to liberalism,” the illusion of immanent revolution, and the contemptuous view of the state “as a mere organ of society” that expresses the confluence of political and economic forces (LT 278): in short, to Marxism and its fundamental rejection of the state. In place of the fiction of the state, Lefort claims, the Marxist project declares all power to be social power, not political power. In rendering this judgment, Lefort laments the lack of traction that “analyses like those of Hannah Arendt” found.² While Slavoj Žižek in Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? agrees that “until two decades ago, Leftist radicals dismissed her as the perpetrator of the notion of ‘totalitarianism,’”³ in contrast to Lefort he assesses the current academic stature of Arendt as a sign of “the theoretical defeat of the Left – of how the Left has accepted the basic coordinates of liberal democracy (‘democracy’ versus

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² For a discussion of Hannah Arendt, see the essay by Peg Birmingham in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
‘totalitarianism’, etc.)” (DSST 3) and colludes in maintaining the academic and governing status quo.

In charting the space in which Marx has been thought and rethought, and Marxism redeveloped, in current continental philosophy, the dual concepts of the state and totalitarianism, and the concomitant tension between the political and the social that these concepts mark, can be helpfully utilized as a prism through which to appraise the field. There are those, such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, who explicitly embrace democracy and call for hegemonic rearticulations of the state and the political sphere; and there are those, such as Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Žižek, who reject or are ambivalent about democracy, or are apprehensive of the alliance between the state and the political, and who thus call for an articulation of the political outside all state forms. Finally, there is Jacques Rancière, whose sympathies are with democracy although he redefines it as a project wholly incongruent with the state. This essay will attempt to situate these philosophers and their varying connections and divergences. In the first instance, we must begin with how “the political” is defined, since it is on this definition that many of the other aspects of the rethinking of Marx are built.

While Lefort and Arendt locate politics in the division between society and the state, Rancière argues that this division itself is a product of partitioning, of giving a part, or carving up the sensible world into what can and cannot be seen or heard. This work of giving and maintaining order is characterized by Rancière as the sphere of policy or the police. In the preface to Disagreement, Rancière explicitly takes up the premise that Marxism has “turned the political into the expression, or mask, of social relationships,” and the conclusion that with its collapse, “the social and its ambiguities” have been abandoned in favor of a purified political philosophy. Rancière counters that the return of political philosophy is belied both by the evacuation of political activity that is concurrent with its supposed resurrection, and by the oxymoronic sterility of the phrase “political philosophy” itself, which, insofar as it theorizes law and order, or the arkhe of distribution, might better be called a philosophy of the police. Philosophy, he writes, only “becomes ‘political’ when it embraces aporia or the quandary proper to politics” (D ix), which is the quandary of equality. While “the self-proclaimed ‘restorers’ of politics and of ‘its’ philosophy revel in the opposition of the political and the social” (D 91), Rancière asserts to the contrary that “the ‘philosophical’ return of politics and its sociological ‘end’ are one and the same” (D 93).

Rancière elegantly captures the current state of political theory and its various conundrums in both *On the Shores of Politics* and *Hatred of Democracy*. In the former, he is particularly attuned to the glib and self-congratulatory proclamations of a politics that claims to be freed from philosophical hopes for a more perfect world. Declaring the end of “utopian islands and millenarian dreams,” these oracles instead reassure us of “more accessible earthly paradises.” 5 “One might merely smile,” Rancière scoffs, “at the alacrity with which political administrators look forward to the time when politics will be over and they can at last get on with political business undisturbed” (OSP 3). The crux of this overcoming and putting to rest of politics is the demise or ruin of utopian promise, “for the original evil,” as this narrative tell us, “was the promise itself,” fundamentally “murderous” in its complicity with the future telos of a community (OSP 5). Politics has, at last, in this view, abandoned “the programme of liberation and a promise of happiness” (OSP 6) and thus awakened to the insidious transformation of dreams into nightmares (*ibid.* ) and the promise of the best into the “promise of the worst” (OSP 9). In the later *Hatred of Democracy*, Rancière further specifies what these supposed terrors are within democracy characterized as the reign of excess: the erosion of borders; the dissolution of politics into limitlessness; the devouring of the state; and “the religion of the collective and the blind fury of the hordes.” 6 The haters of democracy, Rancière attests, have falsely characterized “a childish humanity whose dream of engendering itself anew leads to self-destruction” (HD 28). Summed up, these formulations amount to an elegiac mockery of the thesis that “democracy = limitlessness = society,” an insistence that the rumors of the death of politics have been greatly exaggerated.

Political philosophy, meanwhile, seems immortal, its death always deferred in the repeated attempts to make the political identical with itself, closing the gap between politics and the police. Rancière conceptualizes the life of political philosophy under three main rubrics: archipolitics, parapolitics, and metapolitics. Archipolitics is associated with Plato and indicates a foundation that is completely realized “with nothing left over” (D 65). In archipolitics, the community is wholly saturated with law such that *physis* and *nomos* are fully identified and contingency has been eliminated (D 68). Parapolitics is associated with Aristotle, and later Hobbes, and indicates a struggle for dominion or the formulation of a social contract that determines sovereignty. And metapolitics is associated with Marx and the idea that political conflict will come to an end when its motor, the economic processes that drive it and produce “a radical surplus

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of injustice” or “absolute wrong” (D 81), are fully resolved. Insofar as meta-
politics conceives of politics as merely a lie or mask, “the social is always ultimately
reducible to the simple untruth of politics” (D 83). If the social is “the truth of
politics” (ibid.), the truth of its lie, then all politics is mere ideology (D 85) and
the Marxist withering away of the state produces, or aims to produce, a pure
administration that would perfectly map the social body. Metapolitics thereby
repeats the archipolitical dream of closure, the end of politics in its “absolutiza-
tion” (D 86). Rancière, however, distinguishes his own project from the Marxist
one insofar as he takes the people to be “different from itself, internally divided”
(D 87). Neither the state nor society is a unity, and the people cannot be equated
“with a sociologically determinable part” (D 99), since they have no place in
the established order. What nonetheless might continue to go by the name of
class struggle is the equality “of anyone and everyone” (D 17), an equality that
is presupposed by the social order that attempts to deny it.

Rancière thus reconceives class struggle as staging the spectacle of equality. In
class struggle, a speech act “subjectifies the part of those who have no part” (D
38) by making possible “a space where they are countable as uncounted” (D 39)
or where their status as speakers of the logos, of words and not merely noise, can
be comprehended as universal. He claims that “the party of the rich has only ever
said one thing, which is most precisely the negation of politics: there is no part of
those who have no part” (D 14). This party is “antipolitical,” policing the parts of
a contractual society. But, since the arkhe is always premised on a “lie that invents
some kind of social nature” (D 16), any social order will be contingent and will
always ensure a dispute or disagreement, an “equality that gnaws away at any
natural order” (ibid.). Hierarchy, the order of the city, is confronted with anarchy,
its disordering. Without arkhe, the claims of politics to sublimate chaotic nature
and produce security, stability, and equal representation are disrupted and poli-
tics cannot be identified “with the self of a community” (D 64).

The bedrock of this presupposition of equality lies in the equality of under-
standing that any speaking being is also a logical being, that the disjunction
“between logical animals and speaking animals” (D 22) is itself never a given but
always the effect of a social and sensory ordering and thus “the very dispute that
institutes politics” (ibid.) by establishing domination. The quandary of equality
thus presents a disjunction between two logics, the egalitarian logic of politics
and the distributive logic of the police, the latter characterized by Rancière as
the form of governance that defines the “configuration of the perceptible” (D
29), arranging sensible reality, ordering and allocating “ways of doing, ways of
being, and ways of saying” (ibid.), giving each body its “particular place and
task” (ibid.), and pursuing, in utilitarian fashion, the happiness or good of the
community. As the name Rancière gives to the rules and policies that govern
what can appear and who can be counted, a regime of “total visibility” (D 104),
the police are also the order of identity and exchange, negotiating conflicts of interest, defining properties and predicates and determining “a population exactly identical to the counting of its parts” (ibid.). Politics, to the contrary, disrupts or challenges the distribution of bodies in social space precisely because it is an activity that springs from “the part of those who have no part” (D 30), that is, those whose placement or configuration is heterogenous to what the police order renders perceptible.

Rancière argues that a “wrong” is perpetuated whenever people are “deprived of logos” (D 23), condemned “to the night of silence or to the animal noise of voices expressing pleasure or pain” (D 22), that is, whenever their voices are taken to be of no account, thereby instituting a gap between speech and logos. But while social bodies might be subject to an inegalitarian distribution, as speaking beings they can demonstrate their equality.7 As demonstrable, equality is the “incommensurable” that “ruins in advance the project of the city ordered according to the proportion of the cosmos and based on the arkhe of the community” (D 19). Foundation, measurement, ratio, the mission of a single logic or principle of unity that could capture the good of all and found the state on its secure basis, is thereby impossible, although its quest is the source of all politics, since “politics such as it is is encountered, always in place already, by whoever tries to found the community on its arkhe” (D 18). Equality is thus portrayed, in contrast to the description of order, as, variously, quandary, aporia, heterogeneity, disagreement, antagonism, incommensurability, interruption, polemic, and paradox, that is, as the foreign principle of politics.

Never simply given, neither an essence nor a goal, neither a tool nor a means (D 33), the principle of equality is pure premise, the permanent assumption of politics in its dispute with the police. This premise is activated in its performance, a performance that is simultaneously a subjectification and a disidentification, bringing into being a who that can “measure the gap” (D 36) that it itself manifests, the gap between the acknowledged count of the social and natural order and that which cannot be counted in the given terms of perception, within its frame of reference or field of experience. Rather than a founding or giving form, politics for Rancière is a decomposition and disruption of the regime of appearance. Although the wrong is a miscount, politics is not a better accounting or the providing of an “exact count” (D 28), which would be merely

7. For Rancière, women’s exclusion from universal suffrage is exemplary of the paradox of excluding some from “the equality of all before the law” (D 41). Women, in this example, is not the group of those who share a set of properties or the name of a collective body or social category; it is instead “the class of the uncounted that only exists in the very declaration in which they are counted as those of no account” (D 38). The demonstration of equality exposes the nonuniversality of universal law, the illogic of the logic of the count. This exhibition of logos thereby contradicts and counteracts the ruling order’s attempts to deny the logos to some.
another policing of demographic categories in administration of particularities; as a response to miscount, “politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account” (D 27).

Politics is thus disagreement or “the practices driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality” (D 30). This emphasis on process and practice underlines the performative dynamic Rancière attributes to politics, the theatrical or dramatic element of its staging. In its contestation of the partition of the sensible, politics is “aesthetic in principle” (D 58, emphasis added). In its subversive presentation of equality, the “act of equality” (D 34) has an evental aspect that “cannot consist in any form of social bond whatsoever” (ibid.). Politics is “upsetting” (D 49) because its speech act poses the truth of equality against the lie of social reality, contradicting in its performance (its aesthetic event) the non-count of the speaker as a speaking being. This spectactularity makes apparent what the police render incomprehensible, showing the speaker to be a speaking being. So, while the police create order and form a social bond, politics disrupts established harmony (D 28) and invents “worlds of dissension” (D 58). Politics thus only and always confirms, stages, demonstrates, asserts, dramatizes, and/or occupies equality, and it is this activity, this performance, this speech act, that thereby subverts any social order, a subversion that is not the aftereffect of the demonstration but the demonstration itself. So, whereas the police “can procure all sorts of good” (D 31) and indeed have the good as their telos (promoting security and tranquility), political activity secures nothing, stabilizes no social bond, promises no fully realized city; it does nothing but stage over and over again the demonstration of equality, which is its “sole principle” (ibid.). And this principle is decidedly not an arkhe since it founds no order; it is fundamentally anarchic, “the name of nothing” (D 35). The scandal of politics is “its lack of any proper foundation” (D 61). It has no identity or essence and no remedy that would resolve its difference from itself. The distinction between police and politics, Rancière claims (in one of many departures from Althusser8), does not mirror

8. For all the authors discussed here, departures and divergences notwithstanding, Althusser appears to have played a decisive role, insofar as his structuralist reading of Marx, his bringing together of Freud (and Lacan) and Marx, and his theory of the subject of ideology, provide the frame of reference (the academic state or situation, we could say) of philosophical Marxism. Both Badiou and Rancière, and for similar reasons, break with Althusser’s structuralism as (over)determining the logic of the situation in a way that impedes the possibility of a break with that situation or an irruption from within. For Althusser, whose work rests on a sharp if complicated epistemological distinction between science and ideology, the subject is fundamentally entangled with ideology, is in fact subjectivized by ideology even while constitutive of it; ideology is an identificatory practice. Badiou and Rancière, however, ally subjectivation with truth and with disidentification. [*] For a discussion of Althusser, see the essay by Warren Montag in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
that between state and society; it does not proclaim the State a dead and rigid machine opposed to the life of society (D 29).

If the people are not equal to themselves, democracy cannot be reduced to social relations nor to any coincidence between form and content, law and spirit, individual and community. This imaginary “idyllic state” of consensus or the “inclusion of all” (D 116), which is always counterposed to totalitarianism, Rancière renames “postdemocracy” (D 95), the nihilistic reassertion of unity and totality, or the identity of humanity with itself, whose image serves as the basis of many critiques of so-called democracy. Against the postdemocratic order of consensus, entangling state and society without residue, Rancière asserts that democracy is the “mode of subjectification” that disrupts or interrupts the “order of distribution of bodies as a community” (D 99). As bodies, the many are doomed to “a purely individual life that passes on nothing to posterity except for life itself, reduced to its reproductive function” (D 23). Rancière thus makes a fundamental distinction between animal being and speaking being. The premise of equality, that is, of equality before the *logos*, although a premise, nonetheless depends for its demonstration on the postulate that “the modern political animal is first a literary animal” (D 37), entangled in the gap “between the order of words and the order of bodies” (*ibid.*), between voice and violence.

Rancière develops this account of the political speech act around mathematical and literary tropes, features that are reinforced by Alain Badiou with his reliance on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Cantorian set theory. Badiou’s thought will be treated in the next essay. We can, however, offer a preliminary contrast between these two students of Althusser here. Rancière and Badiou diverge significantly in at least two ways: first, in their assessment of democracy and democratic promise; and second, in their assessment of the rights of man. In the first instance, Badiou accuses Rancière of being too much a democrat,9 not enough of a militant, and in the end still a political philosopher (M 120), while not doing either politics or philosophy (M 115–16). For Rancière, democracy is first of all anarchy (HD 41); it “is neither a society to be governed, nor a government of society, [but] is specifically this ungovernable on which every government must ultimately find out it is based” (HD 49). As neither government nor society, “it is the action that constantly wrests the monopoly of public life from oligarchic governments, and the omnipotence over lives from the power of wealth” (HD 96) and is thus the “vision that even today sustains the hope of a communism or a democracy of the multitude” (*ibid.*). While Badiou concurs that politics is action that disrupts the state, he claims that even democracy, in a formula adopted from Lenin, is merely a “form of State” (M 79) or an “exercise

of sovereignty” (*ibid.*). Thus, just as the State must wither away, so too must democracy, which, precisely through its romanticization, devolves into “mass sovereignty” (M 88) or “terroristic-fraternity” (89). Since politics, or communist politics, “strives for its own disappearance” (M 80), Badiou proposes an appeal to “equality’ or ‘communism’ but certainly not the word ‘democracy’” (*ibid.*). “Democracy’ can be retrieved as a political category,” Badiou argues, only as “a politics of emancipation [that] does not have the State as its ultimate referent” (M 92); it is then the designation for “the effectiveness of politics” (*ibid.*). Even so, the quarrel with Rancière seems more semantic than fundamental: Badiou writes, in a turn of phrase that could just as well have been written by Rancière, that the work of the “emancipatory process” is toward the impossibility “of every non-egalitarian statement concerning the situation” (M 93).

This divergent appraisal of democracy is echoed, second, in a conflicting verdict on human rights. For Rancière, the demonstration of equality is the staging of a “nonexistent right” (D 25), the right of those who have no rights. A right, for Rancière, “is not the illusory attribute of an ideal subject; it is the arguing of a wrong” (D 89), and thus rights emerge in their declaration, in the demand that lays claim to equality, in the repudiation of the status quo and its count or misconit. Marx’s essay “On the Jewish Question” is then the quintessential metapolitical text in Rancière’s view, marking a gap between man and citizen, society and state, political and human, whose destiny is to be overcome (M 82, 87). But politics for Rancière takes place in the interplay between police law and its declamatory dispute; Marx’s critique of human rights as merely bourgeois rights presupposes an end to the alienating split of subjectivity, the possibility of its being perfectly identical with itself without disjunction. The rights of man, however, are not rights that predicate or belong to the human, but a subjectifying claim that entails disidentification. Rancière offers a formula for rights in his essay “Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?”: “the Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not.” In formulating this paradox, Rancière argues that Arendt’s critique of human rights renders them either tautological or empty. Rather than viewing the rights of man as either rights of the already politicized citizen or nonexistent, the impasse attributed to Arendt, Rancière contends that this dilemma is itself an artifice of the ruling configuration and that in action that lays claim to rights, this given is disputed and the subject politicizes itself.

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By contrast, Badiou characterizes his work as “a political attack against the ideology of human rights and a defense of antihumanism.”12 In doing so, he claims to be launching a wholesale critique of “democratic totalitarianism” (E lv) and the dominant themes of progressive politics, even and especially those that might appear as most radical. His work begins with two premises that might at first seem irreconcilable, and proceeds from there to develop a series of oppositions. The first premise is that universality entails what he calls “eternal truth,” and the second is that such truths are not transcendent but immanent; there is no “heaven of truths” (E 43). These premises are resolved as “an ethics of singular truths” (E lvi), a resolution that requires clear contrasts between truth and knowledge, subjective and objective, event and situation. The event is a singular break with the situation, the subject is induced by truth, and truth remains uncaptured by the order of knowledge that it ruptures. What Badiou means by an ethic, in contrast to the reigning ethics, is continued fidelity to the event of the universal as a break with history and militant adherence to truth.

In The Sublime Object of Ideology, Slavoj Žižek distinguishes the Althusserian idea of ideological alienation from the Lacanian one of fundamental antagonism. In the former, still consistent with “the traditional Marxist notion of social antagonism,”13 there is both a prioritization of a particular antagonism that is considered determinative in the last instance and the possibility of resolving that antagonism within history. By contrast, the Lacanian deadlock does not prioritize a particular antagonism and holds out no hope of final resolution. In this way, according to Žižek, it exemplifies the “post-Marxist” break with utopian logics. The psychoanalytic account of the subject is not accidental to this post-Marxist logic: “the ‘death drive,’ this dimension of radical negativity, cannot be reduced to an expression of alienated social conditions, it defines la condition humaine as such: there is no solution, no escape from it” (SOI 5).

The idea of harmonious being, whether within or between human beings, is a dangerous aspiration, even a “totalitarian temptation” (ibid.), and the gesture or hope toward reconciliation is the gesture of terrorism. We must instead discover

disguising the working of power, Lefort contends that human rights are neither individualist nor unitary, but are a bond of “antagonism” (ibid., 266, 272) or “plurality, fragmentation, heterogeneity” (ibid., 271) that threatens the fantasy of a One and “the loving grip of the good society” (ibid., 272). Lefort’s analysis is, however, significantly different from Rancière’s insofar as it privileges the limitation of power that the law symbolically enacts (i.e. it privileges the state). Nonetheless, there is a promissory element in Lefort’s depiction that is not wholly divergent from Rancière’s characterization.


a “modus vivendi” (a “form-of-life” in Agamben’s terms) with this “terrifying dimension” of destruction and impossibility that is inculcated by language.

Crucially, the psychoanalytic theory of antagonism does not derive it from social causes. Antagonism is rather an irreducible element of psychic formation, of a fundamental aggressivity within that no amount of cultural change can dispense with. We must instead reverse the presupposition of social constructionism: social antagonisms are themselves founded on “an original ‘trauma,’ an impossible kernel which resists symbolization, totalization, symbolic integration” (SOI 6). This traumatic element of “a blind automatism of repetition beyond pleasure-seeking self-preservation” reveals the impossibility built into the pursuit of goods. The project of capitalism, maintaining the circulation of goods in a cycle of generation and degeneration, of expenditure, consumption, exhaustion, and collapse, bringing them into being and passing away, is thus inherently and internally self-destructive, an effect of its own limit.

In understanding this critique of goods, it is useful to bring together, as Žižek does, the Marxist and Freudian notions of “fetish.” For Freud, the fetish has a very specific meaning and purpose, serving as a substitute for the mother’s missing phallus. The fetish appears where the other’s castration is too intense, too traumatic and uncanny, to bear; in place of the missing object, the fetishist installs one that can be made present, thereby exemplifying the psychical mechanism of disavowal whereby a belief is simultaneously retained and given up. Fetishism is thus a very peculiar articulation of the fort–da game: a mode of playing with absence and presence in which the replacement object signifies both castration and not castration, the traumatic perceptual presence of an absence (the encounter with castration) and the reassuring absence of a presence (the denial of reality). The fetish is a kind of monument to absence insofar as it both buries and commemorates the horror of castration, thereby testifying to the very reality it denies, its displaced presence. The formula, as Žižek borrows it from Octave Mannoni, of “I know very well but all the same I don’t believe it,” carries this doubled relation to knowledge, acknowledging reality while nonetheless retaining a belief that runs counter to it.

For Marx, the fetish also serves a veiling function, presenting as magically apparent the commodity that in fact is the objectification of the labor process and dissociating its value from the value of human freedom that this process eradicates. The commodity is thus granted a level of autonomy, independence,

and self-sufficiency that the worker is not. Its displacement of value holds at bay the labor relation that brings it into being, and it thereby takes the place of, substitutes for, the missing social relation. The commodity then appears as transcendent, enigmatic, and mystical, a social thing “whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible,” fantasmatically replacing “a definite social relation between men.”

Both of these types of fetishism, the Marxist and the Freudian, function through mechanisms similar to that of the dreamwork: it is not merely a latent content that is concealed (this attachment to content is itself fetishistic according to Žižek), but rather “the ‘secret’ of this form itself” (SOI 11), its work of condensation and displacement (i.e. of overdetermination) that makes possible its genesis. The real question with regard to both the work that forms the dream and the work that forms “the value of a commodity” (ibid.) is how or why this form has been assumed. In the pursuit of goods, the disturbing, strangely familiar secret is less the fundamental lack of a fully harmonious social relation than the very process of disavowal, of knowing and not believing, that gives it form. Through this disavowal of reality (the reality that the social does not exist), fetishism procures the ever-widening circulation of goods, goods that, in keeping consumers attached to objects whose value is misplaced and whose source is not admitted, both reject and retain, pervert and procure, the idea of phallic fullness that never was and can never be: this is the object that has the power to fully satisfy me. The free circulation of goods takes the place of human freedom and equality, fills in for their lack, such that the false universalism of bourgeois rights and duties is not simply an inadequacy to live up to its own ideals, but a constitutive fantasy that structures social reality: not a delusion, but a fetish-work that generates and gives shape.

While the discussion of fetishism may have seemed a detour, it is crucial not only to understanding the entanglement of psychoanalysis with contemporary Marxist thought, but also to understanding the critique of democracy and rights developed by the militant Left. For Žižek, democracy is a political fetish and he presses for the courage to abandon “democracy” as the master-signifier of the chain of political signifiers (SOI 78). Crucially for Žižek, the fetish conceals a lack, not a positivity, around which social relations are articulated (SOI 49). The disavowal of absence, the absence of a social relation, explains for Žižek the romanticized attachment to fraternal democracy that nonetheless retains an inability to acknowledge that the father is dead. Fetishism, whether Marxist or Freudian, thereby indicates a fundamental political truth: the splitting of reality that indicates an internal (not external) antagonism, dislocation, and disruption within any perceptual or articulated form of understanding, a gap between

what we know and what we believe. The effect of disavowal is then a habitual vacillation between the vernacular of contingency and the quest for security; without the guarantee of fullness or the fullness of guarantee, the brother–citizen–fetishist reintroduces the paternal function over and over again in the biopolitical gesture of optimization that impedes political action. Sovereignty, or the fear of its absence, is intimately tied to biopower, as both undergird the violence of law and the liberal democratic illusion of freedom and equality.

Žižek pointedly disparages the predominant multiculturalist mode of respecting the “other” that prevails in the “New World Order that poses as the tolerant universe of differences,” just as he mocks the rise of identity politics and its etceteral structure (race, gender, sexuality, etc.). Žižek finds the “underlying ontological vision” of an “irreducible plurality of particular constellations, each of them multiple and displaced in itself” (WDR 65), to be vapid and arid. This vision, the latest variant of nihilism, “masks the underlying monotony of today’s global life” (WDR 68), while also encouraging the pseudo-radicalism of taking pleasure in dreaming about and demanding things one does not really want.

But, whereas Žižek sees in democracy the disavowal of social antagonism, Laclau and Mouffe define radical democracy precisely as social antagonism. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe reflect on the demise of what they characterize as “the Jacobin imaginary.” This imaginary had rested on a series of assumptions now in crisis: the epistemological and ontological privilege of the working class, the promise of revolution, and the fantasy of social unity that would “render pointless the moment of politics” (HSS 2). In rethinking Marxism and its stakes, Laclau and Mouffe take the concept of “hegemony” as a “fundamental nodal point of Marxist political theorization” (HSS 3), and moreover one whose logic is heterogenous to other basic Marxist categories (*ibid*.), especially to the rationalism of dialectical materialism and its presumption of historical necessity. Hegemony provides the basis for the development of contingency, as against necessity, and thus for the specificity of a variety of social struggles. Laclau and Mouffe thus describe their project as elaborating a “new conception of politics” (*ibid.*) that is explicitly both “post-Marxist” and “post-Marxist” (HSS 4), a dual emphasis that marks a trajectory that simultaneously insists on and departs from its Marxist origin. In this joint formulation of radical democracy, Marxism becomes repoliticized (and to some extent de-economized) in a transformation of emancipatory discourse that situates it within the clamor and claims for universality on the part of various particularities.

With Lefort, Laclau and Mouffe assert as well that just as democracy opens the possibility of “hegemonic articulations” (HSS 187), it also carries the imminent possibility of a totalitarian logic that would attempt to reoccupy the space of power, fill in its missing substance, and control its “radical indeterminacy” (HSS 188). Their work thus articulates a fundamental alliance with the Marx of class consciousness and a departure from the Marx of economic determinism and historical materialism, isolating these two strands from one another. In later and separate works, Laclau and Mouffe further pursue the theme of antagonism and democratic struggle. I will focus on just one exemplary essay here.

Laclau’s essay “New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time” perhaps most explicitly clarifies which principles he retains from Marx and which he leaves behind. He calls this work a “manifesto,” and presents the argument of the essay “as a logical sequence of its [Marxism’s] categories” (NRRT 4). Laclau here charts a distinction between negativity and objectivity, or between antagonism and contradiction (NRRT 7), affiliating the former with the political and the latter with the social (NRRT 35). With this schema, Laclau articulates the fundamental tension between the political and the social by arguing that while political action seeks a “reconciled and transparent society” (ibid.), such a society would be the annihilation of politics. Politics seeks its own impossibility in the realization of a harmonious social totality, since such a society would no longer be properly political (ibid.). Laclau here adamantly distinguishes between social totality, on the one hand, and politics, on the other. The social is defined as the realm of “the sedimented forms of objectivity” (ibid.) and it is formulated on the model of the oikos and its good government with which it is taken to be homologous; the political is defined as the realm of subjectivity and it is formulated on the model of the polis or city taken as a site of dissension rather than of good government. The social is the realm of goods as potential or proto-totality (including not only material goods, but most especially the good of the community), and its logic requires ever better management; the political is outside this order of exchange and regulation, and is the realm of freedom. According to Laclau, there is politics because there is “subversion and dislocation of the social” (NRRT 61). And yet, and herein lies the crux of the paradox, the domain of the political founds itself on the creation of some, however imaginative or contentious, vision of ideal closure and reconciliation. Since the social is internally uneven and antagonistic, the subject is “thrown up” (NRRT 44) into a political world of freedom by social and subjective dislocation and incompleteness.

20. Cf. Rancière’s claim that “every politics works on the verge of its radical demise” (D 91).
Laclau also distinguishes between subjects and subject-positions or the location of individuals within sedimented social forms. Identities, for Laclau, are established only through relations of difference and are thereby immanently self-sundering; there is no pure externality but instead a “constitutive outside” of identity, such that differences always already inhere in the formation of any identity. Rather than an integrative gesture that inscribes identity in a social whole, as a subject-position, politics in this view is that which interrupts the inscription of particular and predicated subjects into a social whole. While predication and identification particularize us as parts of a whole, members of subsets, thereby divesting us of singularity, interruption singularizes a subject in calling him or her to a task uniquely her own. As the dissemination of the singular rather than the sum total of particulars, the universal cannot be integrated into the whole, a constitutive failure that points to the future possibility of radical democracy since it requires us, as Laclau puts it, “not to understand what society is but what prevents it from being” (NRRT 44). The universal functions through the dislocation of subjects who are not fully placed socially and whose freedom lies in the failure of the structure to fully constitute an identity (ibid.). To restate the political paradox, then, we could say, with Laclau, that politics aims toward an “impossible object [society] and thus toward the elimination of the conditions of liberty itself” (ibid.). Politics is irreconcilable with the very element that makes politics possible, both because of the paradox earlier discussed – that subjectivity and politics would annihilate their own founding conditions if fully achieved – and also because its possibility lies in the rootless, groundless ground beyond life and history where the signifier emerges.

As Žižek clarifies, the “radical” of radical democracy must be taken in a paradoxical sense, as it does not aim “at a radical solution,” but instead acknowledges “a kind of postponing of a fundamental impossibility” (SOI 6). It is thus not a “pure, true democracy; its radical character implies, on the contrary, that we can save democracy only by taking into account its own radical impossibility” (ibid.). The only solutions are particular ones, and they always entail a radical irresolution, a permanent deadlock. In “An Ethics of Militant Engagement,” Laclau writes about his theoretical relation to Badiou, taking up Žižek’s claim in The Ticklish Subject that Badiou and Laclau share a “deep homology” insofar as both turn away from the Hegelian and Marxist notion of “reconciliation between Universal and Particular.”21 They instead, according to Žižek, assert “a constitutive and irreducible gap,” although this gap is different for each. For Laclau it can

be characterized as “the gap between the Particular and the empty Universal” or as that between “the differential structure of the positive social order … and properly political antagonism.” For Badiou, it is “the gap between Being and Event” (ibid.). For both, there is a dimension of “decision.” While Laclau professes to find Badiou’s thought “congenial,” especially in its affirmative and emancipatory commitments, he also questions the ontological and mathematical underpinnings of Badiou’s epistemology and its capacity to distinguish truth and disaster. Thus, although Badiou, Žižek, and Laclau can come across as allied insofar as they all borrow fundamental premises from Lacan, Žižek seems a necessary hinge figure here, the one that binds them together.

Agamben is noticeably less psychoanalytic in his perspective, and his work is premised on eminently non-Marxist sources and suppositions, in particular those of Carl Schmitt, Arendt, and Michel Foucault, allying these three together in a remarkable amalgamation of their conceptual leverage. From Schmitt, Agamben takes up the concepts of sovereignty and the state of exception; from Arendt that of totalitarianism and the critique of human rights, as well as the rise of government as administration of an all-encompassing social sphere figured on the order of the oikos; and from Foucault the concept of biopower. Were we to situate Agamben within Rancière’s rubric, we could perhaps view his work as a version of the modern metapolitical view that sees “the democratic gap as a symptom of untruth” (D 91). Certainly Agamben aims at a certain closure or overcoming of a rift in being. At the same time, his work can be understood as offering a critique of the imbrication of modern parapolitics and archipolitics in a form of sovereignty whose resultant terror aims at establishing an absolute community (D 81). In any case, Rancière also explicitly criticizes Agamben for endorsing Arendt’s argument about human rights, as discussed above (WSRM 302).

In Homo Sacer, Agamben argues that “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power,” where this biopolitical body is taken to be “bare life” or homo sacer. Whereas Foucault claims that the entrance of zoe (natural life) into the polis is the fundamental condition of modernity, Agamben argues that the bond that attaches zoe to bios, the natural to the political, is “absolutely Ancient” (HS 9). Unlike Foucault, therefore, who charts a historical passage of the primary modes of power and their historical dominance from the reign of sovereignty to juridicality to discipline and biopolitics, Agamben sees

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a structural imbrication among these forms of power: the convergence between the juridical and the biopolitical, the law and the body, is the permanent nucleus of sovereignty. If the political history of modernity or the modern history of politics thus charts an increasing “indistinction” between bare life and the law, one also marked by the collapse of democracy into totalitarianism, this confusion is realized in the biopolitical invasion of sovereignty into the everyday activities of the vulnerable body such that the camp rather than the city becomes the site or nomos of human (animal) being, the triumph of universal homelessness. Democracy is then defined by its biopolitical condition, allied always already with totalitarianism. The political project that is demanded is a politics that is no longer founded on the exception of bare life (which, precisely as exception, is always included) and its unity with law (HS 11). In the juncture between homo sacer and sovereignty, between life and law, sovereignty and biopower are the dirty secret of one another: each liminal, crossing, becoming the other, entailing a confusion between them.

Bare life is neither natural life (zoe) nor political life (bios), but something that emerges from their “zone of indistinction,” just life, nothing but life, sheer life, life itself, life abandoned to itself and to death, neither zoe nor bios, neither physis nor nomos (HS 84–5, 88, 106). As sacred, bare life is “life exposed to death” (HS 88) or homo sacer, defined by Agamben as the one who can be killed but not sacrificed and who is thus outside all law, human or divine, political or theological, abandoned to and by the law. The double exclusion of homo sacer from human and divine law points toward an “originary political structure prior to the distinction between sacred and profane, religious and juridical” (HS 74). Thus, “the sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both life’s subjection to a power over death and life’s irreparable exposure in the relation of abandonment” (HS 83). The sacred is the mark of sovereign excess, its access to and grasp of the body. In bringing sovereignty together with bare life, Agamben writes that “the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially homines sacri, and homo sacer is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns” (HS 84).

In Žižek’s view, the liberal–totalitarian state of emergency that Agamben theorizes, a state that produces only survivors, entails an alliance between victimization, humanism, and the pursuit of goods insofar as they are all oriented by the biopolitical project of the optimization of life (WDR 107). Sovereignty and biopower are then the flipside of each other: the bifurcated and dual formation of law that describes the way in which capital, and terror, operates. Žižek thus characterizes the liberal mode of subjectivity as itself homo sacer (WDR 71), thereby aligning Agamben with the questioning of democracy (WDR 97). And certainly Agamben’s politics cannot be assimilated into the radical–democratic
project (WDR 98); he is not interested in renegotiating the limits of inclusion and exclusion or the limit that separates citizen from *homo sacer* (WDR 98, 100). There is no place in Agamben for such a democratic project of renegotiation and there is, in fact, no democratic subject, but only a democratic consumer and survivor. In the postpolitical regime of biopolitics, we are all *homo sacer* (WDR 100). With no democratic way out, a messianic dimension lurks in Agamben’s theory, pointing toward a future where mere life would no longer be the ultimate terrain of politics (*ibid*.), simultaneously a suspension of mere life and an embrace of mere life.

In *Means Without Ends*, Agamben argues that Marx’s critique of the rights of man and his theses about human emancipation have become archaic: “The Marxian scission between man and citizen is thus suspended by the division between naked life (ultimate and opaque bearer of sovereignty) and the multifarious forms of life abstractly recodified as social–juridical identities.”25 Human rights provide no defense in camps, but simply secure the operation of biopower. Nonetheless, Agamben continues to maintain a discourse of emancipation, one that defines it as overcoming of division and “the possibility of a nonstatist politics” (MWE 8–9) as opposed to state sovereignty. In arguing for a form of life that “must become the guiding concept and the unitary center of the coming politics” (MWE 12), Agamben proposes a new relation between *zoe* and *bios*, one that does not depend on their sacrificial split. Here we have both a conjunction with and a departure from Badiou. Both Badiou and Agamben condemn the biopolitical or bioethical hold on life, the means by which the state keeps the human in its grip. For Badiou, however, the only answer to state policy is a militantly subjective politics, while for Agamben *happiness* itself becomes the source of a revolutionary form of life, a way of closing the gap that permits the zones of indistinction to dispense terror and dispense with life. As Agamben puts it at the conclusion of *Homo Sacer*, the “biopolitical body that is bare life must itself instead be transformed into the site for the constitution and installation of a form of life that is wholly exhausted in bare life and a *bios* that is only its own *zoe*” (HS 188). It might be edifying to read this opaque passage alongside a similarly opaque selection from *State of Exception*, in which Agamben envisages that “one day humanity will play with law just as children play with disused objects” (SE 64). Taking these together, Agamben suggests that the journey before us, embroiled in the enigma of our political plight, will lead to an overcoming and an arrival at justice, or failing that, we will find “unprecedented


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biopolitical catastrophe” (HS 188). In evading this dire option that he himself has so thoroughly investigated, Agamben reaches for the messianic.

Agamben’s political conclusions tend to bifurcate, or combine, the Heideggerian and the Benjaminian. From Heidegger, he adopts the idea of “the end of the history of being” (MWE 110). From Walter Benjamin, he adopts the idea of a uniquely revolutionary form of violence, one that, citing Benjamin, “neither makes nor preserves law, but deposes it” (SE 53). In this combination, Agamben foresees a double end: of the history of being and of the history of the state. This would be a politics of pure means, without ends, a revolutionary politics, and also the coming into history of “anarchic historicity” (MWE 111). If, also with Benjamin, the state of exception has become the rule, fundamental and exemplary, then only an “anomic violence” (SE 54), that is, a violence that does not return to the law, a violence that is “pure” in the sense of being absolved of all attachment to the law, either as constituted by it (i.e. the police) or constitutive of it (i.e. mythical violence), can transform, or better overturn, or even better dissolve, “the relation between violence and law” (SE 63). Because it is neither constitutive nor constituted, pure violence operates as a means without ends (SE 61), an absolute medium or mediation that is thereby also a dissolution. Pure violence would enact a “play with law” (SE 64) such that “the world appears as a good that absolutely cannot be appropriated or made juridical” (ibid.). Rather than a politics “contaminated by law,” Agamben proposes instead “political action,” a revolutionary event “which severs the nexus between violence and law” (SE 88), thereby allying “pure means” with “human praxis” (ibid.). Only this absolute violence can break with the order of the state in its homogenizing biopoliticization. Here, as with Badiou, we have a Marxist idea of an anti- or post-state politics, one that does not run from violence. As a politics beyond the law, pure, wholly removed from the violence of law or the law of violence, it is divine.

What seems clear for all the philosophers discussed in this essay is that the social is viewed, if not always as a fetish, at least suspiciously; it does not exist just as the people does not exist, since there is no self-identity. This is a kind of antihumanism, as well as an antideterminism. Thus we see that the opposition between humanism and determinism has been superseded because both are rejected, the one for its argot of victimization, of the sacrificial, suffering human


27. There is an obviously theological dimension to much of contemporary Marxism. Badiou, Žižek, and Agamben in any case pay heed and homage to Benjamin’s notion of divine violence. And, following a trajectory that seems to radically depart from Benjamin, both Žižek and Badiou treat St. Paul as a crucial figure.
animal, the other for its adherence to the logic of the situation. Instead we have a subjectivization that breaks with its history, a constitutive self-sundering, and a thinking of emancipation as making the claim to equality, via disagreement, dissensus, and antagonism. Disidentification, rather than class consciousness, has become the basic tenet of class struggle. Refusing to acquiesce or collaborate in the demise of politics, pursuing the impossible, and not merely, as Žižek cogently characterizes what passes for radicalism today, embarking on “an unending process which can destabilize, displace, and so on, the power structure” through “endless mocking parody and provocation” (WDR 101), the philosophers discussed here retain a shared fidelity to Marx’s legacy by repudiating postpolitical nihilism and adamantly adhering to the task (act, presentation, supposition, appearance) of emancipation and universality.
There can be no doubt that the notion of the event constitutes one of the core concepts in contemporary philosophy, cutting across the divide between so-called “continental” and “analytic” thought. From Martin Heidegger to Jacques Derrida and from Alfred North Whitehead to Donald Davidson, a modern or contemporary philosopher can be defined as one who develops the conceptual tools necessary to think through the peculiar nature of an event as such. The result of this agreement is actually a striking paradox. The event, which in most versions is supposed to mark an unprecedented break with the status quo, has itself become today a matter of strict consensus. What should be absolutely singular and chance-like is on the verge of being drowned out in the bland unanimity of nonthought. In the words of the late François Zourabichvili: “The theme of the event lies at the center of philosophical preoccupations today, it animates the most daring and the most original projects. But the spirit of the time does not provide in and of itself a philosophy and should not mask irreconcilable differences.”

To save the event from the risk of complete shipwreck in this process, few endeavors could be more urgent than an overview of the history and theory of the event, or rather of events in the plural, since the uses of this concept are so numerous and variegated as to block nearly all possible

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comparison. Indeed, there seem to be as many versions of the concept of the event as there are philosophers who claim to stand in its lineage.

Alain Badiou⁴ is certainly among the more forceful proponents of a full-bodied doctrine of the event, one polemical and ambitious enough to compete with alternative versions that can be found in the works not only of Heidegger or Derrida but also of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, or Jean-François Lyotard.³ It is precisely through the category of the event that Badiou, as he puts it in his Manifesto for Philosophy, proposes to take one more step in the reconfiguration of modern philosophy over and against the widespread declarations of its imminent end, crisis, or closure, especially in the guise of Western metaphysics: “A single step. A step within the modern configuration, the one that since Descartes has bound the three nodal concepts of being, truth and the subject to the conditions of philosophy.”⁴ For Badiou, the event is that which ties these three nodal concepts into a single philosophical knot. How then can we capture the singular force of this use of the concept of the event, if at the same time we want to avoid the generalized state of homonymy that surrounds it in the context of contemporary thought? Wherein lies the pull of Badiou’s treatment of being, truth, and subject by way of the event? How can we account for the fact that this pull now seems to have become unstoppable, especially among newer generations of students, artists, scholars, activists, and so on?

I. TRAJECTORIES

In order to highlight the singularity of Badiou’s ongoing philosophical project, I propose to mark three trajectories in and out of his thinking of the event. The first one is conceptual and tries to come to grips with the way in which being, event, truth, and subject fit into a unified philosophical system. Badiou in fact is adamant about what he considers to be the necessarily systematic nature of philosophy insofar as “it is of the essence of philosophy to be systematic, and no philosopher has ever doubted this, from Plato to Hegel” (MP 65). On the most general level, we could say that Badiou’s system, like Hegel’s, remains dialectical

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2. Alain Badiou (January 17, 1937– ; born in Rabat, Morocco) was educated at the École Normale Supérieure (1956–61) and gained his habilitation in 1989. His influences include Althusser, Canguilhem, Lacan, Mao, Marx, and Sartre. He has held appointments at the University of Reims (1965–69), the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes-St. Denis (1969–99), and the École Normale Supérieure (1999–2006).

³. The work of Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard is treated in individual essays in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.

in that it seeks to think both substance and subject at the same time. It does so, however, by splitting each of these terms. Badiou defines the dialectic precisely in terms of a logic of scission, instead of the textbook versions of negation and sublation or the negation of negation: “The dialectic, so to speak, is itself dialectical in that its conceptual operators, which reflect reality, are all equally split.”5

Being itself, to begin with, never amounts to a full substance – say, the substance that ultimately is life itself for the Spinozists Deleuze and Toni Negri. It is true that both Deleuze and Badiou inscribe being in a metaphysics of the multiple, or of multiplicity. Being not only is multiple, but it is actually a multiple of multiples. No matter how far you go, in strictly ontological terms you never reach a substantial halting point, except the void: in Badiou’s case, the empty set or null set, marked \(\emptyset\). This is one of the possible readings of the death of God, namely, the One “is” not. Being is multiple, not One. But Badiou’s ontology more specifically takes as its point of departure an “originary scission” or Two at the very heart of being \(qua\) multiple, namely, the split between inconsistent and consistent multiplicity. It does so, moreover, by claiming that mathematics is the discourse of ontology.

For Badiou, mathematics in its unfolding historicity, from the ancient Greeks to the distinctly modern revolutionary invention of set theory after Georg Cantor, says everything that can be said about being \(qua\) being. This claim marks the shockingly ambitious opening wager of his undeniable masterpiece *Being and Event*:

> Our goal is to establish the meta-ontological thesis that mathematics is the historicity of the discourse on being \(qua\) being. And the goal of this goal is to assign philosophy to the thinkable articulation of two discourses (and practices) which are not it: mathematics, science of being, and the intervening doctrines of the event, which, precisely, designate “that-which-is-not-being-\(qua\)-being.”6

*Logics of Worlds*, as a matter of fact, proposes a theory of appearing (or “great logic,” as opposed to logic in the “small” sense of a combination of linguistic or grammatical rules) to supplement the theory of being (philosophy as “metamathematics” or set-theoretical “metaontology”) expounded in the first volume of *Being and Event*:


If *Logics of Worlds* deserves the subtitle *Being and Event*, it is to the extent that the traversal of a world by a truth, initially grasped in its type of being, this time finds itself objectivated in its appearing, and to the extent that its incorporation into a world unfolds the true in its logical consistency. (LW 38)

Prior to thinking logical consistency, however, the question is how to develop an ontological discourse based on sheer inconsistent multiplicity, when everything that presents itself belongs to consistent multiples.

Badiou thus affirms that even if the One “is” not, “there is” One. This means that oneness is only the effect of an operation that counts-as-one, whatever there is in a given situation. Consistent multiplicity presents multiple ones, counted as so many x’s or y’s. Whatever precedes the operation of counting itself, the stuff that is pure inconsistency without one, remains strictly speaking out of reach of all presentation. To accomplish the difficult task of thinking inconsistency, therefore, will involve the entire trajectory of Badiou’s thinking, from the dialectic of void and excess all the way to the theory of the subject of truth in the final meditations of *Being and Event*. In fact, unlike what happens in *Logics of Worlds*, which begins by positing a metaphysical theory of the subject from the start, there is a principle of retroactive clarification at work in *Being and Event*, insofar as the earlier meditations become effectively thinkable only under the condition of the later ones. The possibility of thinking inconsistency as such thus arrives in actual fact only if and when there happens to be a subject at work who is faithful to an event.

Before reaching this point we must grasp how, in addition to the division between consistent and inconsistent multiplicity, there is a second split central to Badiou’s philosophical system: the one that separates presentation from representation, or a given situation from the state of this situation. In set-theoretical terms, presentation counts the elements of a set whereas representation counts the parts or subsets of a set. It is a count of the count, not exactly a recount but a peculiar redoubling of the count. Representation thus operates according to the logic of the power set, \( p(\alpha) \), which is the set of all subsets of \( \alpha \). It does for inclusion (\( \subset \), or “is a subset of”) what presentation does for belonging (\( \in \), or “is an element of”), without for a moment undoing the fact that the latter defines the only verb of the ontological discourse for Badiou. It is one thing, for example, to count the members or citizens (elements) of a nation, and another to count them a second time in terms of groups or classes (parts), according to age, race, occupation, sexual orientation, legal status, and so on. In fact, Badiou argues that the political state typically wants nothing to do with singular members but only with classes, or interest groups, which is why the play on the double meaning of the state, both in its strictly political sense, as “State,” and in its
everyday usage, as in “a state of affairs,” is justified. In set theory, the pivotal theorem of excess then holds that there is an inevitable excess of parts over elements, of inclusion over belonging, or of representation over presentation pure and simple: \( p(\alpha) > \alpha \). This is not only intuitively clear for finite situations, insofar as anyone can grasp that there are more ways of grouping the elements of a set into subsets than there are elements in the original set: far more importantly, set theory – in an event of its own – also demonstrates formally that, in the cases of infinite sets, there is no way to measure by how much the cardinality of the power set exceeds the cardinality of the original set. Badiou calls this the “impasse” or “deadlock” of ontology: “The gap between \( \alpha \) (which counts-as-one the belongings, or elements) and \( p(\alpha) \) (which counts-as-one the inclusions or parts) is, as we shall see, the point in which the impasse of being resides” (BE 83). This impasse is quite literally the turning point around which pivots the whole conceptual artifice of Being and Event.

Thus, in the ontological investigation, any attempt to present being qua being, that is, any attempt to present presentation itself, hits an insurmountable obstacle in the guise of the excess of representation over presentation pure and simple. What seems at first to be an utter obstacle, though, quickly turns into an enabling moment that will trigger pure inconsistency itself, so to speak, to come to pass “in person,” at least if we keep in mind that \( \text{en personne} \) can also signify “in nobody” or “anonymously” in French. To understand this move, it is essential to add that the excess of representation over presentation that constitutes the impasse of ontology is not in turn a purely structural given. It is not simply of the order of the always-already in the sense of a deconstructive orientation; rather, what seems to be a structural impasse both signals and requires at the same time the exceptional intervention of a subject. The excess of any structure of representation over and above its own resources, in other words, is a question of a rare and contingent occurrence. It appears only where something happens that goes against the state of what is normally given. The event is this something, which is almost nothing, but which suffices to trigger a radical transformation of the situation as a whole: the supplement of what happens over and above what is. However, an event, too, is in some way split. It is not a miraculous or mystical occurrence coming from beyond but something that always happens, whenever it does happen, within a singular situation in this world. What makes such a happening into an event for a given situation is its evental site that is symptomatic of the situation as a whole. Thus, on one hand, an event certainly can be seen as purely self-referential; ontologically speaking, self-belonging is even the only feature – condemned in set theory – that describes the event. On the other, though, it is tied to the situation by way of the evental site whose elements it mobilizes and consequently raises from minimal to maximal existence. And of the evental site, perhaps symptomatically, there is no matheme.
A truth, then, is the sum of consequences that can be drawn from the faithful investigation of the situation from the point of view of its supplementation by an event. The most important feature of a truth is its generic nature. In set-theoretical terms, a generic set is one without attributes or predicates that would define “what” counts as an element of the set. Badiou, referring to the mathematician Paul Cohen’s 1963 proof of the existence of generic sets, names this the one notion that sums up all *Being and Event*. This is because a truth, understood as a process or procedure instead of as a property of logical statements in the narrow sense, investigates and treats a given situation from the point of what is most generic, indistinct, or anonymous about it. Ultimately, taking off from the symptomatic site where a certain miscount or impasse uncovers the point where the state of a situation fails to guarantee its own consistency, this amounts to nothing less than a thinking of the being of that situation as pure generic or indiscernible inconsistency. It is also for this very reason that a truth is strictly speaking universal. Not only does it relate to a given situation from what is most anonymous and generic about it, but precisely because no particular attributes are required, such an investigation is also in principle addressed to all.

It is worth stressing, since this is a common misconception, that Badiou does not treat truth as a revelatory or mystical experience of gaining access to being *qua* being. It is not a question of staring ourselves blind on truth as on the sun in Plato’s allegory of the supreme Idea of the Good; sticking to the same allegory, we must also return to the cave of illusory shadows. This is why Badiou introduces both a further scission – this time between truth and truthfulness or veridicality – and a new operation, forcing, which somehow links the two. Forcing, we might say, extending its strictly set-theoretical meaning, is the moment of the putting-to-work of truth: “A term forces a statement if its positive connection to the event forces the statement to be veridical in the new situation (the situation supplemented by an indiscernible truth). Forcing is a relation *verifiable by knowledge*” (BE 403). This is how a truth, which breaks with our current encyclopedia of knowledge, nonetheless produces new knowledges as well.

A subject, finally, is the local instance of fidelity to a truth procedure. “I term *subject* any local configuration of a generic procedure from which a truth is supported” (BE 391). It is the subject who is in charge of investigating the consequences of a truth in the present and forcing its supposed completion back on the situation at hand. For Badiou as for Lacan, the subject is fundamentally split. Unlike Lacan, however, Badiou does not ascribe this split to the individual’s subjection to the law of the signifier but rather to the subject’s incorporation in a truth process, which usually separates a part that is inscribed in normality (the mortal individual or human animal) from the militant part that is involved in the elaboration of the truth itself (the Immortal).
We are now in a position to understand in what sense Badiou's system can be concentrated in a single formulation from *Being and Event*: “The impasse of being, which causes the quantitative excess of the state to err without measure, is in truth the pass of the Subject” (BE 429). This means that in the end, the task of thinking substance and subject at the same time implies, as it were, a barring of both terms of the dialectic. By the same token, we come to understand in what sense philosophy circulates between a doctrine of being and an intervening doctrine of truth, that is, between ontology and the theory of the subject.

Badiou’s philosophical system in *Being and Event*, to put it differently, appears at first to hover around three (and now, with *Logics of Worlds*, four) fundamental concepts: being (and now also appearing), truth, and subject, tied together as if in a Borromean knot by way of a unique doctrine of the event. In actual fact, however, not only are almost all of these concepts subject to a dialectical scission (consistent/inconsistent being, presentation/representation, event/evental site, truth/truthfulness, mortal animal/immortal subject), but there are also a number of intercalated or intermediary concepts (such as the notion of forcing, not to mention points, bodies, and organs, all of which are added in *Logics of Worlds*) without which this philosophy risks lapsing into various forms of idealism or precritical dualism.

Badiou indeed wants his philosophy to be not just dialectical but materialist as well. After having reviewed his teacher Louis Althusser’s canonical works under the title “The (Re)commencement of Dialectical Materialism,” now in *Logics of Worlds* he seems to square the circle with a plea for nothing less than a renewal of the materialist dialectic against the dominant ideological climate that the book calls democratic materialism: “After much hesitation I have decided to name my enterprise – or, rather, the ideological atmosphere in which it gives vent to its most extreme tension – a *materialist dialectic*.”7 Beyond its latest polemical edge, this materialist side of Badiou’s philosophy can be understood on several different levels. Ontologically speaking, for instance, the axiom of separation posits the hypothetical existence of at least one set (the empty set) to which the properties of further operations can be applied. It thus defeats the idealist belief in the all-powerfulness of language that seems to accompany the aftermath of the linguistic turn. In the same vein, logically speaking, the theory of appearing may well amount to a phenomenology but it refuses to give to the subject a constituent role any more so than ontology would to language or to logic in the narrow sense. Badiou also postulates that every appearing is

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anchored in a minimal component, or real atom, of being. This runs counter to
the whole paradigm of virtuality that runs from Bergson to Deleuze and from
Brian Massumi to Elizabeth Grosz. Finally, and perhaps above all, materialism
also applies to the concept of philosophy itself. For Badiou, philosophy is never
a self-generated speculative discourse but is conditioned from the outside by the
nonphilosophical – aside from being threatened from within, as we will see, by
an antiphilosophical tendency as well.

Thus, we could say that Badiou’s philosophy too presents a “thinking of the
outside,” albeit in a slightly different sense from what Maurice Blanchot or
Deleuze had in mind when they used this expression to describe the work of
Foucault. For Badiou, this supposes, against any and all speculative–idealist
temptations, that philosophy itself does not produce any truth. To believe other-
wise, no matter how flattering it may well seem to the philosopher, always has
disastrous consequences for philosophy itself. A truth always originates in an
event, but philosophy is strictly speaking unable to give rise to an occurrence of
this nature. Events instead happen in the so-called truth procedures, which are
also the conditions of philosophy.

The basic materialist principle behind this conception of the philosophical act
thus holds that truths in the plural are produced outside philosophy in the four
generic procedures of truth that are art, science, politics, and love. What philos-
ophy does rather modestly amounts to developing the conceptual toolbox to
think the truths at work in such scientifc discoveries, amorous encounters, polit-
ical sequences, or artistic confgurations. The task of philosophy, in other words,
consists in creating a conceptual space of compossibility for the various truths
produced in its time. “The specifc role of philosophy is to propose a unifed
conceptual space in which naming takes place of events that serve as the point of
departure for truth procedures,” Badiou afirms in his Manifesto for Philosophy:

It does not establish any truth but it sets a locus of truths. It conff-
urates the generic procedures, through a welcoming, a sheltering,
built up with reference to their disparate simultaneity. Philosophy
sets out to think its time by putting the state of procedures condi-
tioning it into a common place. (MP 37)

In the end, this distinction between philosophy and its conditions is only another
way of afrying the materialist primacy of practice over theory.

Put otherwise, the truths of art, politics, science, and love stand in themselves
as forms of thinking; they need not wait for the philosopher to tell them what
counts as “the political” or “the aesthetic” and so on. But philosophy can think
through such thinking. Badiou proposes for instance that philosophy become
a kind of metapolitics:
By “metapolitics” I mean whatever consequences a philosophy is capable of drawing, both in and for itself, from the notion that real politics are forms of thought. Metapolitics is opposed to political philosophy, which claims that since politics does not think, it falls to the philosophers to think “the” political.⁸

Badiou’s proposal for an inaesthetics,⁹ likewise, is neither an aesthetic theory nor a philosophy of art; and metamathematics, finally, should not be confused with an epistemology or a philosophy of mathematics.

II. GENEALOGIES

A second trajectory, which I would call genealogical, could take us in a number of different directions. There is the question, first, of the continuity or discontinuity in Badiou’s philosophy: whether his work presents some kind of break between an “early” and a “late” Badiou, as historians of philosophy are so fond of establishing in the cases of Wittgenstein or Heidegger or Lacan. I favor a more continuist line of arguing, but this interpretation is by no means uncontroversial, even now that Badiou seems to have joined his voice to those of us who plead for an ongoing renewal of the materialist dialectic. Second, there is also the question of the relation among Badiou’s major works. He himself speaks of “the dialectic between my two ‘big’ books, the old one and the new one,” referring to the two volumes of Being and Event, and thus to the dialectic “of onto-logy and onto-logy, or of being and appearing” (LW 527). But I would make the case that Theory of the Subject, which Badiou himself recently described as his “first ‘big’ book of philosophy,”¹⁰ actually mediates between the other two, insofar as the version of dialectical materialism embraced in this earlier book encompasses a notion of the event – mentioned but not yet fully developed under this name – as both a vanishing cause (the event conceived of ontologically as a flash of self-belonging, an instant that disappears as soon as it appears) and as a new consistency (the event as incorporated logically in a disciplined body that must endure and be able to treat at least a few points). Read in this way, as Badiou’s third “major” book, Theory of the Subject could serve as the very embodiment of the necessary dialectic between Being and Event and Logics of Worlds.

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⁸ Alain Badiou, Metapolitics, Jason Barker (trans.) (London: Verso, 2005), xxxix (translation modified).
⁹ Badiou’s inaesthetics is discussed in this volume in the essay by Gabriel Rockhill.
In addition to such potentially rather scholastic questions, however, I would also like to propose a slightly different take on Badiou’s genealogical trajectory. This involves studying how, to put it in Nietzschean terms, “he became who he is” by following a spiraling fidelity to three maitres, meaning both “masters” and “teachers,” namely, Sartre, Althusser, and Lacan. Thus, in a rare autobiographical statement, “The Philosopher’s Avowal,” Badiou writes: “There are the immediate teachers, the ones we meet at school; and then there are the philosophical master-teachers. During the decisive period of my formation, I have had three: Sartre, Lacan, and Althusser.”¹¹ Badiou began by thinking that he would follow in Sartre’s footsteps as a novelist, playwright, and committed intellectual. His success as a student of philosophy, however, would decide otherwise for him. Thus, after his entry into the École Normale Supérieure, his encounter with Althusser’s Marxism would force him for years to push the investigation of the structure to the point of its immanent breakdown or deadlock. But, as we saw, this impasse is itself the retroactive effect of a subjective intervention. Thus, whereas Althusser was forever unable to perceive in the notion of the subject anything but an effect of ideology, Badiou finds in Lacanian psychoanalysis a theory of the divided subject with which to supplement the basic principles of structuralist Marxism. Fidelity to the event and its consequences then allows for a renewed understanding of the old notion of commitment that Badiou openly inherited from Sartre: his first and most formidable love, both in a literary and a philosophical sense, perhaps on a par only with Stéphane Mallarmé and Samuel Beckett.

To achieve this seemingly impossible triangulation, finally, we must consider the role of Badiou’s Maoism. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, it is the sequence of Badiou’s so-called “red years,” roughly from 1968 until the backlash of 1977 with the arrival of the Nouveaux Philosophes, that alone enables his unique articulation of Sartre, Althusser, and Lacan.¹² Thus, it should not come as a surprise if Logics of Worlds, in which Badiou forcefully returns to the tradition of dialectical materialism, or the materialist dialectic, also begins and ends with reflections on Mao. This is at least in part due to the fact that Badiou himself in more recent years has come to the realization that an effective transmission of his philosophical system also presupposes the transmission of the experiences – be they political or artistic or otherwise – that make up much of its genealogy.

¹² For a more detailed account of Badiou’s Maoist years, see my “Post-Maoism: Badiou and Politics,” Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique 13(3) (2005). This special issue, which is titled “Badiou and Cultural Revolution,” also contains a bibliography of Badiou’s Maoist group, UCFML, or Union des Communistes de France (marxistes-léninistes).
III. POLEMICS

As Badiou’s philosophical system kept spiraling outward, its polemical force also underwent a snowball effect. This then opens up a third trajectory for traversing Badiou’s thinking. From the start, in fact, much of his conceptual labor has been determined by his opponents: adversaries, I should say, more so than enemies, even though there is no shortage of the latter and they are not spared either. It is just that they receive little to no philosophical credit. Even his three master-teachers, perhaps with the sole exception of Sartre, have been the object of frontal assaults and partial criticisms, respectively: Althusser, who is targeted most vitriolically in *De l’idéologie*, and Lacan, throughout Badiou’s writing but most succinctly in *Theory of the Subject*.

Subsequently, Badiou’s polemic with Deleuze, based on a long correspondence and summed up in *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, is meant to pinpoint the precise nature of a fundamental divergence – being or life itself as the singular event versus events as breaks with the normal representation of being – in the midst of an overarching convergence regarding philosophy as a metaphysics of infinite multiplicity against the jargon of finitude.13 In addition, much of *Being and Event* (including its title) represents a coming to terms with the “poetic” hermeneutical ontologies of presencing influenced by the work of Heidegger, as opposed to the “axiomatic” metamathematical ontology that Badiou proposes. This last polemic in particular still deserves to be unpacked in greater detail. Finally, Badiou has never ceased writing models of review articles that usually lead to the clarification of an intimate disagreement, particularly in relation to French philosophy.14

Aside from these individually oriented polemics, Badiou’s work has also reopened the debates both old and new with the adversaries of the tradition of philosophy as such. First and foremost among these adversaries, of course, we find the sophists, or those who make up the tradition of what Badiou, in his *Manifesto for Philosophy*, calls the “Great Modern Sophistry” (MP 98). This diatribe against the sophists – including Nietzsche or Wittgenstein as the major figures and Richard Rorty or Gianni Vattimo as minor ones – is what we would come to expect from a self-proclaimed Platonist. Indeed, as Badiou writes in an essay on Lacan, “the antisophistic argumentative rage constitutes the ‘tumos’ of philosophy, i.e., its core of polemical anger, since its origin.”15 Perhaps more

14. Most of Badiou’s reviews and notes on French philosophy are collected in the small volume *Pocket Pantheon*. For a general panorama, see Alain Badiou, “The Adventure of French Philosophy,” *New Left Review* 35 (September–October 2005).
interesting than this age-old rage, though, is the fact that in addition to, and partially overlapping with, the sophists, the adversaries of philosophy in the way Badiou seeks to reground it also include a respectable series of so-called “antiphilosophers.”

In Badiou’s hands, the understanding of antiphilosophy obviously is not limited to the otherwise quite difficult reconstruction of Lacan’s usage of the term. Instead, the category emerges as the name for a longstanding tradition of thinkers who, with regard to the dominant philosophical trends of their time, situate themselves in the strange topological position of an outside within or of an internal exteriority, adopting a range of attitudes that typically oscillate between distance and proximity, adoption of a range of attitudes that typically oscillate between distance and proximity, admiration and blame.

Based on his readings of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Lacan, as well as the occasional reference to Kierkegaard, Rousseau, and St. Paul, Badiou distinguishes a number of features that make antiphilosophy into a coherent tradition in its own right. First, the assumption that the question of being, or of the world, is coextensive with the question of language; second, and as a consequence, the reduction of truth to being little more than a linguistic or rhetorical effect, the outcome of historically and culturally specific language games or tropes that therefore must be judged, or even mocked, in light of a critical-linguistic, discursive, or genealogical analysis; third, an appeal to what lies just beyond language, or at the upper limit of the sayable, as a domain of meaning or sense, irreducible to truth theoretically understood; and, finally, in order to gain access to this domain, the search for a radical act, such as the religious leap of faith or the revolutionary break, the intense thrill of which would disqualify in advance any systematic theoretical or conceptual elaboration. Of course, not all antiphilosophers share these features in their totality, or not to the same extent. Whereas Nietzsche’s filiation with the sophists is explicit in his work, for example, by contrast there are certainly many theses in Lacan’s conception of truth and meaning that bring him closer to an antisophistic stance that every contemporary philosopher, in Badiou’s view, should traverse. In fact, the tension between the first two of these features and the last two produces a characteristic vacillation that, even within the work of a single antiphilosophical thinker, can range from a purely constructivist viewpoint, which reduces truth to what can be discerned in the existing language systems, all the way to the yearning for a mystical beyond, pointing toward the other side of language.

The most important element in the characterization of an antiphilosopher, without a doubt, is the reliance on a radical gesture – the act – that alone has the force of destituting, and occasionally overtaking, the philosophical category of

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This article is published in a shorter and slightly modified version as “Anti-Philosophy: Plato and Lacan,” in *Conditions*, Steve Corcoran (trans.) (London: Continuum, 2008), 228–47.
truth. In the case of Nietzsche, to give but one eloquent example, Badiou qualifies this antiphilosophical act as “archi-political,” whereby the prefix is meant to draw a clear line of demarcation between the act for antiphilosophy and the event for philosophy – even though the same “events” in the common sense of the word, for instance, the French Revolution or the Paris Commune, may be at stake. Badiou first posits that Nietzsche’s relation to politics, which he sees as significantly overdetermined by 1789 or 1792, is one of rivalry and mimicry. To be more precise, the antiphilosopher is never content with putting his thinking under condition; instead, he will absorb the energy of a given event – in politics or in art or even in love and in science – so as to make it his own. Not only does this entail a significant amount of suturing of philosophy onto the event, but it also goes one step further by turning the ensuing notion – in this case the act that breaks in two the history of the world – into an explosive that can be used both to dethrone traditionally conceived philosophy and to mock really existing politics:

The philosophical act is, I would say, archi-political, in that it proposes itself to revolutionize all of humanity on a more radical level than that of the calculations of politics. From this let us retain that archi-politics does not designate the traditional philosophical purpose of finding a ground for politics. The logic, once again, is a logic of rivalry, and not one of founding oversight. It is the philosophical act itself that is archi-political, in the sense that its historical explosion will show, retroactively, that the political revolution properly speaking has not been truthful, or has not been authentic.16

Badiou draws important lessons from this reading of the antiphilosophical act, first and foremost with regard to the necessary restraint and reserve philosophy should show in front of the events that condition it. Otherwise, the risk is great that only an antiphilosopher’s personal experience can guarantee the authenticity of the proposed break, as in Nietzsche’s Ecce Homo, whereas all philosophy for Badiou presupposes the possibility of separating a truth statement from the question “Who is speaking?” In fact, this decisive role of the speaking subject constitutes a final feature that is typical of antiphilosophy. It reveals the extent to which the experience of a radical act can be transmitted only in a near-autobiographical style that is inseparable from the subject of the enunciation. This explains the experimental, writerly side of antiphilosophers.

present in Nietzsche’s aphorisms, Kierkegaard’s diaries, Lacan’s seminars, or St. Paul’s epistles:

Why? Because as opposed to the regulated anonymity of science, and against everything in philosophy that claims to speak in the name of the universal, the antiphilosophical act, which is without precedent or guarantee, has only itself and its effects to offer by way of attesting to its value.17

In the end, though, the fate of the antiphilosopher may well be to bequeath to the philosopher the task of avoiding the disastrous consequences of claiming truth itself to be within its purview: the disaster, that is, of presenting itself as a truth procedure. As Badiou writes in Manifesto for Philosophy:

The key to this turnabout is that philosophy is worked from within by the chronic temptation of taking the operation of the empty category of Truth as identical to the multiple procedures of the production of truths. Or else: that philosophy, renouncing the operational singularity of the seizing of truths, is itself presented as being a truth procedure. Which also means that it is presented as an art, a science, a passion or a policy. (MP 128–9)

Precisely for this reason, however, the philosopher must stay in the closest proximity to the antiphilosopher, who alone keeps him on guard against the temptations of religion, disaster, or the “service of goods” pure and simple:

I think that all three – but Nietzsche’s case is without doubt the most dramatic – in the last instance sacrificed themselves for philosophy. There is in antiphilosophy a movement of putting itself to death, or of silencing itself, so that something imperative may be bequeathed to philosophy. Antiphilosophy is always what, at its very extremes, states the new duty of philosophy, or its new possibility in the figure of a new duty. I think of Nietzsche’s madness, of Wittgenstein’s strange labyrinth, of Lacan’s final muteness. In all three cases antiphilosophy takes the form of a legacy. It bequeaths something beyond itself to the very thing that it is fighting against. Philosophy is always the heir to antiphilosophy. (Ibid.)

This, in the final instance, would be the legacy that Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Lacan bequeathed to all those who seek to (re)affirm the possibility of philosophy today.

**IV. PROSPECTS**

To conclude, let me now turn to the possibility of thinking with Badiou, that is, not just of continuing the exegetical commentary on Badiou's own thinking, but of actually putting his thought to work so as to think the events of our time or of previous times. In the preface to *Being and Event*, Badiou indeed insists that he wants his philosophy to serve as a toolbox to think events in any or all of the four conditions of truth that for him are science, politics, love, and art:

> The categories that this book deploys, from the pure multiple to the subject, constitute the general order of a thought which is such that it can be *practised* across the entirety of the contemporary system of reference. These categories are available for the service of scientific procedures just as they are for those of politics or analysis. They attempt to organize an abstract vision of the requirements of the epoch. (BE 4)\(^{18}\)

While seemingly self-effacing, however, the suggestion of practical availability and service also presents us with a number of problems. Perhaps these problems even amount to authentic aporias – otherwise not a very common term in this thinker’s personal vocabulary – which somehow would be inherent in Badiou’s philosophy: not necessarily shortcomings, but inevitable side-effects of the enormous gravitational pull of his thinking.

If one reads the meditation on Mallarmé in *Being and Event* (Meditation 17), for example, one does not obtain an analysis of Mallarmé as an event in French symbolist or postsymbolist poetry so much as a commentary on Mallarmé as the poet–thinker of the eventfulness (or eventality, *événementialité*) of the event. “A poem by Mallarmé always fixes the place of an aleatory event; an event to be interpreted on the basis of the traces it leaves behind,” Badiou posits at the opening of this pivotal meditation (BE 191).

\(^{18}\) See also, somewhat less modestly, the end of Badiou’s preface to the English translation of *Being and Event*: “I would like this book to be read, appreciated, staked out, and contested as much by the inheritors of the formal and experimental grandeur of the sciences or of the law, as it is by the aesthetes of contemporary nihilism, the refined amateurs of literary deconstruction, the wild militants of a de-alienated world, and by those who are deliciously isolated by amorous constructions” (BE xv).
Of course, it is one thing to read Mallarmé as the poet-thinker of the event-like nature of the event (l’événementalité de l’événement) and quite another to read his work as an event in nineteenth-century French poetry. It is almost, though, as if Badiou’s meditation, by a strange inward necessity, were unable to preserve the radical innovation in the history of poetry addressed by the second reading except by replacing it with, or displacing it onto, the concentrated rigor and self-contained formalization of the first approach.

Something similar happens in the case of Badiou’s sections on Paul Valéry’s Marine Cemetery at the end of Logics of Worlds. Here too the poem is read as a subtle disposition of the different elements and processes involved in the transformative change produced by an event. “This poem is, in our terms, the history of an event,” Badiou writes (LW 455); and in a footnote, he adds that Valéry matches Mallarmé’s extraordinary skills in this regard:

> It is the question of the “pure event” that connects the Mallarmé of A Cast of Dice and the Valéry of Marine Cemetery: under which conditions can the poem capture what lies beyond what is, what purely happens? And what then is the status of thought, if it is true that such a happening strikes at thought’s corporeal support? (LW 516, translation modified)

In both of these cases, poetry is not read as an event so much as in terms of a poetic theory of the event qua event.

Badiou’s readings of Mallarmé and Valéry demonstrate an almost boundless confidence in the powers of thought to think the event, except that, in the process of this demonstration, most events, which are supposed to give rise to the various truths that condition philosophy from the outside, become transposed into so many theories of the event, of truth, of the body, or of the subject, and so on. In other words, it is as if Badiou’s philosophy, instead of serving the truths that are produced outside it in the four conditions or generic procedures, could not avoid looping these instances back onto themselves before tying them in with a strictly intraphilosophical apparatus – namely, his own.19

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19. When I asked Badiou about this in an interview a few years ago, he admitted that this was indeed a real problem, one “which obviously entails a rather large amount of philosophical appropriation of the condition.” In fact, he added, it might be the only plausible way to argue that his philosophy carries a dogmatic streak in it, insofar as “I submit the condition to the conditioned.” See my “Can Change Be Thought? A Dialogue with Alain Badiou,” in Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions, Gabriel Riera (ed.) (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), 257. I cannot agree, in this regard, with Alberto Toscano’s vote of confidence in Badiou’s “inaesthetics,” in the translator’s note to Handbook of Inaesthetics (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), when he writes: “Rather than seeking to welcome (that is, to absorb)
If these strategies may seem justifiable on the part of a philosopher whose thought operations are by definition unique to philosophy even though they are conditioned by events outside it, there comes a point where such selective appropriations and displacements of the condition back onto the conditioned, or of the events back onto the philosophy of the event, can become real obstacles to that philosophy’s application. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine how the available options for such an application are reduced to two mirroring extremes. Either we could privilege the systematicity of the philosopher’s conceptual apparatus, in which case the events studied by application actually risk becoming nothing more than illustrations of concepts extrinsic to the events themselves, or we could privilege the radical break introduced by the events in question at the expense of the philosopher’s systematization, in which case the events risk becoming the occasion for a typically antiphilosophical appeal to the ineffable singularity of experience, over and above its impoverished conceptualization.

My proposal for renewing the task of theory, as different from philosophy properly speaking, derives from a desire to trace a diagonal across these two extremes so as to produce an effective and applied thinking of the event that can still learn a great deal from Badiou’s work. I could phrase this by returning to my initial statement that to be a philosopher today means to think the event. We might then ask: Is this also true the other way around? In other words, does thinking the event always require that one be a philosopher? I would argue that theory has a role of its own to play in this context – one comparable to the role of psychoanalysis for the condition of love, or to the role of inaesthetics for art, or metapolitics for politics, when they are not yet equated with philosophy as such. This also means that a theoretical treatment of events that take place within the various truth procedures need not worry about the simultaneous presence and philosophical reflection of all four of them.

Badiou’s requirements for philosophy are perhaps overly demanding if it is our aim to take him up on his offer of applying the conceptual apparatus of Being and Event. In his Manifesto for Philosophy, for instance, he even goes so far as to suggest that, in the absence of a strict compossibility among the truths produced in all four of these conditions, philosophy also ceases to exist. “We shall thus posit that there are four conditions of philosophy, and that the lack of a single one gives rise to its dissipation, just as the emergence of all four conditioned its

the poem into the realm of speculative thinking in a hermeneutic vein, Badiou’s approach is committed both to declaring the autonomy of artistic procedures (poetic or literary, cinematic or theatrical) and to registering what he calls their ‘intraphilosophical effects’” (ibid., x). Or, rather, Badiou may very well be committed to this ideal, but whether he manages to live up to it in his own work is a different question. I would argue, in particular, that Badiou’s Handbook of Inaesthetics and Metapolitics are not quite examples of the method they are meant to introduce in the philosophical treatment of art and politics, respectively.
apparition” (MP 35). I would argue that we need not follow the philosopher in these exorbitant demands. My proposal is rather to work more closely on the conditions, as it were at the grassroots level, all the while trying to stay clear of the pull by which the philosopher almost inevitably seems to tie the conditions back into the conditioned. This task, by which I would redefine the field of theory or critical theory, involves a precarious balancing act between, on the one hand, the quasi-transcendental if not outright transcendent repetition of the essence of the event and, on the other, the empiricist diluting of the event into the prior conditions or prerequisites that explain away the chance surprise of its emergence.  

MAJOR WORKS


20. A version of this article was first presented as a public lecture at the 2006 School of Criticism and Theory, Cornell University. With thanks to this program’s director, Dominick LaCapra, for his kind invitation, and to members of the audience for their numerous questions and objections.


**Thinking the Event**


If, as Richard Rorty suggests, there are three seminal works of post-Second World War English-speaking philosophy that ushered analytic philosophy into its “post-analytic” phase – W. V. O. Quine’s “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951), Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), and Wilfrid Sellars’s “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” (1956) – what could be called, rather unimaginatively, its “post-postanalytic” phase can usefully be understood as working through a certain naturalism about meaning, mind, and reason common to all three.¹ I use the tentative expression “a certain naturalism” because I think there are two different senses of naturalism lurking in these works that need to be separated and whose separation is crucial to understanding how Donald Davidson, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom take up the legacy of Quine, Wittgenstein, and Sellars.²

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² Donald Davidson (March 6, 1917–August 30, 2003; born in Springfield, Massachusetts) was educated at Harvard University (BA, 1939; PhD, 1949). Influenced by Anscombe, Kant, C. I. Lewis, Quine, Ramsey, Spinoza, Tarski, and Wittgenstein, he held appointments at Queens College, CUNY (1949–51), Stanford University (1951–67), Princeton University (1967–70), the Rockefeller University (1970–76), the University of Chicago (1976–81), and the University of California, Berkeley (1981–2003). He has written more than a hundred articles, which have been assembled in five volumes of collected papers: *Essays on Actions and Events; Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation; Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective; Problems of Rationality; and Truth, Language, and History.*

John McDowell (March 7, 1942– ; born in Boksburg, South Africa) was educated at New College, Oxford (BA, 1965; MA, 1969), where his influences included Dummett, Evans,
I. NATURALISM AND NEO-KANTIANISM: QUINE, WITTGENSTEIN, SELLARS

The two forms of naturalism to be distinguished are the naturalization of meaning, mind, and reason and the naturalistic reduction of them. The first form of naturalism consists in the rejection of transcendent abstrata, like Meanings (with a capital “M”) that are knowable a priori, that bear necessary relations to each other, and that are expressed in analytic statements. Naturalism in this form consists either in rejecting the notion of Meaning as a kind of non-spatiotemporal entity belonging in some extra- or super-natural, Platonic form-like realm or else in rejecting some Cartesian immaterial mind-substance categorically distinct from anything in corporeal nature. Although different, both reject anything beyond the natural and in this respect express a similar form of naturalism: naturalism qua anti-super-naturalism. The second form of naturalism amounts to the denial of any normative-rational dimension to human beings and thus denies a normative-rational dimension to the basic human activities of justifying claims to knowledge, holding contentful mental states, and speaking meaningful language. Naturalism in this second sense consists in reducing (or eliminating) the is/ought, cause/reason, fact/norm distinctions. This form of naturalism is reductive naturalism, naturalism qua non-normativism. Put positively, anti-super-naturalism is the weaker claim that human beings and their rational activities of making claims to knowledge, holding mental states, and speaking a meaningful language, are natural phenomena that belong to, or form a part of, the larger natural world. As natural objects and phenomena inside this larger natural order, human beings and their activities are open to the kind of law-governed explanation that all natural objects are and that natural science strives to uncover. Non-normativism or reductive naturalism is the stronger claim that human beings and their activities are nothing but natural objects and phenomena, that not only are they open to being understood in the vocabulary of the natural science and the explanatory apparatus of natural law, but that they can be exhaustively explained in such terms. Quine advocates both forms of

Hegel, Kant, Rorty, Sellars, Strawson, Wiggins, and Wittgenstein. He began his career as a fellow at University College, Oxford (1966–86), and since 1986 has taught at the University of Pittsburgh. Selected major works include: Mind and World; Mind, Value, and Reality; and Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality.

Robert Brandom (March 13, 1950–; born in New York) was educated at Yale University (BA, 1972) and Princeton (PhD, 1977). Influenced by Dummett, Frege, Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, David Lewis, Rorty, Sellars, and Wittgenstein, he has spent his career, beginning in 1976, at the University of Pittsburgh. His major works include: Making It Explicit; Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism; and Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality.
naturalism, whereas Wittgenstein and Sellars hold the first but not the second; for them meaning and reason are to be naturalized (de-super-naturalized, de-transcendentalized) without being naturalistically reduced. Their position I term neo-Kantianism since it insists on Kant’s distinction between “ought” and “is,” on the irreducibility of “norms” to “facts,” while denying that this irreducibility requires the positing of another, transcendent realm or immaterial substance wherein such norms exist or subsist. Thus, Wittgenstein and Sellars prise apart the issue of the normativity of meaning and reason from commitment to a two-world/two-self metaphysic, arguing that meaning and reason can be de-transcendentalized without being stripped of their normative character.

Quine’s epistemic holism is the basis of his commitment to the first sense of naturalism. Epistemic holism, the thesis that sentences go to experience all at once for confirmation or disconfirmation, has the consequence that all sentences are open to revision on the basis of experience; that is, none are analytic, a priori, or necessary. In the context of radical translation, this leads to translational inde Terminacy: that “There is a rabbit” and “Gavagai” are assented to and dissented from under the same sensory conditions (which is what experience comes to in this context) need not entail they have the same meaning, since this experiential datum is compatible with “Gavagai” meaning “There is an undetached rabbit part” or “There is a stage in the history of a rabbit,” and so on. Hence Meanings – what such analytic hypotheses of a translation manual express – are indeterminate. If Quine’s holism leads to this weaker sense of naturalism, his scientism commits him to the stronger sense: not just to the elimination of Meanings but to the evacuation of meaningfulness (intentionality, normative-rationality) from the activities of justifying claims to knowledge, holding contentful mental states, and speaking a meaningful language. Epistemology becomes “naturalized epistemology”: the theory of knowledge becomes the merely descriptive enterprise of reporting how we in fact arrive at our beliefs rather than the normative enterprise of determining whether how we arrive at them is how we (rationally) ought to. Philosophy of mind becomes behaviorist psychology, where intentional mental


Quine’s adoption of radical translation as the methodological starting-point for inquiring into meaning immediately de-transcendentalizes or pragmatizes it because it holds that all there is to the meaning of a sentence or mental state (whether another’s or one’s own) is whatever the practice of giving the meaning, that is, radical translation, can recover of it. This has the effect that conclusions at the level of the epistemology of meaning (whether we can know the meaning) are immediately conclusions at the level of the metaphysics of meaning (whether there is any meaning to be known), and that they apply in the first-personal case as well as the third-personal case: “radical translation begins at home” (Willard Van Orman Quine, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays [New York: Columbia University Press, 1969], 46).
states, such as beliefs and desires, get understood in purely behaviorist terms of
correlations between (dispositions to) gross bodily behaviors and sensory stim-
ulations, and as a consequence their intentionality is eliminated. Philosophy of
language becomes a kind of behavioral sociolinguistics: the theory of meaning
becomes nothing more than the activity of correlating a translatée’s assent/dissent
behavior in response to sensory stimulation with a translator’s; understanding
and speaking a language is no longer considered an essentially meaning-
freighted activity; it is just the acquiring of certain regular correlations between
sights (stimulations) and sounds (verbal responses), and thus as an activity is no
different in kind from a parrot vocalizing or a dog heeling on command.

Wittgenstein and Sellars both embrace the first form of naturalism; they part
company with Quine in resisting the second form. For Wittgenstein as for Quine,
if the meaning of a term is understood as transcendent to use (i.e. as Meaning),
as some kind of rule over and above ordinary use that lays down in advance of
use what the term means, then meaning so conceived is indeterminate. Hence,
Wittgenstein advocates a use-based account – the meaning of a term depends
on how the linguistic community in fact uses the term – which expresses his
commitment to the de-transcendentalization of meaning (the elimination of
Meaning) since it locates the meaning of a term in the actual *de facto* uses made
of it by language users. However, while locating meaning in actual practices of
communal linguistic use, Wittgenstein, unlike Quine, does not want to reduce
meaning to mere regularities in communal linguistic behavior, for this would
rob meaning of its essential normative dimension: if meaning were identified
with actual regularities in use, then since actual uses contain mistaken uses, such
an account would build mistakes into the meaning of a term, which would in
turn mean that there is no such thing as the correct, determinate meaning of a
term. To obtain the neo-Kantian position that makes meaning *dependent on* but
*not reducible to* regularities in actual communal use, Wittgenstein’s key notions
of custom, practice, and form of life are conceived in normatively rich rather
than naturalistically reduced terms, not as observable regularities in community-
wide linguistic behavior resulting from stimulus–response conditioning, but as
*normatively structured* regularities instilled through practices in which masters
*instruct, evaluate, correct*, and so on, novices in the use of terms. In doing so
they point the way to showing how the normativity of meaning can be natural-
ized (found in actual use) without thereby being naturalistically reduced.

Sellars’s attack on the “Myth of the Given” is similarly an attack on reductive–naturalistic accounts of meaning and knowledge, for his problem with
“the Given of experience” acting as a foundation for meaning and knowledge is

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that it fails to attend to the normative-rational dimension of these phenomena. Although animals and machines, like persons, are sensation-capable, that is, they can register the impacts of the experiential “given,” there is a fundamental difference between the person who says “This is red” when having a red experience and the parrot trained to produce the sounds “T-h-i-s-i-s-r-e-d” when the red light flashes, or the photocell rigged up to a speaker that stutters the same sounds when a red object passes before its sensor. The difference is, he thinks, that the content-bearing (intentional) states of the person essentially bear normative-rational (e.g. logical and epistemological) relations to other contentbearing states: the thought that this is red entails the thought that this is colored, is compatible with the thought that this is round (and also with the thought that this is not round), is contradictory with the thought that this is green, provides evidence for the thought that this is not a Granny Smith, and so on. These logical and epistemological relations, which are distinctive of intentional activity, are normative in that if one has the first thought one ought (rationally) to have the other thoughts, independently of whether one does in fact have them. As such they express relations that cannot be completely captured by natural laws that operate at base with the category of temporal sequence; that is, when this happens that will happen, for whether or not one does as a matter of fact have the thought that this is colored after having the thought that this is red, nevertheless the latter thought ought (rationally) to be had. In this way, Sellars argues that what is distinctive of contentful states is that they bear these normative-rational relations to each other, that they have a location in “the logical space of reasons,” which cannot be reduced to the natural lawlike relations of before and after, or cause and effect.6 For Sellars, it is because “the given of experience” can only stand in temporal or causal relations, rather than normative-rational relations, to content-bearing states that it cannot be the foundation of such (normative-rational) content-bearing states, and thus why any attempt to derive content from “the given” would be “of a piece with the naturalistic fallacy in ethics,” that is, attempting to derive “ought” from “is”.7 Furthermore, this normative

7. *Ibid.*, 19. Sellars readily acknowledges that his critique of “the Given” reprises Hegel’s critique of Sense-Certainty in the *Phenomenology*: experiences must be contentless if they are to be certain, but experiences that have no content cannot enter into logical or epistemological relations with beliefs. Hence they are unable to serve as semantic or epistemic foundations. For example, in the opening section of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars refers approvingly to Hegel as “that great foe of ‘immediacy’” and characterizes his work as continuing the assault on “the Given” initiated by Hegel (*ibid.*, 14), and later, he refers to his attack on the given as an “incipient Méditation Hégélienne” on the notion (*ibid.*, 42). McDowell and Brandom, who are heavily influenced by Sellars, also see their work having deep affinities with Hegel.
dimension of beliefs and utterances, this locating of a belief or utterance in the logical space of reason, which is constitutive of its being contentful in the first place, is understood by Sellars to be socially achieved. One learns the meaning of color words, and thus grasps color concepts and forms justified beliefs about the colors of things, from others – for example, from those who have already mastered the language game of color predication – through practices of instruction, evaluation, correction, and so on. So for Sellars, as for Wittgenstein, content is constituted by normative-rational relations that in turn are constituted in the actual social practice of language learning where the inferential and epistemological relations that judgments bear to each other are instilled.

A central theme of Davidson’s, McDowell’s, and Brandom’s work is that each in its different way aims to elaborate this Wittgenstein–Sellars-initiated, neo-Kantian middle ground that accepts the Quinean abandonment of a transcendent-to-practice notion of meaning (anti-super-naturalism) while rejecting the elimination of normativity (non-normativism): Davidson in the subtle treatment of the relation between reason and cause that emerges in his charity-constrained, triangulated account of radical interpretation; McDowell in the role that “second nature” plays in his naturalized Platonism; and Brandom in the social-fallibilistic character of his deontic scorekeeping account of meaning.

II. DAVIDSON: CHARITY AND TRIANGULATION

While Davidson has much in common with his teacher, Quine, there are crucial differences between them in their general philosophical outlooks and conclusions. The commonalities concern their shared methodological starting-point of radical translation (or radical interpretation) and their agreement over the core doctrine of holism. These have the effect of committing Davidson to the Quinean conclusions of the rejection of the analytic/synthetic (a priori/a posteriori, necessary/contingent) distinction and the elimination of Meanings (meaning indeterminacy). As such, they express Davidson’s commitment to a general de-trascendentalization of meaning and reason, and so to naturalism qua anti-super-naturalism. Two central differences concern the difference in the data on which radical interpretation/translation is based and the different status that the principle of charity has in radical interpretation/translation. These differences signal Davidson’s commitment to the essential normative-rational character of meaning and belief and thus mark his refusal to have the naturalization of meaning and reason lead, as it does in Quine, to the naturalistic reduction of meaning and reason. Hence, they express his neo-Kantianism: his resistance to naturalism qua anti-normativism while at the same time embracing naturalism qua anti-super-naturalism.
Even though Davidson more or less adopts the Quinean methodological starting-point of radical translation, at the outset there is a highly significant modification in his conception of the data available to the radical translator, which gets signaled in his terminological shift from “radical translation” to “radical interpretation.” As against conceiving of the data as a speaker’s assent/dissent behavior under certain sensory stimulations, Davidson takes the data of radical interpretation to consist in a speaker’s *holding a sentence true* when certain conditions obtain *in the world*. That is, not only is there a difference between them over what the speaker is responding to (not the experiences of speaker, i.e. states of affairs in the world *-as-they-affect-the speaker*, but states of affairs in the world *itself*), the nature of *what* the response is is also different (not verbal behavior, i.e. mere noise production, but the attitude of holding true). The difference is that the attitude of holding true, as opposed to the mere production of noise, is minimally contentful; it is not dumb sounds but a state with a content – namely, *that* a certain sentence (whatever it means) is meaningful, is being held true. It signals at the outset of Davidson’s account that the data of radical interpretation are not to be understood, as they are for Quine, in the very stripped back, reductive-naturalistic terms of physical noise in response to sensory stimulation, but rather as intentional.

The other major difference between them concerns the status of the principle of charity as a constraint on radical translation/interpretation, and this difference brings to center stage Davidson’s irreducibly normative-rational conception of human beings and their activities as against Quine’s reductively naturalistic conception. In order to resolve the impasse in translation/interpretation created by the holistic interdependence of meaning and belief, both think that the translator/interpreter is to employ the principle of charity. The principle of charity obliges the translator/interpreter to make a charitable assumption about what the speaker believes – the charitable assumption being that the translator/interpreter is to attribute true and/or rational beliefs (according to the interpreter) to translatees/interpretees *in the main*, and on the basis of this, use the speaker’s assent/dissent behavior or what the speaker holds true to determine what the speaker’s utterances mean. The difference between them arises over the force of the obligation to translate/interpret charitably. For Quine, the constraint to translate charitably has at most a pragmatic force: one should translate others charitably (e.g. as not believing contradictions, as holding beliefs about rabbits rather than undetached rabbit parts or time-slices of rabbits) if one wants to interact with them in a hassle-free way. For Quine, it is *possible* to translate others as holding mostly false and irrational beliefs by our lights; it is just that pragmatic considerations to do with ease of understanding and facility in communication and interaction counsel one against doing so. For Davidson, on the contrary, this is not possible: interpreting them in a way that has them holding false or irrational beliefs in the main either
means that one’s interpretation is thereby wrong or the creatures we are interpreting are not creatures engaged in belief-holding, language-using activities after all. The principle of charity not merely has hypothetical, pragmatic force but is a categorical, constitutive constraint on interpretation: interpreting them so that, for example, their beliefs abide by noncontradiction or that they hold beliefs about whole rabbits rather than about spatial or temporal parts of them, in the main, is required not merely if one wants to understand them more easily, but if one is to find them understandable at all, that is, if they are to be belief holders, creatures capable of meaningful or interpretable activity period.

Davidson’s theory of belief and meaning attribution, then, gives an essential role to normative-rational considerations, for to insist that charity is constitutive of interpretation is just to insist that normative rationality is a constitutive constraint on holding beliefs or speaking a language. It means that for Davidson these human activities are a lot richer than a purely reductive–naturalistic account would have it, involving in addition an irreducible normative-rational dimension. This is Davidson’s neo-Kantianism since it insists on the Kantian conception of human beings as essentially rationally autonomous agents and not merely causally determined or law-governed objects. However, this needs to be handled carefully: while distinguishing reason from cause, or the normative from the nomological, Davidson needs to be careful not to completely exile them from each other for this risks making reason completely other to nature and thereby courts a form of super-naturalism about meaning and reason, the avoidance of which is necessary if he is to maintain the Quinean naturalized position on Meanings to which he is also committed. That is, if Davidson is to tread the fine line of holding the first sense of naturalism while denying the second, he owes us an account of how he can have normative-rational relations without positing

8. Like radical translation, radical interpretation and the principles that govern it result in metaphysical as well as epistemological claims about meaning (see note 4). Consequently, I move between epistemological formulations of the thesis that charity is constitutive of content (e.g. what it is to attribute beliefs or take someone to be a belief holder) and metaphysical formulations of it (e.g. what it is to be a belief or believer).

9. Donald Davidson, “Radical Interpretation,” in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 137. The various features of Davidsonian charity can be seen to mirror some core concepts of Gadamerian hermeneutics. In attributing to interpreters what interpreters find true or reasonable, and in this attribution being a condition of interpretation rather than something interpretation may or may not bear out, charity functions very much like Gadamer’s notions of tradition or prejudice: the inescapable background of basic beliefs that an interpreter cannot help but bring with her to any attempt to understand another person or text. In addition, charity in both these respects resembles what Gadamer calls a “hermeneutics of trust”: the fundamental presupposition or trust that others have a basic sensibleness to them, or that they share a world with us (whatever the differences in beliefs about this world there may be between us), which is necessary for understanding others to be possible in the first place.
an other-worldly realm or substance, or, put conversely, he needs to show us how normative-rational relations are in some sense continuous with ordinary, natural-worldly phenomena and relations, while not thereby being reduced to them. The causal principle of content determination, which gets its full elaboration in the theory of triangulation, is where this subtle position on the relation between reason and cause, the normative and the natural, gets worked out.

On Davidson’s fully fledged triangulation account of content determination, the content of a belief and the meaning of an utterance are the result of a process of triangulation between the world, the speaker/interpretee, and the hearer/interpreter. The causal principle forms a part of the triangulated process, and as a constraint on interpretation says that the content of a belief (and hence the meaning of a sentence) is determined by what state of affairs in the world causes it. The basic idea is that an interpreter, by knowing what conditions obtaining in the world cause him to hold true a belief or sentence of his own language, and by noticing that an interpretee holds true an utterance of his own language under the same conditions, puts forward the interpretative hypothesis that the meaning of the interpretee’s utterance is the same as the one he utters under those same conditions. In this way an interpreter can figure out the meanings of an interpretee’s beliefs and sentences (knowledge of another’s mind) by using his knowledge of a common world about which both interpreter and interpretee are speaking and holding beliefs (knowledge of the world) and his knowledge of the language-world relations of his own language (knowledge of his own mind). While this is the basic strategy, matters are not nearly so simple: the above account makes it seem as if one first had independent knowledge of the contents of one’s own mind and language as well as independent knowledge of the external world (by simply being in causal contact with it), from which one then gains knowledge of other minds. However, rather than seeing knowledge of other minds as dependent on these other two kinds of knowledge, Davidsonian triangulation contends that knowledge of the content of our own mental states, knowledge of the mental states of others, and knowledge of the external world all come into being together. In particular, knowledge of other minds is implicated in knowledge of one’s own mind and knowledge of the external world: the intersubjective is not dependent on the subjective and objective; rather, there is an interdependence between the subjective and the intersubjective and an interdependence between the objective and the intersubjective. I will look at the reasons behind each interdependence and in doing so show how the subtle position on reason and cause emerges.

While the term “triangulation” appears in Davidson’s later work, its presence is discernible in his earlier, constitutive charity account. Regarding the.

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10. It first appears in the 1983 paper, “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge,” after which it gets more constant discussion in, for example, “Epistemology Externalized” (1990),
interdependence of the subjective and the intersubjective, this is present at the outset in the methodological standpoint of radical translation, for if in general whatever there is to the content of mental states and the meaning of sentences is whatever can be recovered from the third-personal position of the radical interpreter, then not only would others not be belief holders or language users unless they were interpretable by one, but also one would not be either unless interpretable by others. Like Quinean radical translation, Davidsonian radical interpretation “begins at home.” Davidson’s reason is the familiar Wittgensteinian one against the possibility of a private language: if one by oneself were the authority on the contents of one’s own mental states and utterances, then whatever seemed to one to be their meaning would just be their meaning, and therefore they would not mean anything determinate at all. It is only if there is another present to interpret what their content is that there is any chance of an independent check on their having a stable, determinate content, even to oneself. Thus, one’s having contentful mental states and one’s speaking a meaningful language requires the other; determinate subjective content requires intersubjective interpretation.

Furthermore, being interpretable to another requires a common world that both speaker and hearer are responding to, talking about, holding beliefs concerning. It cannot be based on subjective experience for the reason just outlined, which is why Davidson takes the data of radical translation to be holding sentences true in response to states of affairs in the world and not to experience (sensory stimulation). In his later work, this requirement gets expressed in the causal principle: that the contents of others’ (and one’s own) beliefs and utterances are what cause them in the objective world. Thus, the objective is required for the intersubjective. However, what the objective cause is of each of our mental states and utterances cannot be straightforwardly identified, this time for familiar Quinean–Davidsonian reasons: whenever we are in causal contact with whole, spatiotemporal objects, we are in causal contact with undetached parts of them, time-slices in the histories of them, and so on. Although the requirement that the cause be something objective or common to both of us rules out any subjective causal antecedent in the form of experience, this still leaves a multitude of objective causes to choose among. In order to fasten on whole objects rather than undetached parts or time-slices of them as the cause (and thus the content) of the mental states and utterances, interpreters need to make an assumption about what normative similarities in the world interpretees are responding to: namely, that interpretees respond to the same

saliencies in the world that interpreters do, that they live in the same similarity-spaces as interpreters do (e.g. that they notice and respond to whole objects, not undetached parts or time-slices of them). Unless this assumption is made, there is no way for the causal principle alone to determine what the objective cause and thus content of the belief or utterance is. That is, in order to have any determinacy in the identity of the objective cause we need to mobilize the whole intersubjective, charity-constrained apparatus of radical interpretation: that interpretees believe what interpreters do in the main, that interpretees hold obvious (to interpreters) empirical beliefs, that what they are causally responsive to is what we are, namely whole objects rather than spatial or temporal parts of them. Objectivity is thus dependent on intersubjectivity: the objective cause is not something directly identifiable by speakers and hearers, but rather is a construct of the entire intersubjective, triangulated, normative-rational process of interpretation.

Of course with the introduction of the causal principle in triangulation, a question arises about its compatibility with the principle of charity, which is the familiar question of the compatibility of reason and cause. For if content is constitutively constrained by charity, content is determined by normative-rational factors: what one believes is, for the most part, what one rationally ought to believe. However, if the causal principle governs content attribution, content is determined by a causal relation between a belief and the states of affairs in the world that cause it: what one's beliefs are about are what in fact cause them in the world. The first determines the meaning of sentences and the content of beliefs by means of a normative-rational mechanism; the second according to a facto-causal mechanism. The problem is that these mechanisms or principles need not coalesce, which is just to hold that reasons are distinct from causes: the cause of a belief need not provide a good reason for it, and thus the belief attribution demanded by normative-rational considerations need not be the belief attribution suggested by consideration of the causal factors. Davidson's way round the tension involves recognizing the difference between claiming that reason and cause are distinct and claiming that reason and cause are incompatible: to say they are distinct is merely to say that they need not go together, whereas to hold they are incompatible is to hold that they cannot go together. The first, unlike the second, allows for the possibility that they can go together, that reasons can be causes.11 Although we cannot infer from the fact that something is a cause of a belief that it provides good reason for it (because of the distinctness of reason and cause), likewise we cannot infer from the fact that something is a cause of a belief that it is thereby not a reason for it (because in being distinct they are not

11. This position, that reasons, while distinct from causes, can nevertheless still be causes, is the cornerstone of his philosophy of action.
thereby incompatible). Reason and cause, although distinct, are not incompatible; rationality, although distinct from and thus irreducible to causality and the realm of the natural, is capable of coexisting with it: it does not require anything super-causal or super-natural. It is this insight on the subtle relation between reason and cause that emerges from Davidson’s theory of content, which paves the way for his neo-Kantian middle position: one that allows him to hold that there is an irreducible normative-rational dimension to human beings and their meaning-bearing activities without having to posit anything beyond the natural. This middle position is even more evident in his philosophy of mind: anomalous monism, as the name suggests, is a form of nonreductive physicalism that aims to combine physical monism (i.e. anti-super-naturalism) with the idea that there are no strict type identities obtaining between the mental and the physical (i.e. antireductive naturalism).

III. McDowell: Naturalized Platonism and Second Nature

The problem that McDowell explicitly addresses in *Mind and World*, a problem he takes to arise with the modern scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and its attendant “disenchantment” of nature, is the problem we have been focused on: the problem of providing an adequate account of the place of rational, intelligent, meaningful activities in a thoroughgoing natural world. At the outset, McDowell signals his commitment to de-transcendentalization for he refuses to configure the problem in Cartesian “substance” terms of how two categorically distinct substances fit in the same world, preferring instead the de-reified, Kantian–Sellarsian terms of types of processes or “kinds of intelligibility”: how rational processes (e.g. thinking and speaking a language) fit into a realm of thoroughgoing natural processes, or how two different kinds of intelligibility – the kind that belongs to “the space of reasons” and the kind that belongs to “the realm of law” – that cannot be reduced to one another can nevertheless apply to one and the same process (thinking or speaking) or thing (human agent). Seeing the problem in these de-reified terms immediately makes space for a middle position between Platonism (or dualism) and reductive naturalism, for rather than there being two metaphysically distinct regions or things, there is just one process or thing, and a natural empirical process or thing at that, which is open to two ways of being understood.

The structuring dilemma of *Mind and World* is the one that structures this essay; indeed, my understanding of the contemporary landscape of Anglo-American philosophy is indebted to McDowell. The horn of the dilemma I call reductive naturalism is McDowell’s “bald naturalism,” and the horn that I call super-naturalism McDowell refers to as “rampant Platonism.” McDowell’s
term for the middle position between the two horns is “naturalized Platonism.” Naturalized Platonism aims to respect rationality, the production and consumption of meaning, as *sui generis* (and thus avoid bald naturalism) while insisting that such states and activities are part of, arise in, and reflect features of our natural way of living (and thus avoid rampant Platonism). His strategy is to link reason and nature not by relocating rational thought and intentional activity within the bounds of the realm of law (*à la* reductive naturalism), but by expanding the bounds of nature to include more than the realm of law. The key concept that is to effect this reconception of the natural, this expansion of nature beyond the realm of law, is the concept of “second nature.” This notion of second nature is the notion of normative nature: the idea that the domain of the normative (rational thought or intentional activity generally) is natural. Both parts of the term “second nature” are important for showing how naturalized Platonism is meant to avoid bald naturalism and rampant Platonism. To insist on a *sui generis* domain of the normative or the rational, and hence resist reductive naturalism, seems to force one into rampant Platonism: the postulation of an ideal realm of meanings and normative-rational relations radically disconnected from what goes on in the natural, phenomenal world. In order to avoid the metaphysical postulation of a Platonic other-world of ideal rational relations, the normatively constrained ideal space of reasons must be natural in some way, but not in the way that a rock’s falling to the ground is (which might be thought of as a paradigm of a process of “first nature”). If it were, rational processes would be understood in the same general law-governed terms and McDowell would be advocating some form of reductive naturalism. Call this other sense of nature, in which thought and other intentional activities are natural, “second nature.” In short, the “nature” part of “second nature” is important in order for McDowell’s naturalized Platonism to avoid rampant Platonism; and the “second” part of “second nature” is important for his view to extend the notion of nature beyond objects of first nature (i.e. as coextensive with whatever is susceptible to the kind of law-governed explanations characteristic of natural science) to normative phenomena, and hence to avoid bald naturalism.

To expand nature beyond the realm of law, which is what the notion of second nature is designed to do, produces a problem the avoidance of which is behind the original thought that naturalism and rampant Platonism exhaust the space of possibilities in the modern era; it seems to involve a renunciation of scientific modes of explanation of the natural world, “a crazily nostalgic attempt to re-enchant the world” and be a reversion to a medieval way of thinking about nature that divines meaning in “the movement of the planets or the fall of a

What makes bald naturalism and rampant Platonism seem to exhaust the philosophical options for accounting for mind in the natural world in the first place is that any attempt to reconceive or expand nature to include normative phenomena looks like a prescientific re-enchantment of the natural world in which natural objects are understood to be freighted with meaning and purpose. It is therefore incumbent on McDowell to explain this notion of “second nature” that extends without renouncing the modern scientific conception of nature.

While explicitly acknowledging that this concept is drawn from Aristotle’s account of the development of ethical character – “the best way I know to work into this different conception of what is natural is by reflecting on Aristotle's ethics”\(^\text{14}\) – it also counts as part of its ancestry Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit* – “I would like to conceive this work [*Mind and World*] as a prolegomenon to a reading of the *Phenomenology*”\(^\text{15}\) – and the Wittgensteinian notions of custom, practice, and form of life.\(^\text{16}\) What all these notions have in common is that they take the normative as irreducible to the natural but as nevertheless arising out of ordinary (natural) human phenomena: namely, historically concrete, socially articulated, normatively structured practices of learning, habituation, and enculturation. Each takes rationality to be a normatively rich, not naturalistically reduced, natural phenomenon, thus as not exhaustively explained by similarities in stimulus–response behavior (Quine) but by similarities in normative nature, by agreements in judgments of normative similarity (Wittgenstein–Sellars–Davidson). They are what constitute McDowellian shared “second nature,” that is, our nature as normatively governed creatures. Hence second nature is that aspect of ourselves constitutive of (practical) ratio-

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 72.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 78.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., ix. Although McDowell does not explicitly use the Hegelian notion of *Sittlichkeit*, his general sympathy with Hegel and his explicit invocation of the closely related Hegelian notion of *Bildung* make it appropriate. *Sittlichkeit* refers to the customary way of being of a people: their cultural institutions, social mores and roles, and so on. In short, it refers to how a community constructs meaning for itself insofar as this is embodied in historical–social practices and roles. Moreover, in its *ultimate* dialectical form, *Sittlichkeit* refers to a community’s norms once they have been subjected to communal question, dispute, rational examination, and reflection, and adopted on the basis of their being authoritative for this historicized formation of reason. With *Sittlichkeit*, then, Hegel introduces a nonmetaphysical, custom-based, historically situated conception of reason that has both the elements McDowell seeks in the notion of second nature: normativity and no metaphysical inflation.

nality in Kant’s sense, which in being constituted in actual, social practices, is de-transcendentalized.

Similarly, in McDowell’s primary source for the concept of second nature – Aristotle’s account of how an individual can learn to be moral – we get a model for how a natural entity such as a human being can grasp and participate in normatively structured conduct and develop a second (normative) nature. Aristotle’s account of how virtue is acquired explains how ethical demands are recognized as such by ordinary individuals as a result of their exposure to proper upbringing and initiation into the appropriate ethical customs and traditions. Such individuals acquire at the end of this social initiation a reflective awareness of the validity of these ethical demands: not just a recognition of what it is to be virtuous or to have a good character, but also a justification of this (what Aristotle calls “the that” and “the because” of virtue). Ethical requirements are demands of reason that one comes to understand and accept given the right education and socialization (*Bildung*); the right education and socialization enable one to develop a “responsiveness” to the rational-ethical demands (develop “practical wisdom”) and in doing so achieve a rational-ethical character. Moral education, socialization into the right form of life, which is an actual occurrence in the ordinary natural world, produces a rational-ethical nature in a flesh and blood, historico-social human being, that is, in a natural (not transcendent) self who, in developing a sensitivity to the rational requirements of ethical character, is not only subject to a natural-lawlike process but recognizes and responds to the normative demands of ethical-rationality. Hence a non-super-natural process produces an ethical nature, a capacity to be responsive to normative-rational demands constitutive of ethical character. In this account we have the development in natural individuals of second nature, the recognition of what it is to be virtuous and why, which while not to be understood on the model of the lawlike relations between external events (characteristic of first nature), is nevertheless just as much a part of the nature of human beings as getting hungry. Such an account is meant to “naturalize” the space of reasons not in the manner of bald naturalism (i.e. by reducing normative-rational talk to lawlike regularity talk) but by making our normative rationality a perfectly un-special (natural) characteristic of ordinary human development and living, part of the everyday social practices of real human beings.

**IV. BRANDON: DEONTIC SCOREKEEPING**

In Brandom’s monumental *Making It Explicit*, the middle position between Platonic super-naturalism and reductive naturalism about meaningfulness is
also to be won by working out in detail or “making explicit” the Wittgenstein–
Sellars social practice-based account of the normativity of meaning and it has
three central features: pragmatism, inferentialism, and socialized fallibilism. The
pragmatic characteristic of his view consists in his de-transcendentalization of
meaning through the adoption of the Quine–Wittgenstein–Sellars practice-
centered approach of looking for the normativity of the meaning of a term in
our actual use of the term in asserted judgments. On this approach, since the
meaning of a term waits on its use in asserted judgments, judgments that express
the meaning of terms (what pre-Quine would be analytic statements) are deter-
mined by the actual making of judgments employing those terms (synthetic
statements). Thus Brandomian pragmatism can be equivalently expressed, as
Quine’s anti-Platonism can be, as the abandonment of the analytic–synthetic
distinction.

Just as Quine’s abandonment of the analytic–synthetic distinction is based on
holism, Brandom’s pragmatism is closely related to inferentialism (his Sellarsian
term for holism). For Brandom, the thing about judgments is that they are infer-
entially related to other judgments, and the place a judgment occupies in the
web of interrelated judgments is determined by the inferential relations it bears
to these other judgments and that they bear to it. So if a term’s meaning is deter-
mined by its use in asserted judgments, and these are inferentially articulated,
then the inferential relations of judgments that the term occurs in constitute its
meaning. This inferentialist picture of meaning contrasts with the representa-
tionalist account: instead of an assertion, for example, “This is red,” meaning
what it does in virtue of referring to a particular state of affairs in the world,
its meaning is a function of its inferential relations, for example, relations of
implication to other sentences (e.g. “This is colored”), relations of incompat-
ibility to still other sentences (e.g. “This is blue”), and so on. However, these
meaning-constitutive inferential relations should not be thought of in the strict
formal logical way of deductive consequence and contradiction, but as relations
of material inference. Importantly for Brandom, material inferences – infer-
ences from, for example, “X is west of Y” to “Y is east of X,” from “It is raining
in the vicinity of X” to “The roads around X are wet” – are perfectly proper as
they stand; their validity does not derive from the application of a logical prin-
ciple (e.g. modus ponens) after the addition of a suppressed major premise, for
example, “If X is west of Y, then Y is east of X,” or “If it is raining in the vicinity
of X, then the roads are wet around X.” In fact, Brandom suggests the explana-
tory order is the other way round: the validity of deductive logical principles is
based on the self-standing validity of material inferential moves. This explana-
tory prominence given to the proprieties of material inference means that what-

ever normative rationality formal logic has must already be present in material inferential proprieties, and so is in keeping with the pragmatism of looking to actual use and actual inferential proprieties for the foundation of the normative.

These two features of pragmatism and inferentialism naturalize meaning, that is, see it as constituted by actual use and the material inferential relations obtaining in actual use, and in doing so face the usual danger of reductive naturalism (what Brandom calls “regularism”): of identifying meaning with purely de facto regularities in assertional use and inferential behavior, and thereby eliminating its normative dimension. In order to preserve the normativity of meaning and remain faithful to his goal of carving out a middle position that naturalizes normativity without naturalistically reducing it, Brandom introduces into his view a third, normatively imbued, social-fallibilist feature. The pragmatist and inferentialist characteristics of conceptual content are explicated in the deontic (normative) terms of obligation and permission – or as Brandom prefers “commitments” and “entitlements” – that are designed to ensure that actual use and the material-inferential relations obtaining therein are normative from the outset, with the normative element in turn getting a social-fallibilist characterization in the form of deontic scorekeeping.18 This deontic scorekeeping account of meaning normativity involves seeing the material inferential relations between judgments that constitute the meaning of terms occurring in them as commitments and entitlements that a speaker undertakes by asserting a judgment and that are instituted socially by a scorekeeper who assesses (keeps score of) these commitments and entitlements by attributing them to the speaker and by undertaking the same or different ones himself. Speaking a language is thus understood in Sellarsian terms as taking part in “the game of giving and asking for reasons”; indeed, deontic scorekeeping is the attempt to make explicit what goes on in this game, because to make an assertion is to undertake commitments and entitlements, which are things that stand in need of reasons (from other commitments and entitlements) and which can be used as a reason (for still other commitments and entitlements). The normativity of meaning is to be got from this being a reason-giving, reason-requiring activity, where reason in turn is understood in a social, material-inferential way.

The basic idea here is that any given assertion carries with it commitments and entitlements to other assertions: for example, to assert “This is red” is to be committed to “This is colored” and “This is not blue,” and also to be entitled to “This is the color of a ripe tomato,” but it is incompatible with commitments to “This is blue” and “This is not colored,” and so on. This account avoids devolving into a form of reductive naturalism that eliminates normativity because these commitments and entitlements are not identified with those a speaker in fact

18. Ibid., 180–98.
undertakes but those he should undertake, where the ones he should undertake are the ones a scorekeeper attributes to him and undertakes himself. However, in turn, the commitments and entitlements that a speaker should undertake are not identified with those a given scorekeeper in fact attributes and undertakes, for these latter can be kept score of by another scorekeeper’s undertakings of commitments and entitlements, and so on. In this way, the normativity of meaning is preserved, for what commitments and entitlements an assertion should issue in is never identified with what any speaker or scorekeeper takes them to be. The possibility of a gap between the commitments and entitlements undertaken by a speaker and a scorekeeper, as well as between scorekeepers, is what supplies the normative ingredient, and it is an ingredient supplied by the social-fallibilist structure of deontic scorekeeping. Brandom’s idea here is that to avoid reduction of the normative to the non-normative (naturalistic reductionism), one must have the ability to draw the seeming–being distinction, that is, be able to distinguish between what a speaker or scorekeeper believes an assertion commits and entitles the speaker to and what it does commit and entitle the speaker to. And what is needed to draw the seeming–being distinction is a fallibilist conception of any given speaker’s and scorekeeper’s undertakings of commitments and entitlements, since fallibilism is just the idea that one may always be wrong, that how things seem to one need not be how they are. Thus what his social account of normativity requires are the resources to fund a fallibilist conception of any given scorekeeper’s attributions of commitments and entitlements, and Brandom thinks what is needed to fund fallibilism is that deontic scorekeeping have the structural capability to generate ever new and different scorekeeping perspectives. That is, he thinks that it is deontic scorekeeping’s inbuilt fallibilist structure, a structure that guarantees the permanent possibility of further scorekeeping perspectives, that ensures there is a genuine, objective normative dimension to the practice. Objective normative assessment is the result of a structural difference in perspectives between speaker and scorekeeper, and between one scorekeeper and another.19

Hence it is this structural feature of deontic scorekeeping – of providing for the permanent possibility of perspectival differences between commitments and entitlements undertaken by speakers and scorekeepers – that allows for fallibilism and stops the normativity of meaning (which is constituted by these undertaken commitments and entitlements) from simply reducing to the de facto say-so of any particular speaker or scorekeeper. Further, the normativity thus funded is immanent to the social practice of scorekeeping: the seeming–being distinction is drawn not by invoking some independent-of-all-scorekeeping-practices standard of assessment (against which a given scorekeeping assessment

19. Ibid., 597.
can be judged, namely, the Meaning), but rather by having a mechanism for constructing an independent-of-this-scorekeeping-practice standard of assessment by having the permanent possibility (for any scorekeeping assessment) of another scorekeeping assessment against which it can be assessed. Hence the middle position of a naturalized account that at the same time avoids naturalistic reduction is attained: naturalization is achieved by looking for the normativity of meaning, in Wittgenstein–Sellars fashion, solely within the actual social practice of speakers and scorekeepers undertaking and attributing commitments and entitlements in what they assert; and reductive naturalism is eschewed because an objective normative dimension is preserved by the fallibilism of this practice.  

V. CONCLUSION: CONTINENTAL CONNECTIONS

One source of the analytic–continental divide was Russell’s and Moore’s banishing of the British Hegelianism of T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley from its hegemonic position in the British academy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The strain of neo-Kantian post-analytic philosophy I have been tracking in this essay welcomes Hegel (at least in the cases of McDowell and Brandom) back into the English-speaking philosophical fold and promises a rapprochement between current Anglo-American and continental philosophy. In endeavoring to delineate a neo-Kantian, neo-Hegelian position that naturalizes (in the sense of socio-historicizing) mind and meaning (Geist) without naturalistically reducing them, Davidson, McDowell, and Brandom represent an important counter-current to the reductive naturalism that has generally pervaded English-speaking philosophy after Quine and which helped to keep the divide in place. Interestingly, it is a reductive naturalism that was not a part of the foundations of the analytic tradition – a founding tenet of the tradition was Frege’s antipsychologism about logic and meaning – but was a positivist-influenced, Quinean addition, which, once jettisoned, reacquaints the tradition with its neo-Kantian, Fregean origins, allowing it again to take seriously Kant’s image of human beings and human activities as essentially rationally autonomous and not merely naturally law-governed. It also brings contemporary Anglo-American philosophy into conversation with the post-Kantian, post-Hegelian traditions in continental philosophy of hermeneutics and phenomenology.


which always took this Kantian point seriously. The fundamental distinction in hermeneutics between Geisteswissenschaften and Naturwissenschaften is rooted in this Kantian insight: it is because mind and meaning are autonomous in Kant’s sense – domains of normative-rational connection rather than simply domains of natural law-governedness – that the “sciences” that study them are different in kind from the sciences of nature. As Davidson might put it, mind and meaning are anomalous (i.e. a-nomological, not reducible to operations describable by natural scientific laws) because they are autonomous (i.e. normative-rational phenomena). Likewise, Husserl’s Fregean rejection of psychologism, which is foundational for instituting phenomenology as a discipline, is precisely a critique of naturalistically reductive conceptions of mind. If phenomenology is “philosophy as rigorous science,” it is because it is not a “rigorous” natural science, but because it rigorously attends, in a way that natural sciences of the mind do not, to the ineliminable intentionality of consciousness, the meaning-laden, normative-rational structures that mediate human encounters with the natural world. In similarly stressing the irreducible normative-rational dimension of human interactions in and with the world, I think it not too much a stretch to speak of Davidson, McDowell, and Brandom as continuing the breakthrough to hermeneutics and phenomenology (already begun by Wittgenstein and Sellars) within Anglo-American philosophy.


23. It may even be a characterization they would embrace. I have noted already McDowell’s and Brandom’s affinity for the continental tradition, especially Hegel; in McDowell’s case this extends to Gadamer (see e.g. McDowell, Mind and World, 115–19), and in Brandom’s to Heidegger (e.g. Brandom, Tales of the Mighty Dead, chs 10, 11). Even Davidson, who had no great admiration for Hegel, had a well-known regard for Gadamerian hermeneutics; see in particular the closing paragraphs of his contribution to the “Library of Living Philosophers” volume devoted to Gadamer, “Gadamer and Plato’s Philebus,” in The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Lewis Edwin Hahn (ed.) (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1997).
RETHINKING SCIENCE AS SCIENCE STUDIES: LATOUR, STENGERS, PRIGOGINE

Dorothea Olkowski

I. BRUNO LATOUR

At the end of Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies, Bruno Latour1 sums up, succinctly, both the method and result of his account of social theory and science studies. Science studies, he declares, is not critical or debunking; it simply shifts attention from the theory of science to its practice. What looked like different and unconnected theoretical questions turn out, in practice, to be tightly intertwined.2 This simple formulation is the expression of what has been called Latour’s constructivist position with respect to science studies. On the basis of “actor network theory,” which describes the manner in which scientific facts are created by and through networks of human and nonhuman actors, Latour proceeds to an examination and refutation of the avowed modernist distinction between nature and culture.3

1. Bruno Latour (June 22, 1947– ; born in Beaune, France) was educated at the University of Bourgogne and received a doctorat d’état from the University of Tours in 1975. His work was influenced by Marc Augé, Harold Garfinkel, Roger Guillemin, Charles Péguy, Michel Serres, and Gabriel Tarde. He has held academic appointments at the Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation at the École Nationale Supérieure des Mines (1992–2006), the Jonas Salk Institute for the Biological Sciences (1975–76), the London School of Economics, Harvard University, and Sciences Po Paris (2006– ).
Latour believes that “the only way to understand the reality of science studies is to … pay very close attention to the details of actual scientific practice, the way anthropologists do when they live among ‘foreign tribes’” (PH 24). This requires following scientists into the laboratory or into the field, as Latour does when he accompanies four scientists investigating the shifting boundary between savannah and forest in Brazil, where he, indeed, pays close attention to the details of actual scientific practice. But the questions Latour poses in this situation are those he brings to it: How do these scientists pass from what he calls “ignorance to certainty, from weakness to strength, from inferiority in the face of the world to the domination of the world by the human eye?” (PH 30). In contrast to the completely preconstructed universe of the laboratory, the question of whether the Brazilian savannah and forest are advancing or receding with respect to one another establishes a minimalist laboratory. It is demarcated in a grid of coordinates by the botanist to record the emergence of species and variations of growth. The botanist cuts particular specimens and brings them with her to her local university office. Detached from the forest, the specimens are now separated, preserved, classified, and tagged, then reassembled, reunited, redistributed according to principles developed by the botanist and her discipline. “With so many trumps in hand, every scientist becomes a structuralist” (PH 38) and the forest is “reduced to its simplest expression” (PH 39). For their part, the pedologists organize the space of the forest utilizing surveying techniques (PH 43). The land itself is said to be transformed into a “proto-laboratory – a Euclidean world where all phenomena can be registered by a collection of coordinates” (ibid.). As the soil samples are collected, the geo-morphologist records the coordinates of each location, the number of the hole from which they have been extracted, the time, and depth, as well as any available qualitative data. Once they are collected, she sends the samples to laboratories around the world where chemical composition, grain size, and radioactivity can be measured (PH 46). The upshot of this activity is that every studied aspect of the forest belongs both to the world of things and to that of signs. Science studies is to focus precisely on this hybrid, the materiality of the soil and the coding of the sign.

For Latour, all scientific work in the field and in the laboratory, such as that of Louis Pasteur, also extensively profiled by Latour, raises a fundamental question. This is the question of an “alternative to the model of statements that posit

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4. Who, we might ask, is foreign?
5. There is no indication from the botanist herself how she sees this activity.
6. Qualitative considerations include texture, color, and earthworm activity.
a world ‘out there’ which language tries to reach through a correspondence across the yawning gap separating the two” (PH 141). In the field, as dirt and plant samples are gathered and studied, “each element belongs to matter by its origin and to form by its destination,” that is, no rupture appears between things and signs and “elementary forms of mathematics … are used to collect matter through the mediation of a practice embodied in a group of researchers” (PH 57–8). Mediation produces what Latour calls a hybrid consisting of form and matter, skilled bodies, and groups arranged in a continuous space-time, a regulated series of transformations, transmutations, and translations. This kind of knowledge does not refer to the world “out there” but to an immanent world that keeps “something” constant through a series of transformations, an immanent world of coherence and continuity, the same meaning through a series of transformations. For example, matching the color of soil samples with a standardized color chart pierced with holes, the material soil samples can be read literally as a text, as belonging to a color code that can be communicated anywhere in the world (PH 58–60). This test is preceded and followed by a multitude of others that, more radically, put a sign in place of a thing. Finally, the signs are assembled and a diagram is constructed that takes the place of the original situation, revealing otherwise invisible features of the savannah–forest transition.

Latour calls this process translation. He claims, initially, to utilize a semiotic model but semiotics operates only within translation. “All reasoning is of the same form; one sentence follows another. Then a third asserts that these are identical even though they do not resemble one another … the second is used in place of the first, and a fifth affirms that the second and the fourth are identical.” In this way, a sentence is displaced and translated, all the while pretending not to have moved, to have stayed faithful. Yet as Latour’s many diagrams attest, there is a structure here as well as a system. For example, not only do the elements of knowledge exist in continuous space-time, but the chain they form conforms to the dictates of dynamical systems as defined by classical physics; it must be reversible, closed, atomistic (consisting of numerous distinct elements or actors in Latour’s terminology), and, within limits, deterministic. Like the atoms described in Newton’s laws of motion, truth must be transportable in either direction along this chain such that “truth-value circulates here like electricity through a wire”; it moves continuously through a closed system or area. Although the chain has no limit at either end, whatever gets added on must participate in

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7. The elements referred to here are elements presented in a scientific text that includes Latour as an author (PH 56).


the series nature of the transformations in accordance with the elements of the immanent system: locality, particularity, materiality, multiplicity, and continuity at one end; compatibility, standardization, text, calculation, circulation, and relative universality at the other. Each stage is thereby matter for what follows and form for what precedes. The two directions represent the limits of the system, the rules of reduction and realism at one end and amplification and relativism at the other. Once such rules are in place, they remain in place, and the phenomena Latour describes well up in the middle between the two limits, then pass up and down the chain of transformations (PH 70–74).10

If it can be said that a network of actants all contributed to the scientific phenomenon called savannah–forest encroachment, what can be said of Pasteur’s laboratory? “Pasteur encountered a vague, cloudy, gray substance sitting meekly in the corner of his flasks and turned it into the splendid, well-defined, articulate yeast twirling magnificently across the ballroom of the Academy” (PH 145).11 Doing away with the epistemological–ontological divide, as Latour claims to do, entails granting historicity to the humans doing research as well as to the microorganisms they are researching. So Latour states that Pasteur changed the microorganisms by means of a simple recourse to the idea that rather than two realms there are many. In this, Latour bows in the direction of Idealism, returning to humans the possibility of activity without reopening a subject–object dichotomy between nature and mind or society. In other words, action, far from being a property of humans, belongs to an association of actants, human and nonhuman, able to exchange competences and offer one another new possibilities, goals, and functions (PH 182).12 The actants involved in Pasteurization include Pasteur himself, the culture medium, the ferment, the Lille laboratory, the French Academy, and on and on. In place of a single referent, one finds an entire series of transformations that make up the reference, and every change in the series of transformations circulates the reference, as Latour expresses it (PH 147–50). So the claim that a scientific phenomenon exists arises from the claim that it is entrenched in an expensive and massive institution, involving a site, laws, people, and customs that provide the mediations needed for actors to establish, maintain, and substantiate newly emerging entities (PH 157, 307, 311).13 The implication of this new view of science is that there is no normal science and there are no paradigms in the Kuhnian sense because there is no single coherent research program. Instead, there is a vast network consisting

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10. In his description over these pages, Latour’s onto-epistemology clearly resembles that of Gilles Deleuze in that both are modeled on mathematical dynamical systems.
11. Latour refers to Pasteur as Prince Charming and his microbes as Cinderella.
12. Following from this, Latour substitutes the term collective for the old word, society. A collective is an exchange of human and nonhuman properties inside a corporate body (PH 193).
13. See PH 303–11 for a full glossary of terms.
of various kinds of “actors” moving both forward and back, undergoing transforma-
tions. This is why, if an entity, such as Pasteur’s microbes, circulates, the impact can be reversed, extended into the past making “the microbes the substrate of other people’s unwitting actions” (PH 169).14

Latour’s analyses of these two exemplary series of actants reveals what is for him a categorial error. Reflecting on the notion of translation, or network, he concludes that the work of those who study society remains incomprehen-
sible if it is segmented into its three habitual categories of nature, politics, and discourse.15 Each of these points engages in two sets of practices but conceives of them as completely separate from one another. The first of these two practices, “translation” or “mediation,” creates mixtures between hybrids of nature and culture, but also between nature, politics, and discourse. The second, “purifi-
cation,” creates and maintains two entirely distinct ontological zones, one consisting of humans and one of nonhumans. It separates and maintains as separate nature, culture, and discourse. In other words, the modern critical stance purifies the networks, but the networks rely on what has been purifi ed to carry out their translations. And yet, “we have never been modern” according to Latour, insofar as we simultaneously direct our attention to both purifi cation and translation and do not separate them (WM 11). Although a certain amount of intellectual effort has been devoted to the study of the opposition between science and discourse, virtually none has been directed to that between science and politics. However, science and politics may be defi ned by a common text, that of the constitution. Just as politicians draft a constitution for states, so scien-
tists draft one for nature, and each constitution has been draft ed by excluding the power of the other (WM 14).

If the moderns conceived of hybrids as (impossible) mixtures of radically disconnected pure forms, for example, Nature/Society or Nature/Subject, then let us become premodern, deploying the middle as the point of departure from which point of view the pure extremes are but provisional and partial.16 Crucially, the place of the object will be modifi ed; no longer the realm of things-in-themselves, it will belong to the community that recognizes how and to what extent objects construct subjects. From now on all actors have historicity and the extremes of Nature and Society can be utilized as relative reference points useful in differentiating intermediaries. In addition, then, to the horizontal (x) axis at each end of which the two pure extremes are located, Latour calls for

14. See PH 170. Substance here means “the work of retrofi tting that situates a more recent event as what ‘lies beneath’ an older one” (ibid.).
16. “A mediator, however, is an original event and creates what it translates as well as the entities between which it plays the mediating role” (WM 78).
the addition of a vertical (y) axis, one that registers variations in the stability of entities from event to essence with the assumption that all actants proceed from existence (below the horizontal axis) to essence (above the horizontal axis). However, very little, in fact no activity can be discerned above the horizontal axis in the essential sectors. It appears that all events find their reality in the existential realm, the depths analogous to the depths of the earth itself where magma erupts and forms relatively stable sites. It is, then, by this means that the “ontology of mediators” has a variable geometry, and the so-called essence of an event or actant is simply the trajectory that links each of its manifestations in the x–y plane (WM 86, 83).17

II. ISABELLE STENGERS AND ILYA PRIGOGINE

Isabelle Stengers18 emerged internationally as a philosopher of science, along with coauthor and chemist Ilya Prigogine,19 on publication of their book, Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature. There they argue that if “in the classical view, the basic processes of nature were considered to be deterministic and reversible … [t]oday we see everywhere, the role of irreversible processes, of fluctuations.”20 Stengers and Prigogine reformulate this world as open, complex, probabilistic, and temporally irreversible. Thus Order Out of Chaos is an account of the conceptual transformation of science from classical science to the present, particularly as it applies to the macroscopic scale, the scale of atoms, molecules, and biomolecules, with special attention to the problem of time, a problem that

17. That this is a dynamical system operating in what is called ideal or mathematical state space should by now be evident.
18. Isabelle Stengers (1949– ; born in Belgium) received her degree in chemistry at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, where she is currently a professor in the philosophy of science. Her work has been influenced by Sandra Harding, Serres, Gilbert Simondon, Shirley Strum, and Whitehead.
19. Ilya Prigogine (January 25, 1917–May 28, 2003; born in Moscow, Russia) received a licence en sciences chimiques in 1939, a doctorat en sciences chimiques in 1941, and was made Agrégé de l’Enseignement Supérieur en Chimie Physique in 1945, all at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. His work was influenced by Bergson, Théophile De Donder, Jean Timmermans, and Alan Turing. Prigogine held appointments at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the International Solvay Institute in Brussels (1959–2003), as Professor of Physics and Chemical Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin (1967–2003), and as Visiting Professor of Chemistry at the Enrico Fermi Institute for Nuclear Studies and the Study of Metals at the University of Chicago (1961–66). He was Professor of Physics and Chemical Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin (1967–2003), Regental Professor (1977–2003), and Ashbel Smith Professor (1984–2003).
arose out of the realization that new dynamic states of matter may emerge from thermal chaos when a system interacts with its surroundings. These new structures were given the name dissipative structures to indicate that dissipation can in fact play a constructive role in the formation of new states (OC 12). Stengers and Prigogine thus take us from the static view of classical dynamics to an evolutionary view arising with nonequilibrium thermodynamics, based on time irreversibility. Simultaneously, “one of the main themes of this book is that of a strong interaction of the issues proper to culture as a whole and the internal conceptual problems of science in particular” (OC 19). Thus, the reorientation from the classical to the contemporary view is, for them, equally reflected in the conflict between the natural sciences and the social sciences and humanities. If the development of science has been understood to shift away from concrete experience toward abstraction, this is, the authors believe, a consequence of the limitations of classical science, its inability to give a coherent account of the relationship between humans and nature. Many important results were repressed or set aside insofar as they failed to conform to the classical model. In order to free itself from traditional modes of comprehending nature, science isolated and purified its practices in the effort to achieve greater and greater autonomy, leading it to conceptualize its knowledge as universal and to isolate itself from any social context (OC 19–22).

Nevertheless, Stengers and Prigogine are alarmed by contemporary criticisms of science, such as that of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who levies what they see as an unrestricted condemnation of modern science, insofar as Heidegger seems to identify science with the subjection of nature (OC 32–3). Equally, they are concerned with the contemporary shift away from science toward mysticism. Neither of these alternatives provides the direction they seek. The enthusiasm for modern science that arose in the sixteenth century and, in many respects, continues unabated today, arose, they posit, as an extension of the age-old effort of humankind to organize and exploit the world and to understand

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21. Equilibrium thermodynamics studies the transformation of energy, and the laws of thermodynamics recognize that although “energy is conserved,” when energy is defined as the capacity to do work, nevertheless, nature is fundamentally asymmetrical; that is, although the total quantity of energy remains the same, its distribution changes in a manner that is irreversible. See P. W. Atkins, The Second Law (New York: Scientific American Library, 1984), 8–13.

22. The French title of this book, an earlier and slightly less developed version, reflects the “new alliance” between science and culture.


25. Latour picks up this theme from Stengers and Prigogine.
humankind’s place in nature. However, while the ancients remained preoccupied with the question of why certain natural processes occur, the moderns ask only how, and answering this question involves activity, the manipulation of physical reality rather than its passive observation. Thus, unlike its predecessor, modern science learned to prepare and isolate physical reality to make it conform to an ideal conceptual scheme (OC 37–41). Experiment is an art with no guarantees of success. It requires choosing an interesting question that embodies a theory’s implications, abstracting a natural phenomenon from its environment, and staging it to test the theory in a manner that is both reproducible and communicable. Additionally, modern science can engage in a thought experiment, governed entirely by theory (OC 42–3). What is crucial here is that the scientist cannot force nature to respond the way the scientist wishes; there is, in effect, a dialogue between humans and nature, not a dictatorship.

But science writes in a mathematical language, so the world appears to be homogeneous, as a result of which the simple can always explain the complex. Moreover, the scientific view may have arisen, in part, owing to the mutual amplification of theological discourse and science, a resonance located in the medieval insistence on the rationality of God, who could be counted on to provide a basis for the world’s intelligibility. Humans, utilizing scientific experiments, sought to view the world from this same divine viewpoint. This is how, Stengers and Prigogine claim, the aim of modern science came to be that of discovering the unique truth about the world, one that excludes the observer and reflects the divine point of view (OC 44–52). For modern science, the central theoretical and practical problem was to find a way to define a continuously varying speed, instantaneous changes in position, velocity, and acceleration, and the state of a body at a given instant. The nearly miraculous explanation came in the form of a single force called gravity. Any pair of material bodies, planets or atoms, is linked by the same force of attraction that operates in the universe as a whole, any local variations being too small to have an impact. Given an initial state, the general law deduces the series of states the system will pass through, and a single state is sufficient to define both the future and the past of any system. This is the meaning of reversibility. Classical dynamics required bold assumptions: a world in which all trajectories are reversible. And yet, the active experiments carried out by scientists remained extraneous to the idealized, reversible world they describe (OC 57–61). This sort of tension between science and society remains thematically central. Stengers and Prigogine are quite explicit that they look for a convergence between nature and the mind that knows, perceives, and creates science. The ideal of a being who could calculate

26. “If the velocities of all the points of a system are reversed … [t]he system would retrace all the states it went through during the previous change” (OC 61).
the future and past of the world, starting from the observation of an instantaneous state, is not an ideal they endorse (OC 77).

This raises the question: What is the relation of philosophy to science? Is philosophy the queen of the sciences or only the handmaiden? For Stengers and Prigogine, the answer to this question is closely associated with their understanding of time, which, they claim, can bridge the spiritual and physical aspects of nature, including human nature. To this end, they narrate the rediscovery of the arrow of time by science. Moving from the study of heat to the conservation of energy, the first and second laws of thermodynamics, linear and nonlinear thermodynamics, self-organization, chaos, dissipative structures, evolution, complexity, open systems, relativity, uncertainty, and finally to temporal evolution in quantum systems, leads to the conclusion that the reversibility of classical dynamics is a characteristic of closed dynamic systems only, and that science must accept a pluralistic world in which reversible and irreversible processes coexist.27 In place of general, all-embracing schemes that could be expressed by eternal laws, there is time. In place of symmetry, there are symmetry-breaking processes on all levels, and yet, temporal irreversibility has become the unifying source of order on all levels. For classical dynamics, time was a geometric parameter; as such, this conception was part of a general drive to eliminate time, to reduce the different and the changing to the identical and permanent. Although Bergson, in 1922, attempted to introduce and defend (against Einstein) the possibility of a multiplicity of coexisting “lived” times, for Einstein, intelligibility remained tied to immutability (OC 293–4). It is precisely this “denial of becoming” that led to the rift between science and philosophy (OC 298).28 Thus, Stengers and Prigogine propose a structure that takes its orientation from the observer, “who measures coordinates and momenta and studies their change in time,” leading to the discovery of unstable dynamic systems, intrinsic randomness, and irreversibility, and proceeding to dissipative structures and from there back to the time-oriented observer (OC 300). All scientific activity is time-oriented and the scientist must come to see herself as part of the universe she describes. Irreversibility is not universal; it requires a minimum of complexity in the dynamical system, such that with an increase of complexity, the role of irreversibility increases (OC 301).29 If the philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz’s monadology is “the most

27. These theories and others along with their philosophical implications are discussed at length in Order Out of Chaos.
28. By the time scientists began to consider time irreversibility, philosophy had already been relegated to the sidelines.
29. “The world of classical science was a world in which the only events that could occur were those deducible from the instantaneous state of the system … [T]he objects chosen by the first physicists to explore the validity of a quantitative description … were found to correspond to

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consequential formulation of a universe from which all becoming is eliminated,” one can look to Charles Sanders Peirce, Bergson, and Lucretius for original and “pioneering step[s] toward the understanding of the pluralism involved in physical laws” (OC 303). Therefore Stengers and Prigogine conclude that, contrary to the model put forward by Thomas Kuhn, change in science does not occur as a result of a crisis, a nearly violent disruption of an otherwise homogeneous and conservative scientific community. Although they concede that crises do occur, science can also be characterized by problems that arise as the consequence of “deliberate and lucid questions asked by scientists who know that the questions had both scientific and philosophical aspects”; in other words, change occurs as a result of both the “internal logic of science” and “the cultural and social context of our time” (OC 309).

Following the publication of Order Out of Chaos, Stengers made a concerted effort to go her own way as well as to forge new intellectual ties to other scientists and philosophers. Stengers begins by questioning the concept of complexity in the discourse of science, a concept that comes to the fore when the relevance of a simple model and that model’s relation to what is complicated, but not necessarily complex, becomes an issue. Just because a phenomenon requires a probability treatment does not imply complexity, which is distinguishable from the complicated real, characterized by approximations that limit us, but which can still be identified.30 Close to but not identical with emergence, which refers to a physical genesis of the new, complexity, Stengers argues, implies a conceptual genesis, an expression of the limited character of the conceptual tools appropriate to simple models but which cannot be prolonged as relevant (PI 12). Insofar as complexity is conceptual, it sets out problems. For scientists, “complexity arises when they must accept that the categories of understanding that guided their explorations are in question, when the manner in which they pose their questions has itself become problematic” (PI 13).31 Thus, one does not discover complexity with respect to objects with a history; rather, complexity is constitutive of a living object (PI 14). This is especially the case when science studies beings produced by history that are also capable of history; that is, the meaning of this being’s interrogation may also present problems for the being itself. The intrinsic complexity of living systems thus imposes the necessity for intelligent

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a unique mathematical description that actually reproduced the divine ideality of Aristotle’s heavenly bodies (OC 305–6).

30. Isabelle Stengers, Power and Invention, Paul Bains (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7, 10. Hereafter cited as PI followed by the page number.

31. “Complexity is not a theory, an exportable general model. The ‘complex’ lesson of dissipative structures is … this gravitational factor that, according to circumstances, can be insignificant or ‘change everything’” (PI 13).
experimentation, avoiding silencing the interrogated being (PI 17). A related and formidable distinction in physics is that between phenomenological and fundamental laws, the former tied to irreversible evolutions and the latter to reversibility. Laws of physics are fundamental insofar as they go beyond appearances to unify the diversity of physical phenomena. From this perspective, the distinction between before and after is merely phenomenological, and uncertainty regarding the future is an effect of ignorance (PI 21–2). What physicists do not see, according to Stengers, is the existence of two types of deterministic laws. One is a science of movement or dynamics, for which the velocity at a given instant is equal to the cause producing it. The velocity must be sufficient to allow the body to regain the altitude it lost, thereby joining past and future through the sign of identity, which is understood as a syntactic rule, a rule defining velocity, force, and acceleration (PI 24, 25). The second, based on the study of unstable dynamic systems, allows a rapprochement of sorts between fundamental laws and phenomenology. In a highly unstable system, starting from quasi-identical states, originally indistinguishable systems will behave dissimilarly and only a God capable of defining the instantaneous state of a system with infinite precision could calculate the trajectories (PI 27). This distinction exposes the limits of the physicist’s ideal without abandoning fundamental laws. Closely related is the question of change, whether it is imposed from the outside or is immanent to things. Modern science set itself up in opposition to the latter, establishing the dominance of the idea of change as nothing but movement, yet with two possibilities. Either change is due to chance collisions of atoms or there is a force exterior to masses responsible for movement (PI 33). Indeed, such a force was put in place in the form of mathematical universal laws of dynamics, which imply that an object of dynamics can be completely understood, meaning that the totality of its past and future can be deduced. And yet, Joseph Fourier’s formulation of the law of heat diffusion, insofar as it characterized an intrinsically irreversible process, the first to be given a mathematical expression, was a scandal for science, since it brought forth the realization that dynamics, describing nature as obedient and controllable, corresponds only to a particular case. The importance of unities such as photons and electrons, whose processes imply irreversible interaction with the world, gradually came to into view (PI 48). Insofar as these transitions are smooth, continuous processes, they promote an acceptance of the autonomy of things, and the opening of new alliances with nature and with natural and productive processes of all types (PI 56, 59).

32. Insistence on attention to the sensitivities of the interrogated subject is fundamental in Stengers’s thinking overall.
33. This is the principle of sufficient reason.
Such transitions and transformations, no matter how smooth and continuous, raise certain important questions. If science had once been understood entirely in terms of fundamental laws, then is it science and scientists that propose changes to this understanding? Or, is it nonscience? Exactly what counts as science can be determined only in a precise context. Innovations and transformations are creations, organizing the examination of phenomena, which “produce the criteria on the basis of which the accepted innovations will be described a posteriori as ‘obviously’ scientific” (PI 82). The implication Stengers draws is that science is a collective activity producing its own norms and responses to these norms, thereby linking scientists and allowing them to work. It is this collective activity, rather than objectivity, however one defines it, that connects scientists who engage in scientific activities, but only insofar as it attracts their interest (PI 82, 83).34 This question of what is science and what makes one a scientist haunts Stengers’s work. What concerns and worries her is the “condemnation of nature to exploitation, the subject and object to separation,” and “the splintered figure of the other of the identity of science” (PI 110–11).35 Rather than Kuhnian official scientific maps and scientific rationality guaranteeing access to phenomena, Stengers proposes a structure of interconnections and relations of expression between otherwise separated populations, keeping alive the possibility of a certain jouissance, that moment when a small detail destroys a grand generalization that the road map had guaranteed.

These considerations culminate in Stengers’s The Invention of Modern Science, a philosophical work in which she engages directly with the dominant philosophies of science to examine the epistemological and social relations between philosophers and scientists.36 For scientists, Stengers argues, Kuhn’s claim that in normal science, scientists do what they have learned to do, that is, utilize a paradigm to study scientific phenomena, preserves what is essential.37 What is essential is autonomy, the preservation of the community as the norm and as condition of the possibility for a fruitful exercise of science (IMS 5). This is crucial in several respects. Guided and supported by the community, individual scientists are freed from accounting for their choices and research priorities

34. “To interest someone means … to act in such a way that this thing … can concern the person, intervene in his or her life, and eventually transform it” (PI 83–4).
35. “I would like to express the deep uneasiness aroused in me by the binary characterization that the modern sciences seem to produce, constructing their identity through opposition with an other” (PI 111).
and they confidently confront even the most disconcerting phenomena. Such “tacit knowledge” is crucial to the scientist who plays the role of an expert or connoisseur who has the capacity to evaluate research within the domain of her expertise (IMS 6–7). Nevertheless, while the concept of the paradigm guarantees cumulative progress and consensus in the sciences, Kuhn also proposed a principle of symmetry that requires the researcher to be attentive to everything outside the research paradigm, such as relations of force, social games of power, differences of resources, or impure interests (industry, the state). Is it not the case, after all, that scientists do, in fact, draw on all the resources of society (IMS 9)? How could they continue their research without the resources supplied by the social, political, technological, and economic environment? Even so, Stengers maintains, scientists do attempt to conceal their relation to everything outside science. Thus the attacks aimed at technosciences for failing to distinguish between the productions of science and those of technical and technological production, as well as feminist critiques aimed at the identification of scientific rationality with male values, fall short of their goal insofar as, unlike Kuhn, these critiques accept what scientists say about themselves without question. Only Kuhn’s questioning of the mode of knowledge, the relation of normal science to what is outside it, opened a wound and fomented a revolt. Scientists might accept the social nature of their discipline, yet they insist that it is more than that, that there is an element of reality, and that if scientists have to justify their actions as socially interested, it will be increasingly difficult for them to pursue minor areas of research. Moreover, they hold out the fear of being overtaken by the interests of those who accuse them of being interested.

In acknowledging this problem, Stengers takes up the cause of science as much as that of philosophy. As she argues,

the philosophers were requiring of the sciences (which they do not practice) that they justify the practice of the philosophers of science; that sciences illustrate a definition of scientific rationality which the philosophers could then disengage, so as to know better than the scientists, what defines scientists as such. (IMS 14)39

To stem the emergence of oppositional forces, Stengers proposes that philosophy should be willing to practice the “Leibnizian Constraint,” not to maintain as its ideal the reversal of established sentiments since they may be precisely

39. In fencing, to disengage is to perform a maneuver that changes the line of attack.
what give meaning and interest to one's problem (ibid.). What, after all, is the point of studying science if not to try to open scientists to what their established identity led them to refuse, combat, or misunderstand? And if the words we use clash with others, scandalize and provoke hateful misunderstandings, producing greater rigidity in order to protect each one's position, then constructing differences using language that leaves irreducible oppositions is clearly counter to the goal of opening science to its own outside. Thus, a version Latour’s “principle of irreduction” will be called into play, that of not putting oneself in the position of a judge who knows what science or politics is and who gives or refuses to give one of these terms the power to explain the other. Neither unveiling the truth behind appearances nor denouncing the appearances that veil the truth, Stengers guards against the mobilizing power of language, the formation of antagonistic camps and recruits to populate them. In this way, she hopes to make room in society for the recovery of a taste for an interest in science and technology, a taste that allows one to take them seriously, but also to laugh at them in a way that does not mock and is not ironic. Rather, laughter is directed toward the life of power when power conceals itself behind objectivity or rationality. Can we not laugh with the scientists? How, she inquires, can this situation be brought about (IMS 17)?

Stengers formulates a creative proposal. Is it not the case, she asks, that scientific theories require the invention of a world that they then render intelligible and to which they give signification? Such a situation undoubtedly calls for careful description. Does this situation conserve the idea of a pure mathematical and experimental science juxtaposed with an impure external milieu that constantly threatens to invade it? Or, as Stengers suggests, can we take the scientific paradigm to be a manner of intervening in the world, an intervention that creates what it explains in a competent, discussable, and astute manner that constitutes the paradigm as an event (IMS 49)? In such an intervention, every fact is an artifact, dictated by experimental conditions that produce observable phenomena. Nevertheless, even if we accept the redefinition of the paradigm as an event, we might ask about the necessity of paradigms. That is, without a paradigm, are the claims of scientists nothing but ideological claims? This inquiry brings us back to the relation between science and its other, its nonscience, and the assertion that science must have autonomy and demarcation. One might, like Hannah Arendt, put into question the false opposition between a truth of which “man” is the measure and a pure rational truth, that is, between poeisis

40. In spite of her admiration for Deleuze, Stengers is not unwilling to diverge from his philosophy in this and in other key respects.
41. “A great number of actors, all of whom have been, in one way or another, produced by the text, undertake to draw lessons from it. All are situated in the space it has opened; none can claim to have a privileged relation of truth with it” (IMS 67).
and praxis when the latter is understood in the Greek manner as performative speech for the sake of immortality that excludes useful or necessary acts (IMS 61).\textsuperscript{42} Indeed, this became an important aspect of the distinction between humans and animals as only those who seek immortal fame do not live and die like animals! In this regard, Stengers’s claim that the baboons studied by Shirley Strum \textit{do politics} radically overturns the notions of purity and demarcation and brings to light the disqualification of women, foreigners, and others as political actors. Stengers’s goal is not to eliminate the difference between science and sociology but, precisely, to open up a space where the distinction between the two can be constructed; not to deny that there is a difference between science and nonscience but also not to declare that scientists have privileged knowledge of what this difference that singularizes them signifies (IMS 62, 64, 67).

What is called for, according to Stengers, is the construction of a point of view from which modern science can be understood as a contingent process, a process whose statements belong to the order of the possible in the context of scientists working with other scientists. This is a point of view that acknowledges the difference between opinions and what can be demonstrated (IMS 80, 81, 83). So, for example, we might say that Galileo’s law of motion is relative to an order of created fact, an artifact of the lab such that the different falling motions and the three concepts of speed that he develops give way to a motion both unique and decomposable in terms of independent variables, controllable by the operator and capable of forcing the skeptic to admit that there is only a single legitimate way to articulate them. This is a world, both fictive and concrete, that yields to one method of interrogation, as only this method has the power to silence critics and rivals. Simultaneously, it is an abstract world: things will have been eliminated if the experimental apparatus does not permit their categories to be defined (IMS 84–5, 90). If the method of science produces truth with regard to a reality it invents \textit{and} discovers, this reality guarantees the production of truth when the constraints of the procedure are respected and the scientist submits to an event that cannot be reduced to the simple possession of knowledge but rather gathers those who are interested, who are willing to risk the intervention of this event in their own problematic field of interrogation (IMS 91, 92).\textsuperscript{43} Thus, to bring a scientific event, say the theory of the big bang, into existence, specialists must multiply the links between this event and work of scientists who do not

\textsuperscript{42} See Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition} (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 12–21, especially: “The task and potential greatness of mortals lie in their ability to produce things – works and deeds and words – which would deserve to be and, at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness” (ibid., 19).

\textsuperscript{43} “Interest derives from \textit{inter-esse}; to be situated between …. Those who let themselves become interested in an experimental statement accept the hypothesis of a link that engages them” (IMS 95).

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belong to this specialty. Unlike communicative rationality, which seeks agreement, scientific rationality seeks to make one forget the contingent singularity of the invention of an experimental practice, so as to make the phenomenon available for other work, to make it objective and to theorize it, to make it construct a representation of reality as it exists outside the laboratory (IMS 105, 107).44

All of this, of course, crashes up against the rocks of modern science and modern life. Kuhnian paradigms no longer form as science mobilizes rapidly through technological innovation, leaving no time to think data through or search for subtle correlations. Scientists are both drawn to and ruled by the imperative to provide society with useful information. Lead scientists and principal investigators have become “patrons” recruiting allies and financing for their growing laboratories. They speak different languages to different constituents, including the “incompetent” public; they are encouraged by “philosophers who learned in school that science would decipher laws that characterize phenomena objectively and their task would be to think this” (IMS 118), and by the errors of those sociologists who trust the rhetoric addressed to the public, “not realizing that the information they have access to reduces them to impotence” (IMS 124). But it should be the case, Stengers advises, that when these scientists leave the laboratory, the change of milieu implies a change of practices, an acknowledgment that it is part of their scientific, ethical, and political responsibility to affirm the selective character of their knowledge, thereby separating science and power (IMS 128, 134). Silencing rivals in order to assert the power to represent phenomena, declaring nonlaboratory sciences such as evolution impotent, the association of a free subject with one freed of opinion, the stabilization of the subject–object relation: these are some of the unfortunate consequences of confusing the event of science in theoretico-experimental practices with the production in laboratories of allies who fail to recognize the limits of their invention-discovery, who fail to separate science from power (IMS 130, 133). This is echoed in the feminist perspective of Sandra Harding, who endorses the impassioned activity of Galileo and Newton while decrying the discourse on method and objectivity that makes their work authoritative (IMS 133, 21).45

Additionally, the limits of theoretico-experimental sciences must be established in the face of newly emerging sciences and field sciences such as computer simulation. The latter produces no theory, only models that cannot be constructed in the laboratory, and finds nothing but constraint in mathematical laws. Or, there are the field sciences, which must collect indices and reconstitute concrete

44. “Every theory affirms a social power, a power to judge the value of human practices. No theory is imposed without social, economic, or political power being at play, somewhere” (IMS 113).
situations rather than representing phenomena like functions with independent variables, and which tend to be interdisciplinary and open to uncertainties rather than proofs. And, there are the scientists, like psychoprimatologists who are faced with creatures (rats, baboons, humans) who are interested in the questions they are asked, or who have brought new beings into existence that cannot be sent out into a nature that is no longer a natural environment for them (IMS 135–46).

Acknowledging this multiplicity of interests makes way for the invention of a new image of science, one that no longer represents the world as offered up in order to be deciphered in terms of obstacles to be skirted, reduced, or ignored. In order for the multiplicity of scientific practices to be represented, science would have to consider a slowing down of its current mobilization, a slowing down that gives voice to the “Parliament of Things,” proposed by Latour. The Parliament of Things is a space of mediators with room for both Natures and Societies, where their representatives all speak in the name of some invention, some “object-discourse-nature-society whose new properties astound us all and whose network extends from my refrigerator to the Antarctic by way of chemistry, law, the State, the economy, and satellites” (IMS 154).46 Such a point of view is neither revolutionary nor reformist, insofar as it puts into question both the concept of ruptures in the continuum of smooth space and the possibility of continuous progress. In this it is truly paradoxical, proving that even epistemology requires invention, the invention of the ways that make possible becoming interested – inter-esse – in others, and, in turn, making them interested as well, not via the realm of intersubjective or communicative rationality, but rather through the invention of links arising as disparities (IMS 153–5).47

As Stengers states, the scientist’s profile will have to change: neither a patron nor a practitioner of normal science, lacking any common ground, the scientist will recognize herself as a representative of the problem that both engages and situates her. And so, Stengers asks, is not every innovation made on the basis of a risk, “a quantitative intensification of already-existing putting into relation” (IMS 158–9)? If so, then let us recognize this risk, let all sensibilities, not just those of scientists, formulate problems, and let us not forget that our practices must hold up when put to the test.


47. Like Latour, Stengers appears to advocate an onto-epistemology based on that constructed by Deleuze. However, in her call for a slow-down and in her problematization of continuous, smooth space, she may well be indicating the need for something else. See as well my The Universal (In the Realm of the Sensible) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), ch. 1, for a proposal concerning such an alternative onto-epistemology.
This essay argues that the establishment of the European Union as a constitutional, political, and cultural project, and, more specifically, the enlargement of the European Union to include former Eastern bloc countries after 1989, constitute a break in the scholarship about Europe as a philosophical concept. This claim does not imply any causal connection between the events, but rather draws new analytic categories, which I will outline and explore in this essay.

The starting premise is that the classical scholarship on the philosophical idea of Europe had settled on the consensus that it coincides with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason. This idea, formulated in the eighteenth century and canonized by Hegel’s philosophy of history, transforms Europe into a universal attribute of the mind that can lend its quality to any object. The self-reflexivity at stake in this definition of Europe was reasserted by Edmund Husserl in the 1930s as a “historical teleology of the infinite goals of reason.”

This self-aggrandizing vision assumes that Europe is not just a geopolitical location, but rather a concept unfolding through space and time, which can be applicable anytime and anywhere, provided the essential criteria are met. Europe announces itself as the site of origin of critical reason and self-reflexivity. Equal only to itself, Europe as universal consciousness therefore transcends its specificity or, rather, posits the power of transcendence as its distinctive characteristic and universalism as its particularity. This makes Eurocentrism into more than just a contingent matter of attitude: it is a structural element of

philosophical thought, which is also embedded in both theory and institutional and pedagogical practices.

I will focus on two features of this Eurocentric paradigm. The first is a universal claim about the structure, value, and function of reason. The second is the importance of the dialectics of self and other, or the binary logic of identity and otherness as the motor for the formation of subjectivity. Central to this universalistic posture and its binary logic is the notion of “difference” as pejoration. Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. Insofar as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as “others.” These are sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, who are reduced to the status of disposable bodies. Because their history in Europe has been one of lethal exclusions and fatal disqualifications, they raise issues of both power and exclusion and the need for ethical accountability.

This universalistic self-image has been challenged and displaced by alternative visions of the philosophical status of Europe. These challenges are both internal to philosophy as a corporate discourse with a formidable institutional history and external to it. The internal interrogation line is drawn along the debate about the “crisis of reason” that has occurred since the early days of poststructuralism between its proponents and opponents. The external fault line is drawn by intersecting critiques developed by radical epistemologies such as feminism, environmentalism, and postcolonial, race, and critical legal theories. They are formulated as a response to concrete world-historical events, such as colonialism, fascism, and communist totalitarianism, which exemplify the atrocities that were committed in the name of Europe’s universal civilizing mission. These historical events are set off against the self-aggrandizing narratives derived from the Enlightenment. What emerges from this juxtaposition is a variety of new critical and creative modes of addressing the question of Europe as philosophy.

The European Union as the immediate social and political context in which these competing views emerge adds to their political and ethical urgency. It also sets the arena for a contested debate about what kind of political, moral, and legal entity Europe is in the process of becoming. This essay aims at providing an overview of the main trends of thought in this debate.

Before going any further, however, some careful distinctions need to be made between perspectives situated within the European continent itself and the terms of the debate within the Anglo-American world. I find it especially important to

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*2. Some of these alternative visions are discussed by Eduardo Mendieta in “Postcolonialism, Postorientalism, Postoccidentalism,” in this volume.
take distance from the often polemical tone the notion of Europe has acquired in US academic debates centered on French philosophy, especially on issues related to humanism, postmodernism, and relativism. A clear example is Martha Nussbaum’s influential statement in *Cultivating Humanity* in favor of two interlocked ideas that pertain to the classical paradigm of European thought: first, an unquestionable appeal to the authority of the history of European philosophy since Greek antiquity; second, the notion that the exercise of philosophical reason is a moral enterprise. This moral universalism concretely results in the liberal American translation of classical European humanism into elitist ideals about higher education, citizenship, and political participation. These beliefs in turn support a transhistorical and ethnocentric civilizational reading of this discipline as a universalistic discourse that is structurally antithetical to any localized, situated perspectives, which are reduced to relativism.

The philosophical opposition to this traditional view confirms the Eurocentric universalistic paradigm, albeit by negation. Recent critiques of the explicit racism of the great continental philosophers are conceived as deconstructions of this Eurocentric and masculinist bias in the teaching of the history of philosophy. Robert Bernasconi’s critical analysis of the racist elements within philosophy contests the equation of continental philosophy with Europe as a geographical and historical entity. It rather needs to be extended to include the multiple ethnic others and foreign influences that have nurtured and fueled continental thought. Bernasconi argues also that the institutional racism of philosophy is such that there is hardly any work on the history of African philosophical traditions and the contribution they have made to the discipline. It is therefore urgent to compose alternative, non-Europe-based histories of continental philosophy as a transnational enterprise.

These critiques exemplify a trend that is also alive in European thought today. The operative words here are “situated perspectives.” Both the critique of ahistorical Eurocentrism and the quest for alternative genealogies of thought express a form of ethical and political accountability that requires adequate understandings of one’s embedded and embodied perspectives. Michel Foucault’s cartographies of power provide a conceptual and methodological example of this approach, as do the feminist politics of locations as situated knowledges and Gilles Deleuze’s concept of radical immanence. For all these thinkers, to stress the situated structure of philosophical knowledge also means to recognize its partial or limited nature. The immediate consequence of this acknowledgment is both ethical and methodological. It requires a specific form of accountability for the production of philosophical ideas. The critiques of both universalism

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and of liberal individualism are fundamental starting-points to rethink the interconnection between the self and society in an accountable manner. This nondualistic situated ethics accounts in a nonrelativistic manner for the complex power mechanisms at play in the enunciation of scientific discourse.

For philosophers situated in Europe today, the European Union project has to do with the sobering experience of taking stock of our specific location. The opposite of the grandiose and aggressive universalism of the past, this is a situated and accountable perspective. Daniel Cohn-Bendit recently stated that for this European project to work, we must start from the assumption that Europe is the specific periphery where we live and that we must take responsibility for it. Imagining anything else would be a repetition of that flight into abstraction for which our culture is (in)famous.

As a consequence, the working definition of Europe adopted in this essay takes a firm and critical distance from the Eurocentric universalism that is taken for granted in the dominant philosophical debates in North America, both by its supporters and by its opponents. I argue that as a result of the European Unification project, but also as a factor that sustains it, the philosophical question about Europe is no longer that of identity, but rather the process of rupture from and transformation of its imperial and undemocratic past. In other words, it is not about who Europeans are, but about what they are capable of becoming. Europe has to become the site of self-criticism and self-transformation on the basis of the hard-won lessons of its rich, dramatic, and complex history. Europe today stands for the ethical obligation to be accountable for its past history and the long shadow it casts on its present politics. In this respect, the political project of the European Union marks a radical redefinition of Europe’s relationship to its outside, or its constitutive others. Insofar as this project is ongoing, it is both contested and fraught with internal contradictions. It follows, then, that the consensus about the displacement of the old universalizing notion of Europe produces a range of options regarding the alternatives. That philosophical consensus itself, however, is beyond dispute.

I. THE EUROPEAN UNION AS NEW DISCURSIVE FRAME

Historically, the project of the European Union originates in the defeat of fascism and Nazism after the Second World War and is grounded in antifascism, antinationalism, and antimilitarism. The life and work of one of the initiators

of the project of European federation – Altiero Spinelli – testifies to this. In the context of the Cold War, however, the new European Community also functioned as a showcase of Western superiority and streamlined the reconstruction of Europe’s war-torn economy. The moral and political bankruptcy of European “civilization” was exemplified by the Holocaust, perpetuated against the Jewish and Roma populations, among others, as well as the persecution of homosexuals, communists, and other groups of people by the Nazi and fascist regimes. The legacy of racism, extermination, and violence of European history comes under criticism in the second half of the twentieth century, first in the aftermath of fascism and subsequently as a commentary on the atrocities of communism. The continental Europe that emerged from the war was philosophically impoverished. As a result of Nazi persecution of Jewish intellectuals, the loss was human first and foremost, but some philosophical ideas also perished. Marxism and psychoanalysis were the critical theories that Nazism violently eradicated. The Cold War, which kept Europe and the world split and dichotomized, and demonized Marxism, did not facilitate the resurgence of those critical theories in the continent where they had originated. Their re-implantation back into Europe entailed a self-critical discussion about the role of totalitarian thought in European cultural, political, and intellectual history that took place within the Frankfurt School, the Yugoslav school of Marxism, and the Italian brand of “Euro-communism,” as well as within French philosophy, which acted as a regenerator of a self-reflexive and critical continental philosophy of the subject in the post-Second World War period.

It is significant in this respect that the French poststructuralists reappraised the very thinkers – Marx and Freud – whom the Nazis had banned. Unlike the structuralists, who also returned to Marx and Freud, they focused as well on the other totalitarian movement of the twentieth century and analyzed the limitations and the horrors of communism. This generation, however, also rescued the transformative potential of Marx’s own philosophical texts against the political conservativism of the institutions that controlled Marxist (and psychoanalytic) dogma. In their view, the crux of the problem was the universalizing theory of the subject that is implicit in these theories: under the cover of historical materialism, or of the unconscious, the subject of critical European theory preserved a unitary, hegemonic, and teleological place as the motor of human history. Accountability for European history therefore took the form of unhinging the subject from unitarian identities, freeing it respectively from the dictatorship of a libido dominated by Oedipal jealousy, and from the linearity of a historical telos that had married reason to the revolution, both of them vowing violence.

A third historical element that affected the critique of the old idea of Europe is colonialism. The persistence of the colonial question in the work of the post-structuralists is visible: they rejected Eurocentrism and the classical definition of European identity in terms of humanism, rationality, and the universal. They stressed instead the need to open it up to the “others within” in such a way as to relocate diversity as a structural component of European subjectivity. Best expressed in Julia Kristeva’s idea of becoming “strangers to ourselves,” this deconstructed vision of the European subject is active also in Hélène Cixous’s and Jacques Derrida’s reappraisal of their Algerian Jewish roots. Other significant contributions that point strongly in this direction are: Gayatri Spivak’s vocal advocacy of new postcolonial subjects that asserts the noncentrality of European hegemony; Deleuze's critique of majoritarian European languages; Massimo Cacciari’s work on Europe as an archipelago open to the influence of other cultures; Gianni Vattimo’s reflections on Europe, Christianity and secularity; and Foucault’s involvement in the Iranian revolution.

II. THREE BRANDS OF PHILOSOPHICAL EUROSKEPTICISM

Three varieties of Euroskeptic have appeared that also contain vocal elements of doubt about the possibility of redefining Europe as a nonethnocentric,

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7. See Hélène Cixous, “Mon Algériance,” Les Inrockuptibles 115 (August 20, 1997), 70. Published in English as “My Algerian in Other Words, to Depart not to Arrive from Algeria,” TriQuarterly 100 (Fall 1997).
multileveled concept in today’s world. They have developed accordingly into different forms of Euroskepticism.

Politically, on the Continent, the opposition to the European Union is led by the nationalistic center and the authoritarian Right, which is both xenophobic and in denial of the legacy of fascism. As Stuart Hall put it, the great resistance against the European Union, as well as the American suspicion of it, is a defensive response to a process that aims at overcoming the idea of European nations. The short-range effect of this process is a nationalist wave of paranoia and xenophobic fears, which is simultaneously anti-European Union and racist. Thus, the expansion of European boundaries coincides with the resurgence of micro-nationalist borders and fictional ethnicities at all levels in Europe today. Unification coexists with the closing down of borders; the common European citizenship and the common currency coexist with increasing internal fragmentation and regionalism; a new, allegedly postnationalist, identity coexists with the return of xenophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism.

Strong opposition to the European Union is also voiced, however, by the nostalgic Left, which seems to miss the topological foundations for international working-class solidarity and refuses accountability for the political violence of communist regimes the world over. The cosmopolitan tradition of socialism militates against the European dimension. This results in the paradox of making the far Left as Euroskeptical as the far Right.

The critique of Eurocentrism by race and postcolonial theory is also negative about Europe’s transformative potential for self-renewal through ethical and political accountability. This Euroskepticism is best expressed by Gayatri Spivak, who turns the tables on the deconstruction of ethnocentrism in A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Spivak suggests that this high level of self-reflexivity is merely Europe’s exacerbated expression of its discursive hegemony, recast in a weakened mode of decentered subjectivity. For Spivak the “crisis” of European identity has become the preferred modus vivendi of continental philosophers and their chosen manner of silencing the vocal minorities that crowd the margins of the globalized world.

I find all three brands of Euroskepticism unconvincing and therefore do not share their cynical dismissal of critiques of Eurocentrism by European philosophers. On the contrary, contemporary continental philosophy has taken apart the notion of Europe, so as to expose its internal fractures. This high degree of complexity highlights one of the central features of the globalized condition,

namely, the inadequacy of simple binary thinking. How to think the simultaneity of potentially contradictory social effects is the question. The response to this challenge is neither the exaltation of neo-universalism under the aegis of American liberal education, nor the retreat into negativity and relativism. It rather consists in new forms of situated European accountability.

III. SUBJECTIVITY REVISITED: ON EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

The primary effects of the unification project and of globalization on the philosophical notion of Europe concern ethical subjectivity and citizenship. The classical model that linked citizenship to belonging to a territory and a community – a nation-state and a culture – and opposed it to a condition of statelessness, is no longer adequate. De-linking the three basic units that compose citizenship – the ethnic origin or place of birth; the nationality or bond to a nation-state; and the legal structure or actual citizenship – sets the conditions for both the radical transformations that are needed in European subjectivity, and the greatest opposition to them. These three factors are disaggregated and disarticulated from each other and become rearranged in a number of interesting ways.

First, let me both acknowledge and then immediately leave aside the neoliberal side of this process, which is exclusively concerned with the defense of advanced capitalism. Insofar as free movement of workers and capital is a central feature of the global economy, deregulated capitalism promotes constant flows and displacements. The problem with this position is twofold: first, it restricts free mobility to capital and data; second, the speed of circulation is such that capitalism erodes its own foundations and thus undermines the nation-state, devastates the environment, and wastes human lives. For these reasons, neoliberalism is not very innovative as a philosophical project. As I stated at the start of this essay, the philosophically interesting projects combine a focused attention on situated practices with ethical accountability in their social analyses of transnational capitalism. Consequently the effects of the globalized and so-called “flexible” labor market, including the de-linking of ethnicity and nationality from citizenship, have to be analyzed in terms of the power differentials and the patterns of exclusion and discrimination they entail. Similarly, the re-bundling of entitlements and benefits in packages of new citizenship rights has to be analyzed as political processes.

There is a further problem: The neoliberal definition of the European Union as a global capitalist power expresses a reactive tendency toward a sovereign sense of the Union. This is also known as the “Fortress Europe” syndrome, and has been extensively criticized in that it entails the belief in an ethnically pure Europe. The question of ethnic purity is the germ of Eurofascism and runs the risk of producing a European form of apartheid.14 Present-day Europe is struggling with alternative models of citizenship at a time of increasing social exclusion, racism, and xenophobia. That the new inclusive sense of citizenship and the tendency toward a reactionary, fortress mentality coexist makes European citizenship into one of the most contested areas of political and social philosophy.

A disaggregated idea of citizenship emerges from the current European Union situation: as a bundle of rights and benefits that can accommodate both nationals and migrants. This project aims to accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity without undermining European liberal democracies, the benefits of the European welfare state, and the universal idea of individual human rights. Let me examine some significant examples of this transformative project.

IV. TRANSNATIONAL EUROPEAN CITIZENS

Étienne Balibar’s15 redefinition of the concept of European citizenship plays a foundational role in the shift of paradigm about Europe as a philosophical idea.16 Balibar is the most eminent representative of the Spinozist democratic tradition that has proved so influential in shaping continental political philosophy.17 The main feature of this school of thought is the definition of the subject not in terms of autonomy and individual rights. The emphasis falls instead on

15. Étienne Balibar (1942-; born in Avallon, France) studied philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure with Louis Althusser (1960–65) and at the Sorbonne in Paris, received his PhD in philosophy from the University of Nijmegen (1987), and his habilitation from the University of Paris I (1993). He began his long career at the University of Paris in 1969, eventually serving as Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Paris X–Nanterre from 1993 until his retirement in 2002. Currently, he is Emeritus Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at Nanterre and Distinguished Professor of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine. In addition to his other works cited elsewhere in this essay, his most important works include: Reading Capital (with Louis Althusser; 1965), Masses, Classes, Ideas (1994), The Philosophy of Marx (1995), Spinoza and Politics (1998), and Citoyen Sujet, Essais d’anthropologie philosophique (forthcoming).
16. See Étienne Balibar, We, the People of Europe? and Politics and the Other Scene, Christine Jones et al. (trans.) (London: Verso, 2002).
multilayered flows of forces that express a subject’s quest for freedom through the understanding of the condition (both positive and negative) of one’s specific power locations.

Balibar’s democratic project starts from the necessity to learn the lesson of the great human tragedies engendered by European history in the twentieth century. This systematic disregard of human rights makes it imperative to learn and re-elaborate the historical memory with renewed ethical urgency. The learning process, according to Balibar, starts from the recognition of the legacy of fascism and of colonialism and proceeds to take in the effects of Europe’s global expansion throughout the whole planet. This process of hybridization forces the recognition of the structural importance of Otherness on the constitution of the European subject. This ongoing learning process simultaneously defeats Eurocentrism and elevates the marginal epistemologies of postcolonial and gender theories to a higher philosophical status.

Balibar takes on critically the idea of the universal power of the law and reminds us that rights are the results of historical struggles and contestations, not of deduction from preexisting general principles. Although the new constitution of the European Union shows both supranational elements and cosmopolitan anticipations, Balibar argues that European citizenship needs to be redefined in transnational terms that draw the hard lessons of the past and meet the complexities of the global age. The point for Balibar is neither to relink nationhood and citizenship by transposing them to a supranational level, nor to declare them obsolete. The point is to turn the question of the European political subject and of citizenship into a process, a work-in-progress. The self-evidence that accompanies so much contemporary cultural racism has to be lifted out of this debate. It is a question of redefining community, belonging, and power mechanisms of exclusion.

The process of the European Union is taken as both part of the global economy and an attempt to move beyond the essentialist grounds on which European nationalism has prospered. Balibar redefines Europe as a transnational space of mediation and transformation. This new European identity is internally differentiated and hence nonunitary and committed to transcultural hybrid exchanges. It is a situated perspective based on multiple border crossings, on confrontations with shifting frontiers and borders, and on a deep commitment to pacifism and human rights.

A more militant version of this position has been developed by another neo-Spinozist political philosopher: Antonio Negri, who developed with Michael Hardt the theory of the necessity of the political project of the European Union as an antidote to the sovereign power of the United States. The European Left has reacted with energy to the historical evidence of the dislocation of European supremacy and the coming of a belligerent American empire. Marxist
philosophers, however, have been slow to understand the nondialectical and schizophrenic nature of advanced capitalism, as was articulated, for example in Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. In both *Empire* and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Hardt and Negri combine a monistic Spinozist political economy with a post-Marxian brand of materialist analysis of labor conditions under advanced capitalism. The productive space of becoming-revolutionary is located in the notion of the politically mobilized multitude as the motor of world resistance. The European Social Forum\(^\text{18}\) is a good example of a social movement that expresses the democratic mobilization by the people themselves against the hegemony of imperial power.

In terms of European citizenship this means that the constitutive power lies with the people, or the multitude, which has the power to resist state sovereignty and to redefine the public sphere. Peace, multilateral international relations, and multilevel constitutional arrangements are the key features of the Europe of multitudes.

V. COSMOPOLITANISM REVISITED

Considering the complex power relations and internal fractures induced by the globalization process and the European Union, the relevance of contemporary cosmopolitanism as political philosophy, as an ethics of human empathy, and a constitutional and institutional design is thrown open for questioning. And so are its links with its classical and modern predecessors.

Jürgen Habermas’s work, in *The Postnational Constellation*, on the universal value of republican institutions and the emphasis on rational argumentation as the precondition for social justice and democratic governance are relevant to the question of Europe.\(^\text{19}\) It is also predictable, in keeping with his philosophical agenda centered on rational cosmopolitanism and communicative ethics. Habermas has defended the novelty and relevance of the European Union as a political and philosophical factor in what he calls the postnational constellation. Contrary to the brutal instrumentalism of unbridled capitalism on the

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18. The European Social Forum is an annual conference held by members of the alter-globalization movement (also known as the Global Justice Movement), which emerged from the World Social Forum and follows its charter of principles. It aims to allow social movements, trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, refugees, peace groups, anti-imperialist groups, and antiracist and environmental movements to come together and discuss themes linked to major European and global issues.

19. For a detailed discussion of Habermas, see the essay by Christopher F. Zurn in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*.
one hand and the Schmittian belligerency of the US on the other, Europe can and, according to Habermas, should become the political incarnation of a moral community that lives by the normative ideals of Kantian neocosmopolitanism. This means the rule by law, not by force, and the principles of hospitality, not of hostility. Habermas calls for a serious European constitution, that is to say, Europe as a political project that would involve the consolidation of a European public sphere that might strengthen the shared political culture of European democracies and welfare states.

Habermas explores the key philosophical issues raised by the event of the European Union: the security of the rule of law; the sovereignty of the territorial state; collective identity and the democratic legitimacy of the nation-state. The focus of Habermas’s argument is the critique of the intolerance, xenophobia, and racism that accompany the structural changes in the postnational constellation. This deficit in democratic procedures is as problematic morally as it is urgent politically. The ethnically mixed and multicultural structure of postnational societies exemplifies the de-linking of nationality and cultural identity from citizenship and the workings of the state, which causes both discomfort and great opportunities. Habermas’s point is that “to the degree that this decoupling of political culture from majority culture succeeds, the solidarity of citizens is shifted onto the more abstract foundation of a constitutional patriotism.”20 This results in renewing the sense of civil solidarity and of a universalism sensitive to difference. Against the postmodernists and the liberals alike, who, for diametrically opposed reasons refuse universally binding values, Habermas argues that the only way to meet the challenges of the postnational condition is to renew democracy through the framework of the European Union. Egalitarian universalism and constitutional patriotism in a postnational democracy remain the ideal.

Following Habermas, in her recent work on European citizenship, Seyla Benhabib21 interrogates critically the disjunction between the concepts of nation, the state, and cultural identity. Solidly grounded in her theory of communicative ethics, Benhabib works toward the elaboration of new rules of global democracy within a multicultural horizon. A self-professed Kantian cosmopolitan,22 Benhabib argues forcefully that “democratic citizenship can be exercised across national boundaries and in transnational contexts” and defends the European Union accordingly.23 She is especially keen to demonstrate that the distinction between national minority and ethnic group does very little to determine

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whether an identity/difference-driven movement is democratic. In its current phase, cosmopolitanism has emerged as the dominant progressive ethos of the globalized world in that it is expected to neutralize the potential conflicts of heterogeneous and fast-changing globalized societies.

More critical thinkers within the poststructuralist tradition, however, challenge this view and investigate the notion that neutralization of differences may not be the most effective way of dealing with contemporary societies. Considering the history of difference as pejoration, this approach runs the risk moreover of perpetuating traditional forms of exclusion and disqualification. What is absolutely clear in a poststructuralist perspective is that the universalistic assumption of one common measure of norms and values based on reason, which is constitutive of classical cosmopolitanism, is untenable nowadays. Diverse forms of thinking pan-human belonging and ethical interconnection are both available and necessary, starting, for instance, from pacifism. Politically, cosmopolitanism promises the end of wars and the dawn of an age of perpetual peace through global trade, “global civil society,” and governance. The recent escalation of wars on terror, however, challenges these premises. Important political, normative, and policy implications are involved in this debate between those promoting cosmopolitanism and those who see a return to a new form of warmongering imperialism.

Derrida strikes his own note on the cosmopolitan issue. Starting from the primacy of the Self–Other relation and also from its paradoxical nature, he emphasizes the impossibility for any culture to be self-evident in the sense of coinciding with itself – and with ideals of cultural sameness. Derrida argues that the Other is constitutive of the Self and acts as an irreducible element of otherness within, as an internal fracture or endless differentiation within, which cannot and must not be resolved. In light of its long history of universal posturing, Europe today, argues Derrida, has a moral obligation to turn the question of its identity into the contemplation of the limits of its universality. Simultaneously a very old culture and younger than ever – because it does not quite exist yet – the European Union offers new modes of interrogating the aporetic relationship that ties Self to Other in a productive spiral of contradictions. Neither reducible to the old mastery as a centralizing, hegemonic power, nor dispersed into endless regional and sub-cultural fragments, Europe has to become an event, a process, a self-reflexive contemplation of its own finitude.

Faithful to his ethical project, Derrida outlines a list of ethical obligations that Europe must undertake toward its others and hence toward itself. These include: the critique of totalitarianism; the rejection of racism and xenophobia; the duty of hospitality and openness to strangers; and a commitment to democracy as an unfinished project that is still to come and hence requires all our collective dedication. Contemporary cosmopolitanism, for Derrida, must respect these ethical rules and adopt a political stance that implements them.

VI. PLANETARY SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Derrida’s contribution to the European debate is not the only one, however, to support a transformative kind of cosmopolitanism. Starting from the definition of Europe as an endless adventure of the human spirit and a process of self-quest, for instance, Zygmunt Bauman’s reflections on Europe connect to his criticism of the project of modernity. Bauman acknowledges that the modern age has reached an aporetic moral condition by having functioned under the twin banners of universality and steady-state-bound foundations, the worst examples of which are revolutionary violence and totalitarianism. These threaten the common good and undermine the autonomous responsibility of the moral self, while proclaiming loudly the need for clear and stable values. Lamenting the facile association of the postmodern era with moral relativism, Bauman stresses instead the specific ethical challenge represented by postmodernity. This can be summed up as an increased degree of self-examination, the loss of the grandiose illusions that drove modernity to excess, and a renewed sense of sobriety in setting social and moral goals. Postmodernity is modernity without illusions.

25. Zygmunt Bauman (1925– ) was born to nonpracticing Jewish parents in Poznan, Poland. In 1939, after the Nazi invasion, he escaped to the Soviet Union with his family. After the war, Bauman returned to Poland and studied sociology and philosophy at the University of Warsaw. He completed his MA in 1954 and became a lecturer in Warsaw, where he remained until 1968. After completing his habilitation, in 1962 he was appointed to the Chair in Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw. In 1968, the anti-Semitic campaign led by the Polish government forced Bauman out of his job and out of the country. Having had to give up Polish citizenship to be allowed to leave, he first went to Israel to teach at Tel Aviv University, before accepting a Chair in Sociology at the University of Leeds, where he is currently an Emeritus Professor. Bauman’s published work extends to approximately thirty books and well over a hundred articles. In addition to his other works cited elsewhere in this essay, his most important works include: Between Class and Elite: The Evolution of the British Labour Movement – A Sociological Study (1972), Modernity and The Holocaust (1989), Thinking Sociologically: An Introduction for Everyone (1990), and Globalization: The Human Consequences (1998).

This sobering loss of illusions is crucial for the process of redefining Europe as a philosophical notion. The civilizing mission formulated in the eighteenth century was betrayed, or rather fulfilled perversely, by modernization narrowly defined as an economic process. Challenging the Kantian equation of moral and legal norms, Bauman stresses the gratuitousness, the lack of self-interest, and hence the profoundly nonrational nature of many moral choices that are made for the good of the world. This essential gratuitousness defeats the logic of means–end, the economist calculations of gains and profits, which is so central to mainstream morality. Bauman’s postmodern ethical project stresses instead the primacy of ethics over politics in the constitution of the subject through the rediscovery of a sense of historical accountability. He also attacks the universalizing claims of state powers and the nationalist ideologies that invent traditions and claim territories to real or fictional nation-states. Bauman is equally scathing, however, regarding the neotribalism of the many self-appointed prophets who capitalize on nationalism and other forms of cultural essentialism. Instead of such cast-iron convictions on newly reinvented foundations, he calls for a vision of Europe in line with Balibar’s assertion of the need to re-embark critically its own past. The new planetary mission that Europe has to share in entails the criticism of narrow-minded self-interests, intolerance, and rejection of otherness. Symbolic of this closure of the European mind is the fate of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, all of whom bear the brunt of xenophobia in contemporary Europe.

The emphasis on the need to reinvent humanity and planetary values while avoiding the pitfalls of Eurocentrism is central to this project. It entails the ability to learn again from one’s own mistakes, but also from the rest of the world. Europe has mellowed into an acceptance of a renewed Kantian model of perpetual peace, in opposition to the aggressive Hobbesian project pursued by the US. The European Union is thus mature enough for a self-critical planetary role as the ethical and political subject that has already undergone intense self-scrutiny and has therefore elaborated a new form of cosmopolitanism free of ethnic nationalism.

An analogous project has emerged within Paul Gilroy’s work *Against Race* on colonialism and fascism, racism and anti-Semitism. The continuity between

28. Paul Gilroy (1956– ) was born in the East End of London to Guyanese and English parents, graduated in American Literature at Sussex University in 1978, and received his PhD in Sociology at Birmingham University in 1986 with Stuart Hall. He taught at South Bank University, Essex University, and Goldsmiths College before leaving London to take up a tenured post at Yale University, where he was Professor of Sociology and African American Studies. In 2005 he was appointed as the first holder of the Anthony Giddens Professorship in Social Theory at the London School of Economics. In addition to his works cited in this essay,
these atrocious aspects of European history lies at the heart of Gilroy’s case about the coextensivity of European discourses of modernization and racialized discourses and practices of exclusion. Like most postcolonial and race theorists, Gilroy stresses the murderous charge that “difference” has assumed in European history, and hence also the complicity of rationality with domination and terror. Gilroy, however, strikes a radically neohumanist note. He considers colonialism and fascism as a betrayal of the European ideal of the Enlightenment, which he is determined to defend, and thus he holds Europeans accountable for their ethical and political failings. Racism splits common humanity and disengages whites from any ethical sensibility, reducing them to an infra-human moral status. It also reduces nonwhites to a subhuman ontological status that exposes them to murderous violence. Taking a strong stand against the return of fundamentalist appeals to ethnic differences by a variety of white, black, Serbian, Rwandan, Texan, and other nationalists, Gilroy denounces these “micro-fascisms” as the epidemics of our globalized times. He locates the site of the ethical transformation in the critique of each nationalistic category, starting from the Eurocentric ones, not in the assertion of any dominant one. He sets up diasporic mobility and the transcultural interconnections against the forces of nationalism. This is a theory of mixture, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism that is resolutely nonracial. Against the enduring power of nation-states, Gilroy posits instead the affirmative politics of transversal movements, such as antislavery, feminism, Médecins sans Frontières, and the like. He refers to this ideal as “planetary humanism,” defined as a “postracial and post anthropological version of what it means to be human” in the age of biopolitics and genetic power.29

Gilroy’s cosmo-politan neohumanism is a strategic postracial and inclusive neouniversalism. It suggests the possibility of a “distinctive ecology of belonging” that would recompose the relationship between self, territory, individuality, and society through multiple connections.30 Planetary humanism marks a social and also symbolic recomposition of one’s relationship to space, time, and community. It turns hybridity into an ecophilosophical notion. The challenge is not to return to fixed identities, clear boundaries, and an allegedly pure past, but rather to grab the opportunities offered by the cultural intermixture already available within our own postindustrial ethno/gender landscapes, so as to create yet unknown possibilities for bonding and community building.

Non-Western humanists point out the complicity between European enlightened humanism on the one hand and colonial conquest and exploitation on the

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30. Ibid., 55.
other and call for a more inclusive sense of humanism. For instance, the black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins reconnects to the tradition of Ubuntu, or African humanism and African-American spirituality. Drucilla Cornell argues along similar lines. Supported by a dialogical system and informed by the notion of care as a collective responsibility for one’s community, Afro-centric humanism has become a resource for all who want to resist the attrition and devastation of a process of modernization that is hastily assimilated to coercive Europeanization. Another significant development in the same area is the decolonization strand of the “postcontinental philosophy” movement. This refers to critical theories inspired mostly by Fanon and Sartre, which reject the deconstructive approach to race and ethnicity issues and embrace instead a robust expression of the specific forms of subjectivity developed by those who inhabit the margins, interstices, and diasporic spaces of modernity. These dehumanized others are the agents of powerful epistemic, symbolic, and material decolonizations.

VII. THE BECOMING-MINORITARIAN OF EUROPE

Another radical position inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy argues that the new global context provides the ground for a significant relocation of the notion of Europe as a nomadic and nonethnocentric project. Insofar as it unsettles dominant European identity, the European Union marks a process of becoming-minor of the masterful European subject and engenders more inclusive subject-positions.

In this philosophical paradigm, the post-Eurocentric condition combines nomadic subjectivity with flexible citizenship. The starting-point is the rejection of the myth of unitary visions of the subject and essentialized notions of European cultural homogeneity. European history at any point in time provides ample evidence of ethnic hybridity through waves of migration and the continuing presence of Jewish and Muslim citizens, which challenges the identification of Europe with Christianity. Nonetheless, the myth of cultural

homogeneity is crucial to the tale of European nationalism. In our era, these myths are being exposed and exploded into questions related to entitlement and agency. Thus, the European Union is faced with the issue: can one be European and Black or Muslim? Gilroy’s work on black British subjectivity is indicative of the problem of how European citizenship and blackness emerge as contested issues.\textsuperscript{34} However, whiteness is also called into play. Being the norm, whiteness is invisible, as if natural, whereas black, of course, is always marked off as a color. The effect of this structured invisibility is that it masks itself off into a “colorless multicoloredness.” White contains all other colors and reduces them to social and symbolic visibility. Giving a specific location, historical grounding, and accountability to antiracist whites is one of the aims of critical whiteness theory. The process of becoming-minoritarian or nomadic constructs subjects that are in transit within different identity-formations, but, at the same time, sufficiently anchored to a historical legacy to accept responsibility for it.

A multiply located, nonunitary subject-position and a rhizomic politics of relations are also recommended by the Deleuzian philosopher Edouard Glissant.\textsuperscript{35} He develops an effective rhizomatic poetics and politics, taking as point of reference the historical experience and the specific location of Africans and West Indians caught in the transatlantic slave trade. Glissant foregrounds the importance of memory and the productivity of mixity as the centerpieces of his theory of Relation.\textsuperscript{36} He argues that even an experience as devastating as slavery produces specific forms of knowledge and subjectivization that transcend the burden of the negative. Glissant actively expresses the becoming-minoritarian or becoming-rhizomatic of blacks, Creoles, descendants of slaves, and colonized peoples. This is described as a spiritual but also logistical shift in the structure of the subject in the direction of openness toward both self and other.

Glissant’s position includes a sharp critique of Eurocentrism, which is based on the ontology of sameness or the rule of One. This includes a

\textsuperscript{34} Paul Gilroy, \textit{Ain’t no Black in the Union Jack} (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

\textsuperscript{35} Edouard Glissant (1928– ) was born in Sainte-Marie, Martinique and left for Paris in 1946. He studied ethnography, history, and philosophy at the Sorbonne, where he received his doctorate. Together with Paul Niger, he established in 1959 the separatist political party “Front Antillo-Guyanais pour l’Autonomie,” as a result of which he was barred from leaving France between 1961 and 1965. He returned to Martinique in 1965 and founded the Institut Martiniquais d’études, as well as \textit{Acoma}, a social theory journal. He now divides his time between Martinique, Paris, and New York, where he has been visiting professor of French Literature at CUNY since 1995. As a philosopher, writer, poet and literary critic, Glissant is one of the most influential figures in Caribbean thought and cultural theory, the preeminent critic of the Négritude school and father-figure of the Créolité movement, which emphasizes hybridity as the bedrock of identity and a “creolized” approach to textuality.

dualistic relationship with the rest of humanity. There exists a dominant mode of nomadism in Western culture, in the form of epic journeys of discovery, which find their historical apogee in colonialism. The power of sameness in the West is best described in terms of monolinguism, or the illusion of a single cultural and linguistic root. Glissant, in a very Deleuzian mode, plays the rhizome against the root and advocates global polylinguism. This includes the deconstruction of the hubris of European master cultures and the arrogance with which they consider their languages as the voice of humanity. This universalistic pretense is one of the mechanisms supporting colonialism. It also entails the reappraisal of minor languages, dialects, and hybrids, in a phenomenon that Glissant describes as creolization.

Glissant offers a striking example of the poetics of relation in his analysis of how, in the Caribbean colonized territories, the French colonists spoke their own homegrown dialects – Norman or Breton – rather than the high and noble language of the French nation. It is this bastardized language that mingles with that of the local population, creating a crossover between two distinct but analogous forms of linguistic nonpurity. Creolization, therefore, cuts both ways and marks the becoming-minoritarian of the former master languages.

VIII. ON FLEXIBLE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

I want to relate this nomadic sense of identity to the political notion of flexible citizenship. A radical restructuring of European identity as postnationalistic can be concretely translated into a set of “flexible forms of citizenship” that would allow for all “others” – all kinds of hybrid citizens – to acquire legal status in what would otherwise deserve the label “Fortress Europe.” This would involve dismantling the us–them binary in such a way as to account for the undoing of a strong and fixed notion of European citizenship in favor of a functionally differentiated network of affiliations and loyalties. These could materialize and exemplify, for the citizens of the member states of the European Union, the disconnection of the three elements discussed above: ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship. According to Ulrich Preuss, such a European notion of citizenship, disengaged from national foundations, lays the ground for a new kind of civil society, beyond the boundaries of any single nation-state. Because such a notion of “alienage” would become an integral part of citizenship in the European Union, Preuss argues that all European citizens would end up being “privileged foreigners.”\cite{preuss} In other words, they would function together without reference.

\cite{preuss} Ulrich K. Preuss, “Two Challenges to European Citizenship,” *Political Studies* 44 (1996), 551.
to a centralized and homogeneous sphere of political power.\textsuperscript{38} Potentially, this notion of citizenship could therefore lead to a new concept of politics, which would no longer be bound to the nation-state. This is a pragmatic way to develop the progressive potential of the European Union, and also of accounting for the effects of globalization on us all. These effects boil down to one central idea: the end of pure and steady identities, and a consequent emphasis on creolization, hybridization, a multicultural Europe, within which “new” Europeans can take their place alongside their constitutive others.

The project of a nomadic understanding of European citizenship is a historical chance for Europeans to become more situated and more knowledgeable of their own history and hence more self-critical. Nietzsche argued that many Europeans no longer felt at home in Europe.\textsuperscript{39} At the dawn of the third millennium, many want to argue that those who do not identify with the dominant and heroic reading of Europe are ideally suited to the task of reframing Europe. This starts by making it accountable for a history in which fascism, imperialism, and domination have played a central role. Nomadic European subjects can lay the postnationalist foundations for a multilayered and flexible practice of European citizenship in the frame of the new European Union.

IX. CONCLUSION: TOWARD A NEW EUROPEAN SOCIAL IMAGINARY

Communities are also imaginary institutions made of affects and desires. Nations are, to a large extent, imaginary tales, which project a reassuring but nonetheless illusory sense of unity over the disjointed, fragmented, and often incoherent range of internal regional and cultural differences that make up a national identity. The project of developing a range of possible postnationalist, transnational, nomadic subject-positions and equivalent forms of citizenship is related to the process of dis-identification from established, nation-bound identities. Balibar argues that dis-identification is the key to democratic politics in that it implies openness toward the other.\textsuperscript{40} This is one of the key elements of the learning process that can lead to a positive and affirmative relocation of European identities. It is important to stress both the need for an adequate European social imaginary for this kind of subject-position, and the difficulties involved in developing this. There is no denying that such an enterprise involves


\textsuperscript{39} Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pt 8, “Peoples and Fatherlands.”

\textsuperscript{40} Balibar, \textit{We, the People of Europe?}, 68–9.
a large sense of loss and is not without pain; no process of consciousness-raising can ever be without pain.

What is lacking is a social imaginary that adequately reflects the social realities and the lived experience of a postnationalist sense of European identity. Europeans need to develop adequate, positive representations of the new trans-European condition that they inhabit on the continent. This lack of the social imaginary both feeds on and supports the resistance to the European political project. More work is also therefore needed on the role of contemporary global media in both colonizing and stimulating the social imaginary of global cultures. At least some of the difficulty is due to the lack of a specifically European public debate and low involvement by the very intellectuals who represent it, although the lack of vision on the part of European political leaders does not help the situation.

The acknowledgment of a shortage in the collective imaginary of contemporary European social and political philosophy includes humble and sincere accountability for the complex historical aspects of European culture and its problematic legacy. Donna Haraway sums up admirably this mixture of affects:

> Shaped as an insider and an outsider to the hegemonic power and discourses of my European and North American legacies, I remember that anti-Semitism and misogyny intensified in the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution of early modern Europe, that racism and colonialism flourished in the traveling habits of the cosmopolitan Enlightenment and that the intensified misery of billions of men and women seems organically rooted in the freedoms of transnational capitalism and technoscience. But I also remember the dreams and achievements of contingent freedoms; situated knowledges and relief of suffering that are inextricable from this contaminated triple historical heritage. I remain a child of the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment and technoscience.41

The progressive and liberatory potential of this process of situated accountability is equally proportional to the imaginary and political efforts it requires of its participants. The recognition of the new multilayered, transcultural, post-nationalist, and nomadic idea of Europe is also the premise for the collective development of a new relationship with collective memory. It paves the way for multiple and alternative ecologies of belonging. This kind of embodied genealogical accountability is a major contribution to the philosophical discussions

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about Europe. Through the pain of loss and dis-enchantment, “post-Eurocentric Europeans” on both sides of the transatlantic divide are moving continental philosophy into the global era by finding enough creativity and moral stamina to confront the mixed legacy of their history and work toward becoming “just” Europeans.
POSTCOLONIALISM, POSTORIENTALISM, POSTOCCIDENTALISM: THE PAST THAT NEVER WENT AWAY AND THE FUTURE THAT NEVER ARRIVED

Eduardo Mendieta

One of the central contentions of so-called continental philosophy is that in order to properly philosophize one must do the history of philosophy, or in other words, that to philosophize is to think through the history of philosophy. In turn, to do the history of philosophy requires a philosophical insight into what gives coherence, unity, and rationality to that history. History, for a philosophical analysis of philosophy’s history, is not just the narration of a sequence of personalities and their thinking, but the insight into the necessity and dependence of their thinking as a narrative.¹ To philosophize, in the continental philosophy tradition, demands both a philosophical understanding of history, and an insight into the way in which that history informs and conditions philosophy. The background assumption for such a view is that there is a fundamental interdependence between reason, that is logos, and history, that is human activity in time. This entwinement of reason and history achieved its highest expression in the thinking of Hegel.² Postcolonial, as well as postorientalist and postoccidentalist, theory carries this fundamental insight of continental philosophy to the outer limits of its conceptual reach. Postcolonial, postorientalist, and postoccidentalist thinking are all unequivocally legitimate children of continental thinking, and faithful servants of its most important insights. The contributions


of postcolonial theory are as integral to the unfolding and self-reflection of the tradition as have been the contributions of phenomenology, existentialism, pragmatism, postmodernism, and deconstruction. No exaggeration is committed if it is claimed that continental philosophy is advanced and perpetuated through its challenges by devastating critiques such as those of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and deconstruction. Such critiques were enabled by the tradition itself. The tradition is precisely that ceaseless self-reflexivity, and preservation in critique. Similarly, postcolonialism, postorientalism, and postoccidentalism are part of that relentless self-reflexivity and reverential preservation through critique.

In the following we will provide a synoptic overview of the philosophical contributions and thematics that give coherence to postcolonialism as a form of thinking. We will do this by paying particular attention to the metahistorical innovations introduced by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak’s incisive and provocative appropriations of Martin Heidegger’s notions of “worlding,” as well as her analysis of Hegel’s epistemograph, and Homi Bhabha’s analysis of the constitutive desiring of the colonizer and colonized as they are implicated in a form of colonial/colonizing governmentality. These philosophical departures, it is claimed, fall under three rubrics: first, the politics of knowledge, or rather the genealogy of the mutual implication of power/knowledge; second, the geography of reason, or the spatializing of temporalizing that always leaves a trace in terms of a territorializing of reason’s materialization in history; and third, the technologies of subjectification that are attentive to the psychic life of domination and colonial desiring. It is thus easy to appreciate the extent to which postcolonial thinking is thoroughly engaged with the central philosophemes of the continental philosophy tradition: the historicity of knowledge, the phenomenology of consciousness, and the genealogy of subjectivity and agency.

We will then relate the conceptual gains of postcolonial theory to those claimed by postoccidentalism. The aim is to unsettle and disturb a certain philosophical complacency and insouciance as it pertains to the philosophical claims of both postcolonialism and postoccidentalism inasmuch as they reflect the recent history of continental philosophy, a history that is perforce viewed through the historical lens of a post-Cold War pax Americana sensibility, for which the collapse of the Soviet bloc has meant the conceptual bankruptcy of historical materialism and the so-called end of history that assured that liberalism and Western-style democracy had won the historical stage. Postcolonial philosophizing discerns and commands the historicizing of histories, the locating of subjectivities, thus allowing the heterogeneity and plurivocity of

*3. Said, Spivak, and Bhabha are also discussed in detail in the essay by Iain Chambers in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
the “others” to speak in their many languages and histories. Such philosophical
attitude turns into the imperative that the philosophical subject name, locate,
map, and territorialize his or her locus of enunciation. As subjects, we speak
from a particular place and time. As Fernando Coronil, Enrique Dussel, Walter
Mignolo, and Anibal Quijano have argued, postoccidentalism relocalizes us in
the colonial and imperial histories of the Americas. The project of postcolo-
nialism, therefore, is one-sided, incomplete, colluding and complicit with colo-
nialism so long as it is not territorialized and temporalized through the sobering
criticisms of postoccidentalism. This is the subject of the last part of the essay.

Before we proceed, some terminological clarifications are required. The
“post” in postcolonialism, postorientalism, and postoccidentalism can be taken
as punctuating a temporal marker. Indeed, postcolonialism makes reference to
the time after the end of colonialism, de jure if not de facto colonialism. The
“post” here is a temporal, historical, geopolitical indexicalization. It marks a time
in geopolitical world-time. The time it marks is the time of the end of Western
imperial and colonial domination, and the beginning of a project of decoloni-
zation. But already there in the turning of the hands of the geopolitical world-
time clock, there is an indication of another sense of “post.” This second sense is
a philosophical, conceptual, and weltanschauungliche meaning and indication.
This “post” refers to a way of looking at the world, one that sees not from the
no-place of the pretend universality of the West and Europe, but from the differ-
entiated, particularized, historicized, and marked perspective of the colonized-
in-the-processes-of-decolonization consciousness. This “post,” as a posture and
attitude of self-consciousness and historical reflexivity, traces a different tempo-
rality, namely the temporality of resistance to colonialism. Postcolonial theory
is a relentless engagement with this duality of the “post.” On the one hand, it recog-
nizes the processes of decolonization that are registered in the annals of world
history, and seeks to formalize and explicate philosophically what they say about
formerly colonizer and colonized peoples. On the other hand, postcolonialism
is also a historical phenomenology of the insurrected and contesting conscious-
ness of the subaltern and subjugated, who always resisted the will to dominate
every master. Like Hegel’s historical phenomenology of the “West,” which is
captured in the aporia of constituted and constituting consciousness, postcolonial
theory is also captured in the aporia of a subjugated but always already insurrected
consciousness. Thus, while many commentators hyphenated the “post-colonial”
to indicate the geopolitical world-time clock, in the following we dispense with
the dash, and opt for the unity in tension of the historical and transhistorical,
the constituted and constituting, the subjugated and insurrected. Additionally,
dispensing with the bridging dash (should) allow us to disrupt the temporalizing
imperative to see the colonial as having become past. Indeed, one of the central
philosophemes of postcolonial, as well as postorientalist and postoccidentalist,
thinking is that the colonial has never come to an end, that part of thinking the postcolonial is precisely to think through the enduring effects of the colonial, of course, from another perspective, through and with another archive and another memory. The postcolonial is an engagement with what Bhabha called the “on-going colonial present”\textsuperscript{4} and Quijano named the “coloniality of power.”\textsuperscript{5} The postcolonial present is also the enduring and always already present of the past coloniality. The past is never past, not even when it is forgotten and erased by those who benefited from its crimes and the privileges it granted.

With these hermeneutical indications now in place, we can anticipate that postorientalism and postoccidentalism similarly refer to both temporal and conceptual indications. If postcolonialism announces the end of the epistemic privilege of the fictitious subject of world history – the “West” – then it also announces the beginning of the end of certain indispensable, albeit always invi- dious, inventions, such as the primitive, the savage, the barbarous, the uncivilized and unmodern, in a word, the oriental. Analogously, with the announcement of this process of mental and philosophical decolonization, which is also the decolonization of philosophy, is also announced the end of othering machines, or dispositifs, to use that felicitous construct by Michel Foucault, that allow the invention of unassailable images and constructs of and for the West.\textsuperscript{6} In other words, if in order to invent the “West” as the best, and highest stage in the unfolding of world-historical consciousness, something like the “Orient” had to be invented, the cessation of such inventing and projecting also entails the cessation of the inventing and projecting of the “Occident.” Yet, as much as “Orientalism” and “Occidentalism” are entwined, they have different logic and histories, which have been variously archived and excavated by different philosophical traditions in different loci of epistemic authority and credibility.

Every major philosophical movement and period has been enabled by material conditions of possibility. The Renaissance was enabled by the rise of a wealthy and philanthropic mercantile bourgeoisie; the Enlightenment by the printing press, the emergence of an educated reading public; postmodernism and deconstruction by the information revolution and the globalization of Euro-American media. Postcolonialism similarly names not just a period, but also a movement that was also enabled by certain material conditions. It would be contrary to the spirit of both postcolonialism and postoccidentalism not to properly foreground their enablement by waves of movements and individual

\textsuperscript{4} Homi K. Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture} (New York: Routledge, [1994] 2004), 183. Hereafter cited as LC followed by the page number.

\textsuperscript{5} Anibal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en America Latina,” \textit{Anuario Mariateguiano} 9(9) (1997).

agents of history. Thus a lengthy discussion of the sources of postcolonial and postoccidentalist thinking would have to analyze at least three different waves of precursors, actors, and thinkers. In the first wave, one would have to study the works of Aimé Césaire, Mahatma Gandhi, José Carlos Mariátegui, José Martí, Lamine and Léopold Senghor, Mao Zedong, and, as some postcolonial critics have argued, W. E. B. Du Bois and the work of the Harlem Renaissance, which went on to influence the Negritude movement in the 1950s and 1960s in Africa. Most of this work was produced at the height of European imperialism and colonialism. A second wave of thinking emerges during the most intense periods of anticolonial struggles, after the end of the two world wars and the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of Europe and the consolidation of US global power. In this second wave we would include the works of Amilcar Cabral, Enrique Dussel, Frantz Fanon, Ernesto Ché Guevara, Renato Ortiz, Angel Rama, Roberto Fernández Retamar, and Iris M. Zavala. A third wave includes the works by Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Coronil, Edouard Glissant, Lewis Gordon, Ranajit Guha, Achille Mbembe, Mignolo, Quijano, Said, and Spivak. While the first two waves were more directly linked to postcolonial struggles, and their respective thinkers were dispersed throughout the Third World, this third wave is marked by their almost exclusive localization in the US academy, and their attenuated relation to ongoing decolonizing struggles. The work of this third wave also reflects greater theoretical eclecticism and heterogeneity, as well as a growing self-reflexivity in light of new challenges, such as the emergence of neocolonialism under the flag of globalization and Aesopian multiculturalism, a form of ethnoracial tolerance that does not step beyond the shop windows of affluent malls in the gated communities of the Euro-American cities.

I. ORIENTALIZING TO INVENT THE “WEST”

Orientalism, published in 1978, is unquestionably the single most important text to have defined and given an identifiable shape to postcolonial theory. It should be taken as a manifesto of a new philosophical method and attitude. In contrast to Spivak and Bhabha, two of the other most notable postcol-

nial critics, whose work has been far more episodic and essayistic, Said has produced a corpus that has achieved wide readership, crossing over beyond the narrow confines of the academy into a global readership. A paused consideration of this book's central thesis, as well as methodological innovations, is indispensable for an understanding of the claims and contributions of postcolonial theory.

It must be remarked from the outset that *Orientalism* was not an orphan book, a kind of lucky draw. As Said has made explicit in many subsequent texts and interviews, *Orientalism* was followed very shortly by *The Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam*. These two books, in fact, sought to further exemplify and document what he had so eloquently elaborated in *Orientalism*. Yet, when Said's work is commented on, whether affirmatively or critically, very few commentators discuss the dependence of the more overtly political works on the more theoretical one. This failure leads to the obscuring and diminishing of the engaged, practical dimension of Said's work. It also conceals the way in which Said's work was never simply or merely denunciatory. In addition, overlooking Said's authorial intent to have these three books read as a trilogy conceals the fact that Said did not philosophize from an undisclosed or unthematized location. And, most importantly, it also contributes to obfuscating the ways in which Said's work was about linking past European forms of Orientalism with more recent US versions of Orientalism. Indeed, not reading these works as a trilogy, which is how Said conceived them, if not at the outset, then as he wrote them and researched them, hinders us from recognizing that Said's overarching methodology was both archeological and genealogical. These terms are used advisedly, for they allude to Foucault's work, which deeply influenced Said, as he himself has noted. Said, however, went beyond Foucault, who nonetheless provided him with a language and a host of metaphors, but not the methodological impetus, nor the critical humanistic outlook, nor certainly what Said called the secular and worldly attitude of the engaged intellectual who speaks truth to power. It must be remembered that Said's conceptual and generative

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11. In an interview Said notes that Foucault ceased to interest him inasmuch as Foucault appeared to him as merely a scribe of power who celebrated the triumph of power but now did not have
heroes were thinkers such as Césaire, Fanon, and C. R. L. James, but also Erich Auerbach and Ernst Robert Curtius, thinkers who stand far afield of structuralist and posthumanist stances. This aside is necessary because a group of scholars has sought to dismiss Said by aligning him with Foucault and thus imputing to him the kind of antihumanism, cynicism, and political nihilism that plagued Foucault’s work. It is also important that we recall the many occasions, both written and spoken, when Said explicitly paid tribute to but also distanced himself from Foucault. Still, even as Said cannot be assimilated to a kind of Foucaultian analytics, it is necessary that we retain the terms “archeology” and “genealogy” to talk about what Said was elaborating in Orientalism, for reasons that will become clear as we proceed.

A careful and attentive reading of the introduction to Orientalism will reveal first, and most importantly, that Said was quite aware that he was breaking new conceptual and methodological ground. The introduction to this now canonical text of twentieth-century critical thought is a dense “meditation on method.” In these pages, Said is at pains to make explicit what it is that he is trying to do, but he is also impatient to get on with the analysis. He is more interested in showing what his method can reveal than in delaying his discoveries with a protracted methodological discussion. In fact, early on in the introduction to Orientalism, Said makes reference to Foucault’s two most methodological works – The Archeology of Knowledge and Discipline and Punish – in order to appropriate Foucault’s analytics of discourse. The reference to these methodological works also announces that Said himself is laying out a methodological work, whose method is best elucidated by what it accomplishes, what it yields, rather than by how comprehensive and exhaustively it renders explicit its modus operandi. A method is what it allows us to discover, uncover, unearth, and elucidate, what the positivism of the evident conceals and buries over with the force of the authority of science and received wisdom. Still, Said unfolds in some densely argued pages what he thinks is generative and innovative, albeit incipient, in his approach.

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anything to say about how this very power was always under contestation and confrontation. See Said, Power, Politics, and Culture, 214.
14. See, for instance, the pieces on Foucault now collected in Edward W. Said, Reflections on Exile and Other Essays (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). See also the numerous references, both appreciative and critical, to Foucault in Power, Politics, and Culture.
Said begins by discussing three meanings that he intends to be attached to the term Orientalism. First, it is the collective name for a series of disciplines, and in that sense it refers to the way in which knowledge is both codified and disciplined within a certain epistemological matrix that corresponds to the way in which knowledge is legitimated and authorized within the Western academy. Second, the terms refers to a “corporate institution” that reigns sovereign over an “epistemologically and ontologically” constituted “imaginative geography” that authorizes, augurs, instigates, demands, and interdicts scholarly, literary, legal, aesthetic, geographical pronouncements that make the Orient available, controllable, acquirable. Orientalism, in this sense, is a dispositif, that is, a power–knowledge device that converts cultures and their territories into objects for imperial conquest and consumption. A third sense in which Said wants the term to be understood is in its radical Vichian sense, that is, as a term that in its evident contingency and historical indexicality refers us to the fact that these mythologies disguised as geographical markers are products of human history that, once analyzed as historical formations, reveal to us how much the “Orient” and the “Occident” are implicated and complicit in each other’s fantasies and dreams of domination. Orientalism, in this third sense, then, should evoke the coproductivity and codetermination of East and West. As Said writes: “Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other” (O 5, emphasis added). We cannot think, then, the West without its imagined and abject East; nor can we think the East without thinking how it in turn must fantasize its other, the West. In fact, Said had alluded to this entwinement earlier in the introduction when he wrote: “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (O 3).

Thus far, then, we have said that Orientalism is a disciplinary regime of knowledge production that has very real power effects, power effects that in turn authorize more of its knowledge production and more of its own power gathering and consolidating. At the same time, Orientalism is also, as is quite evident from the two sections quoted, an “identity machine,” a machine that produces and reproduces a certain ontology of the self. Orientalism, as a power–knowledge dispositif, is what one could call an epistemo-onto-logical device that produces “self” and “other” in conflictive, hierarchical, and invidious oppositions in such a way that the self, the I or “we” of the Occident, lives in a predatory and parasitic way off its derogation, abjection, and subalternization of its other. At the same

time that its other is produced, it must produce for itself a fictive, impossible, alienating self. Thus, already within the first five pages of the introduction to *Orientalism*, Said has announced that Orientalism is not just about the production of an other, the Orient, off which the West lives and from which it derives very material benefits. Orientalism must by definition entail the production and productivity of another meta-geohistorical fiction: the West, the Occident. Orientalism is part and parcel of a process of Occidentalization, the production of an imaginary of and about the West. In turn, the more the Occident constitutes itself through this imaginary, the more it Orientalizes its other.

The critique of Orientalism, then, is not just a critique that seeks to disabuse us of the errors and prejudices about this imagined other, the “Orient,” but is also an explicit critique of the errors, prejudices, and fantasies that we have about ourselves, the “I,” the self of the “West.” In fact, if we conceive of Orientalism as an epistemo-onto-logical mechanism that conditions the horizon of possible existence and experience for historical agents, then the critique of Orientalism must proceed by way of a phenomenology of the imperial self. Indeed, this is what Said accomplishes explicitly and magisterially in the sequel to *Orientalism*, namely *Culture and Imperialism*. Still, already in 1978 in the introduction we are discussing, we find the elements of this critical and reverse phenomenology of imperial agency and subjectivity that surveys the world with petulance, contempt, and unimpeded sovereignty.

What has been here called the *phenomenology of imperial self*, which could also be called an *analytics of the imperial Dasein*, is made explicit in Said's further elucidation of his methodological considerations. After discussing the three senses in which he means Orientalism, Said narrows and refines the sense he wants to attribute to the term Orientalism by making explicit three qualifications. First, while Orientalism refers to a system of ideas and texts that configure and contain an ideology, it would be wrong to “conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea.” It is more than just an ideology. Second, even as an ideology and a compendium of ideas, these cannot be properly understood without an “analysis of their force and effects, their configurations of power” (O 5). Ideas have power and power produces certain ideas, just as truth has power effects and these power effects produce certain truths, to paraphrase Foucault. Third, the final qualification, the goal is not to engage in a naive act of epistemological cleansing. Even if the truth of Orientalism were told, it would still endure, precisely because Orientalism is less about what is real and more about the kind of truth and power effects it has because of its mythologies about “them” and “us.” As Said put it: “I myself believe that Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European–Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient” (O 6). It is not that Said is not interested in truth, but that to get to what may be “veridic” we
have to work through the centuries of sedimented fiction, mythology, and misrepresentations that produced their own truths; and, above all, we have to dismantle the power–knowledge dispositif that holds a monopoly on authorizing not just who is to speak but also what can be said about the “other,” regardless of who says it.

With these qualifications in hand, Said then argues that we entirely misunderstand Orientalism if we think of it in terms of a nefarious plot by the “West” or “Europe.” Instead, we must understand Orientalism as “a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts” (O 12). In other words, it is a way of cognitively mapping the world. Orientalism is also an elaboration of the world in accordance with certain tools and aims. Orientalism, then, is a Gestell, a way of positing the world in a certain way, in accordance with certain Gestalts, figures, and models, which both voice and are the direct expression of a volitional power. Orientalism is the embodiment of, as Said expressed it:

a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do). Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with “our” world.

(O 12, emphasis added)

When Said speaks about these different modalities of power – that is, political, cultural, intellectual, and moral – he is refocusing our attention onto the methodological dimension of his analysis of Orientalism. And what he is directing our attention to is that Orientalism is part and parcel of an ontology of selves that are positioned in geographical, social, historical, cultural, moral, political spaces in certain very specific ways: as masters of a world that is to be possessed, controlled, and known sovereignly and indivisibly. The finest and most explicit moment of this brilliant conceptual breakthrough comes toward the end of the introduction when Said writes:
My principal methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called *strategic location*, which is a way of describing the author’s position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and *strategic formation*, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which group of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large. … Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf … Additionally, each work on the Orient *affiliates* itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. (O 20)

Orientalism, in short, produces a type of knowledge that seems authoritative. As a result, it excludes other types of knowledge and sites of authority (texts as well as other ways of making claims to knowledge) and, ultimately, the moral authority and political agency of others who work outside those privileged hegemonic sites. This privileged site of authority, determined by the *strategic location*, cleared by the *Gestalt* projected by Orientalism, in turn coordinates, maps, agglutinates, orders, and regiments a whole horizon of truths, narratives, images, even genres that cognitively and ontologically grid the world, making it knowable in very specific ways, which again exclude unauthorized cognitive mappings. It must be noted parenthetically that what Said called in 1978 *strategic location* and *strategic formation* is what in *Culture and Imperialism* he is going to refer to with the phrase “structure of attitude and reference.” Here it becomes explicit how Said’s work is both archeological and genealogical in ways that cannot be reduced to Foucault’s type of genealogy. Yet the terms are helpful because they allow us to anticipate the ways in which Said’s analytics and phenomenology of the Imperial and Occidentalist self are a compendium, a catalogue, an inventory, to use the phrase that Said appropriated with gusto from Gramsci, and a genealogy of our contemporary selves. If we properly read *Orientalism* as a genealogy of this Imperial and Occidentalizing and Orientalizing self, then we will discern that Orientalism is a type of discourse that is not just constraining, repressive, but, most importantly, generative, productive, instigating, and prospective. If we discern this, then we can also discern that Said was less interested in gathering a

catalogue for scholastic reasons and aims than in providing us with the critical tools to liberate ourselves from an Imperial ontology, or what was called earlier an epistemo-onto-logical machine that conditions the ways in which we can live out our moral agency and political subjectivity.

II. WORLDING THE "COLONIAL WORLD"

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said claims that: “Without empire, … there is no European novel as we know it.”18 In fact, “imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible … to read one without in some way dealing with the other.”19 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak20 has offered profoundly disquieting and incisive readings of major European novels that seek to render explicit this mutual “fortification” of the novel and imperialism. Spivak in fact has offered another, perhaps more philosophical, understanding of what Said called “structures of attitude and reference” by appropriating Heidegger’s notion of “worlding.” For Spivak, to understand how imperialism and the novel are implicated in each other, we have to understand how the novel contributes to the “worlding” of the “Third World” inasmuch as it both projects and conceals the world of the colonized other. This worlding, additionally, entails constituting a horizon of representation and a horizon of expectation, in which subject-positions are allowed and disallowed.21 The point of the kind of “politics of reading” that is advocated by postcolonial theory aims precisely at un-earthing, remembering, and archiving the worlding that gave origin not just to the other of the West, but to the West itself. For in worlding the other, the other as a “Third World,” the West constitutes its own world, a world that is suffused by amnesias, privileges, and subject-positions that are always surveying from above the history of a Subject with capital S, the subject of all world history.22 Spivak’s audacious readings of canonical literary text, such as *Jane Eyre*, *Frankenstein*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and many other such texts, aim to

20. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (February 24, 1942– ; born in Calcutta, India) was educated at Calcutta University (BA English, 1959), and Cornell University (PhD Comparative Literature, 1967); She has taught at the University of Pittsburgh and, since 1991, Columbia University, where she is now a university professor and Director of the Center for Comparative Literature and Society.
22. Spivak has developed most of her disquieting reading in a series of dense, lengthy, and demanding essays. See *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Methuen, 1987) and *Outside In the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993).
forge a form of self-reflexive literary analysis that reads these texts in tandem with readings of the “archives of imperial governance.”\(^{23}\) Part and parcel of these archives is the production of silences, of absences, and unexpected apparitions that are constitutive of the agency of both readers and agents who live in and through the kind of subject-positions that are commanded by an imperial ethos. For Spivak, however, these transversal readings do not presuppose some unalloyed, pristine, untouched, and archaic “other.” There is no “lost origin,” before colonialism and empire. There is no un-colonized consciousness, or subject that has not been misshapen or misrepresented by a voracious and plenipotent sovereignty and autarkic agency. Just as, for Heidegger and Gadamer, there is no getting out of the hermeneutical circle of interpretation, so for Said and Spivak there is no getting outside the circle of the imperial and colonial worlding that worlds the worlds of both the colonized and the colonizer.

The “politics of reading” entailed by this type of analytics of imperial worlding urged by Spivak remits us to a politics of representation. Spivak has offered one of the most generative readings of what such a politics of representation would entail. In one of her most celebrated essays, as well as one of the most important texts of postcolonial philosophizing, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”\(^{24}\) Spivak engages Foucault and Deleuze’s dialogue on the role of the intellectual in contemporary society as a way to show not only how they both conflate what she calls the macrological with the micrological, but also how in their discussion they also conflate two very distinct notions of “representation.” Spivak proceeds to rescue Marx’s discussion of the two senses of this term in his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. There Marx plays the two different German words – *vertreten* (representation within the economy and the state), and *darstellen* (representation within a theory of subjectivity) – off against one another. The former sense refers us to the role of the advocate, or proxy, while the latter refers us to a portrait, representation, putting forth via an image or trope. If the first belongs to the realm of rhetoric, the second belongs to the realm of persuasion. When Foucault and Deleuze fail, according to Spivak, to distinguish between their representation of those represented – their *vertreten* of those they talk about, those *darstellt*, portrayed, and represented – and the represented themselves, this leads them to a position in which, in “representing them [their subalterns], the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent.”\(^{25}\)

Because they fail to see that speaking for others is not the same as representing them (giving an account of their social position, for instance), they collapse their

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25. Ibid., 275, emphasis added.
borrowed authority into their subjective position in such a way that the subaltern’s own subject-position is eviscerated and silenced. Yet it this “representing themselves as transparent” that is of primary importance to Spivak, as well as for all postcolonial and postoccidentalist critics. The mythically unsituated, universal, transparent intellectual is but a mechanism to render one's forms of “representing” unassailable and transhistorical. Spivak echoes Said, and calls us to the institutional responsibility of the intellectual. Additionally, this enactment of transparency sets the stage for the “need for ‘heroes,’ paternal proxies, agents of power.” By representing the world of the subaltern and colonized subjects through a disavowal of one’s role in that representation, a rhetoric of need and paternalism is also invoked. It is not the interest or subjectivity of the colonial master that stages the world: it is so staged by historical inevitability, the ineluctable iron logic of progress, modernization, and more recently globalization. This “staging of the world in representation” is integral to the worlding of the colonial masters, for through it the proxy of a paternalistic and heroic sovereignty is effaced and occluded behind the grotesque, distorting, haunting, and pitying portrait of the colonized subaltern.

Said described some of his work as a “geographical inquiry into historical experience.” Spivak’s work can be read as attempts to develop a “geographical inquiry into imperial reason.” In her massive and impressive book A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Spivak undertakes an analysis of the interdependence between a certain reading of universal reason, Hegel’s in particular, and certain geographical projections and representation. In fact, for Hegel, which for Spivak is a world-historical metonym, the becoming self-conscious of Geist must take form through its geographical trajectory across the world and history. Consciousness assumes a geography, and geography in turn becomes the trace of Spirit’s own coming to itself. In Hegel’s philosophy of art, world history, and consciousness, we find not just an epistemology, or rather a phenomenology of consciousness, but an “epistemography.” For Spivak, Hegel's epistemography becomes the alibi for the staging of the world as the struggle for space, over space, but also the staging for the disappearance of that consciousness.

26. Ibid., 279.
that reads its coming into being on the maps of its conquests. If “[t]he task of the Hegelian philosopher of art [but this applies equally to the philosophy of nature, law, history, and the phenomenology of consciousness] is to analyze the cryptonym, decipher the epistemograph, spell the spirit’s paraphe, on its way to Europe’s signature,”\textsuperscript{30} then the task of the postcolonial philosopher is to render explicit the actual and metaphorical production of space onto which putative universal reason writes itself in the name of a civilizing mission, the fulfillment of a fate, a globalizing project. Echoing Henri Lefebvre’s materialist analysis of the social production of space, it can be claimed that Spivak’s materialist, feminist, deconstructionist, and postcolonial critique also offers an analysis of the imperial and colonial production of planetary space by way of epistemographs and ontographs that are accompanied by bellicose mappings of imperial sovereignty.

III. “PERVERSE PALIMPSEST OF COLONIAL IDENTITY”\textsuperscript{31}

In “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” Homi Bhabha\textsuperscript{32} takes Edward Said to task on two important registers. First, Bhabha thinks Said misreads, with tremendously deleterious consequences, Foucault’s concept of power–knowledge. For Bhabha the fecundity of Foucault’s genealogical analysis of power–knowledge resides in its rejection of any dichotomous disjunction: essence–appearance, ideology–science, normal–pathological, and so on. “Subjects are always disproportionately placed in opposition or domination through the symbolic decentring of multiple power relations which play the role of support as well as target or adversary” (LC 103). In Said’s work, however, this leads to the problem that it becomes difficult to conceive of the process of subjectification as a placing within Orientalist or colonial discourse for the dominated subject without the dominant being strategically placed within it too. The terms in which Said’s Orientalist is unified – the intentionality and unidirectionality of colonial power – also unify the subject of colonial enunciation.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{31} LC 63.

\textsuperscript{32} Homi K. Bhabha (November 1, 1949– ; born in Mumbai, India) was educated at the University of Mumbai (BA), and Christ Church, Oxford University (PhD, English Literature). He has taught in the English Department at the University of Sussex (1978–94), in Humanities at the University of Chicago (1996–2000), and as Professor of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University (2001– ).
In other words, Said not only homogenizes the Orientalist, making his will to dominate the other both univocal and transparent, but in tandem, owing to the juxtaposition of the mutuality of colonized and colonizer, the other of the Orientalist is similarly homogenized and made univocal and transparent. Said fails to face up to the problems as well as the potentially disruptive effects that introducing the concept of “discourse” entails and evokes. Most of Bhabha’s work is guided by the overriding preoccupation to develop models of subjectification and identification that give more nuanced, and perhaps proper, insight into the tethering of colonial subjectivity to that of the colonialized. Bhabha’s analytics of subjectification are developed through readings of Fanon and Said, but also Freud and Lacan, readings that are so arresting and original that by now they have insinuated themselves within the canon of psychoanalysis and existentialism.

According to Bhabha there are three fundamental conditions that underlie the process of identification: first, identities are called into being with reference to a “phantasmic space of possession” that no subject can occupy separately and continuously. Identification takes place through the reaching out to this space where one is not, and once one is there it is no longer the place to be. This is the place so jealously guarded by the settler, who is haunted by the threat that the natives want to take “their place.” Second, this very place of identification is a “space of slipping” in which to be different from those that are different makes you the same as the putatively self-same, as in “you are a doctor, you are a scholar, you are x, and therefore are different from them and thus you are like us.” This “like us” is predicated on a difference that is marked from the other difference. Here identification happens through a difference that is internal. For Bhabha, this difference that makes the colonizer and colonized the same is one that instigates deferral and displacement.

Identification is not, as is implied by Said, a process of juxtaposing, mirroring onto another what is not oneself; it is rather a process of having to negotiate in between, within one’s own subjectivity, this otherness, the otherness of the self, which is always already different by the way it marks itself off through an identifying sameness. Third, identification is not about affirming a pregiven identity, nor about accomplishing something that was already inchoate. Identity is always achieved in its mis- and re-identification through the assuming of a projected image. Identity is always the staging of misrecognition.
The demand of identification – that is, to be for an Other – entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of otherness. Identification … is always the return of an image of identity that bears the mark of splitting in the Other place from which it comes. (LC 64)

There are two distinctive forms these slippings and deferrals take within the discourse of colonialism. The colonial subject is constituted, but also dismantled, through discourses that articulate forms of difference. The central issue for colonial discourses is the “mode of representation of otherness.” One such mode is that of the “stereotypical discourse.” Colonial discourse constitutes the otherness of the subaltern through a stereotypical discourse that projects a fixity, discernibility, legibility, calculability, and already-knowingness of the other. The colonial subject is always already known through the stereotypes. The colonial discourse renders the colonial reality thoroughly known and visible through its stereotypes. But by its very structure as a stereotype, it requires that it be continuously reconfirmed, re-enacted, relived. At the heart of the stereotype there is lack, a horrifying vacuum, namely that it will not be confirmed. This self-cancellation of the stereotype is confirmed through a reading of the stereotype as a fetish. The stereotype acts as a fetish, takes the place of the fetish of colonial subjectivity. “The fetish or stereotype gives access to an ‘identity’ which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defense, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it” (LC 107).

The other discourse for the constitution of difference that is central to the discourse of colonialism is that of mimicry. At the heart of colonial discourse is the desire for the educated, domesticated, recognizable other that is “a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (LC 122). The paternalistic, self-abnegating, and self-sacrificing colonial subject is to be met halfway by a colonized subject who will be just like itself, but not quite. The telos of the colonial discourse is to educate others into its own best image of itself. Mimicry, however, like the stereotypes, is unstable. The mimicry expected of the colonial other, like every iteration, is however liable to be faulty, challenging, mocking, and displacing. While colonial discourse demands this replication, imitation, it also fears it. It is undone by it, in fact.

The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. It is as if the very emergence of the ‘colonial’ is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial
appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.

Together, stereotypical and mimetic colonial discourse participate in the constitution of a form of governmentality that “is informed by a productive splitting in its constitution of knowledge and exercise of power” (LC 118). Through its mobilization of stereotypes in the form of racisms with their prejudicial and mystifying ideologies, it sanctions and commands deployment of power, while it disavows its source and necessity. The discourses that represent difference in terms of stereotypes and mimicry underwrite a form of governmentality that foists on its colonial subject both the cause and effect of the excesses of its power. Their own instability, furthermore, demands the vigilance and anarchical or arbitrary enactment of its violence.

What makes Bhabha’s analysis distinctive is precisely the way in which it destabilizes Said’s and Spivak’s sometimes too rigid representation of the identity of the colonizer, and perforce, of the colonized. Bhabha’s work combines productively Lacanian psychoanalysis with Foucaultian genealogy in order to make more nuanced Said’s and Spivak’s analyses of the discourses of imperialism and colonialism. For Bhabha, the ongoing colonial present is not an issue just of the endurance and efficacy of the colonial past, but also of the ways in which forms of identification and subject formation have been constituted in the crucible of colonial domination.

IV. THE WEST’S “OCCIDENT”

Postcolonialism is a form of materialist cultural critique that aims to articulate the interdependence between cultural expressions and their material underpinnings. Imperialism both presupposed and produced the novel. The novel, in turn, gave expression to the kind of subjective positions that enabled and condoned an imperial ethos. Already during the early 1970s Latin American liberation philosopher Enrique Dussel33 had sought to articulate a similar materialist reading of the complicity of Western philosophy with the imperial and colonial practices of the “West.” According to Dussel, the great philosphemes of Western philosophy (such as Descartes’s cogito, Kant’s ich denke, and Hegel’s absolutes Wissen) find

33. Enrique Dussel (December 24, 1934– ; born in La Paz, Argentina) was educated at the National University of Cuyo, Argentina, the Sorbonne, and the Catholic Institute in Paris. From 1968 to 1975 he taught at his alma mater. In 1975, after an assassination attempt, he and his family were exiled in Mexico. He has been teaching since then at the Autonomous Metropolitan University and the Autonomous National University of Mexico, in Mexico City.
their genesis and material condition of possibility in the *ego conquiro* expressed by Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro.\(^\text{34}\) “Before the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*; ‘I conquer’ is the practical foundation of ‘I think.’”\(^\text{35}\) Like Said and Spivak, Dussel is also supremely conscious of the relationship between philosophy and geography. In fact, his 1975 *Philosophy of Liberation* – a work that summarized over a decade of philosophizing, written in exile in Mexico – opens with a section entitled “Geopolitics and Philosophy.” In his 1992 Frankfurt Lectures, Dussel returns to the relationship between geography and philosophy, but this time to unmask the myth of modernity. Part of the mythology of modernity is to rewrite history and to segregate and marginalize spatially those who are in pursuit of modernity. These lectures were published in English under the title *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity.*\(^\text{36}\) At the center of these lectures was a challenge to the then-in-fashion debates about modernity and postmodernity. The challenge issued by Dussel was that Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Gianni Vattimo, and Richard Rorty, each name standing in for a particular philosophical tradition within these debates, did not properly understand the crisis of modernity because they did not understand its sources. They did not understand modernity’s sources because they had willfully adopted a chronology of modernity that occluded its sixteenth-century origins and its material conditions of possibility in the conquest of the New World. Dussel, in fact, argued that the crisis of modernity was but the crisis of a project that began in the last decades of the fifteenth century, but that only took proper form in the sixteenth century with the expulsion of the Moors and Jews from the Iberian peninsula. Modernity was the mythological name for another project that had a different name in earlier centuries. This early project had the name of evangelization. Later, before the German and French enlightenments, and surely before the ascendancy of Britain to world empire, the Spanish and Portuguese had been the imperial centers of a Christianizing and evangelizing project. Dussel had, in fact, articulated a counter-narrative of modernity, one that recentered the project of modernity within a longer, most encompassing project, the project of the “Occidentalization” or “Westernization” of the world. Implicit in Dussel’s unmasking of the myth of modernity was also a critique of two other philosophical fashions of the later 1980s and early 1990s:


\(^{35}\) Ibid., 3.

postcolonialism and postmodernism. Curiously, Dussel had called his philosophy of liberation a form of “postmodern” philosophy, just as he had also called it “barbarian” philosophy. What he meant partly was that the critiques articulated by these movements have been part of the intellectual and philosophical canon in Latin America already for over a century. In Dussel’s work, however, the issue of the relationship among modernity, globalization, the West, and the Orient had already been articulated as a philosophical problem. As Said’s work became a point of convergence and departure for postcolonial thinkers, so has Dussel’s.37

Fernando Coronil,38 working from within the social sciences, gave a more explicit articulation of the problematic anticipated by Dussel. In a programmatic essay entitled “Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories,” Coronil presents one of the clearest analysis of Occidentalism and how it relates to the Orientalist project.39 He finds Said’s analysis in Orientalism indispensable, but also lacking. In fact, according to Coronil, Said presupposes an unthematized understanding of the West, whereas part of the project of a critique of all colonial discourse is to give an account not just of a culture’s misrepresentation of its alleged others, but also of how it conceives itself in such a way that it authorizes itself to view others in a particular light. Coronil does not want to dispense with Said, but rather urges us to redirect our attention.

I wish to take a step in this direction by relating Western representation of “Otherness” to the implicit construction of “Selfhood” that underwrites them. This move entails reorienting our attention from the problematic of “Orientalism,” which focuses on the deficiencies of the West’s representations of the Orient, to that of “Occidentalism,” which refers to the conceptions of the West animating these representations. It entails relating the observed to the observers, products

37. See Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta (eds), Thinking From the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel’s Philosophy of Liberation (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) and Eduardo Mendieta (ed.), Latin American Philosophy: Currents, Issues, Debates (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002). The debates have been brought home, and now the issue is about the role of Latin Americans in the US. See Ramón Grosfoguel et al. (eds), Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21st Century US Empire (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005).

38. Fernando Coronil (November 30, 1944– ; born in Caracas, Venezuela), was educated in Venezuela, emigrated to the United States in 1963, and received his BA from Stanford University in 1967, and his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1987. He is Associate Professor of History and Anthropology, and Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center at the University of Michigan.

39. Another indispensable text in understanding the debates around postoccidentalism is Coronil, “Latin American Postcolonial Studies.”
to production, knowledge to its sites of formation ... This perspective does not involve a reversal of focus from Orient to Occident, from Other to Self. Rather, by guiding our understanding toward the relational nature of representations of human collectivities, it brings out into the open their genesis in asymmetrical relations of power, including the power to obscure their genesis in inequality, to sever their historical connections, and thus to present as the internal and separate attributes of bounded entities what are in fact historical outcomes of connected peoples.

Occidentalism, as I define it here, is thus not the reverse of Orientalism but its condition of possibility, its dark side (as in a mirror). A simple reversal would be possible only in the context of symmetrical relations between “Self” and “Other” – but then who would be the “Other”? 40

Occidentalism, then, is an identity machine that constructs the self-same in terms of how it: (i) separates the world into discretely bounded geopolitical units; (ii) disaggregates and de-links their entwined histories; (iii) turns difference into hierarchies; (iv) naturalizes representations of otherness; and (v) intervenes in the perpetuation of asymmetrical power relations. The Occident, therefore, constitutes itself through the abrogation of the epistemic, political, geographical authority to do this unto others.

Walter Mignolo41 will adopt Coronil’s formulations, but give them greater historical specificity. Linking Coronil’s critiques of Said with Dussel’s critique of the philosophers of the discourses of modernity and postmodernity, Mignolo argues that the key word for understanding the material and historical underpinnings of modernity is in fact Occidentalism. Mignolo notes that in the sixteenth century the Americas were in fact called the “Indias Occidentales.” The Occidentalist project is not one of the juxtaposition of a radical other, as in Orientalism, but rather the incorporation, assimilation, evangelization, and conversion of the “Indians.” In the first stage, the Occidentalist project was one of incorporation and Christianization. Later, the Occidentalist project will become one of civilization and enlightenment; and much later one of modernization and


41. Walter Mignolo (January 5, 1945–; born in Isla Verde, Argentina) was educated in Argentina at the National University of Cordoba, where he received his BA and MA from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy. He received his Doctorate in 1974 from the École des Hautes Études in Paris, France. He has taught at the Université de Toulouse, Indiana University, and the University of Michigan. Since 1993, he has been the William H. Wannamaker Professor of Literature and Romance Languages at Duke University.
globalization. Each version or stage of the Occidentalist project has been advocated and shouldered by a different imperial power within Europe. Each imperial seat has left its imprint on what it means to be the West, what it means to be European in relationship to the West. For Mignolo, postoccidentalism is the name for the critique of the project of modernity in particular, but also of the bankruptcy of the Occidentalist project in general, from and in Latin America. The crisis of modernity has been expressed in four different “posts”: the “postmodern” project, which was articulated from Europe itself (Arendt, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Vattimo) and the United States (Jameson); the “postcolonial” project, which was articulated in and from India (Bhabha, Guha, Spivak, the Subaltern Studies Group); the “postorientalist” project, which was articulated from the US looking at the Middle East (Said); and the “postoccidentalist” project, articulated in and from Latin America (Dussel, Kusch, Retamar, Silvia Rivera). What these four different “post” projects articulate is the rupture between different cultural areas, traditions, histories, and the locales of the production of knowledge.

When Mignolo articulates the differences, but also relationships among these different post projects, he is also recentering our attention on the central philosophical idea of all forms of postcolonial, postorientalist and postoccidentalist critique and analysis, namely that the layering and interlocking of the politics of knowledge with the politics of reading produce for us a geopolitics of knowledge that is attentive to the locus of enunciation of knowledge and how that claimed knowledge is or is not related to those about whom it speaks and seeks to “represent.” In Foucault’s language, knowledge is always an effect of power and power produces certain knowledges. This is what Quijano called the “coloniality of power,” by which he meant that all social relations, including knowledge relations, cannot but be imbricated with and refracted by the power differentials established, reconstituted, and renewed after the onset of colonial relations.

In a 1985 essay entitled “Orientalism Reconsidered,” Said, referring to all the kinds of philosophical and intellectual projects that shared in the spirit of his own Orientalism, wrote “They are, therefore, planes of activity and praxis, rather than one topography commanded by a geographical and historical vision locatable in

43. Ibid., 42.
44. See Walter Mignolo, Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), esp. ch. 2; see also under the index word “postoccidentalist.”
a known center of metropolitan power." Said underscores here the decentered topography of knowledge that is not tethered to the commanding leash of an imperial and metropolitan authorizing power. Like Mignolo, he underscores the different and differentiated geopolitical histories of knowledge productions and knowledge–power circuits. The “posts” in postcolonialism, postorientalism, postoccidentalism are not about marking chronologically a moment of crisis and rupture, but rather about announcing an epistemological, hermeneutical, semiotic turning from a form of knowledge production to another that is attentive to local histories. These “posts” announce a past that is never past, and a future that is still to arrive. These “posts” also call us to acknowledge the always disavowed mutuality that makes it impossible to think the West without the Orient, Europe without its others. Postcolonialism, postorientalism, and postoccidentalism are neither anti-Western, nor anti-Occidentalist. This would only perpetuate the kind of amnesia and blindness that the original critiques sought to remedy. At the beginning of the dismantling of the edifice of colonial philosophy and its attendant mentalities is what Chakrabarty calls an “anticolonial spirit of gratitude,” because philosophy conscious of its origins and effects is a gift from all to all.

I. A COMPLEX HISTORY

The history of continental philosophy and the environment brings to the fore some nagging questions: Who counts as a continental philosopher and what is the relationship between geographical location and philosophical approach? Given the embrace of “analytic” philosophy in continental European since the 1970s, philosophy in Europe is now just as divided between “continental” and “analytic” approaches as is philosophy in the English-speaking world. Environmental philosophy in German and French is more likely to engage with English environmental philosophy than with the traditions of French and German philosophy. By far the most productive locale for continentally inspired environmental philosophy is the United States. The situation is further complicated by the fact that continental environmental philosophy has, by and large, developed independently in French, German, and English, so that contributions in one place often remain unnoticed in others. It is the purpose of this essay to present this complicated history, at least in overview. This history has three largely distinct trajectories. English-language continental philosophers have, by and large, sought to show how various European thinkers’ work can be used in addressing environmental issues. Interestingly, with the exception of Martin Heidegger and Félix Guattari, the thinkers chosen have not themselves

1. Pierre-Félix Guattari (March 30, 1930–August 29, 1992; born in Villeneuve-les-Sablons, France; died in Cour-Cheverny, France) studied pharmacy at Bécon-les-Bruyères (1948–49) and philosophy at the Sorbonne (1950–55). He later trained as a psychoanalyst with Jacques Lacan, and worked with Jean Oury at La Borde Psychiatric Clinic from 1955 on. In addition
been particularly interested in environmental issues (and even Heidegger is an interesting case, since his interest seems to run more toward nature; whatever place environment *[Umwelt]* played in his earlier work, he did not have in mind there what we mean by environment when we talk about environmentalism). Simultaneously, and largely unremarked on by English-language continental philosophers, there has been ongoing interest among the French in various environmental issues. A third trajectory can be traced in Germany, where Heidegger and some of early members of the Frankfurt School were exercised by questions having to do with nature, culture, and technology. While, given the relative strength of the Green Party in Germany, one might have expected German philosophers to show an interest in environmentalism, this has not, by and large, been the case. Contemporary German (and, for that matter, Dutch, Belgian, and Italian) contributions have, for the most part, been largely limited to an engagement with environmental ethics as practiced in the English-speaking world. What is distinctive about continental approaches to environmental philosophy, wherever they occur, is a willingness to call into question *all* the relevant terms, in particular “nature” and “humanity.” In distinction, what I am here calling, for lack of a better term, analytic approaches have tended to hold fast their conception of the human being while, at most, being willing to question what nature is, although even this inquiry often does not take place.

While we can find ruminations about nature in the work of Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Nietzsche, and many others, it is really not until Heidegger that thought about nature comes to have what we might term an environmentalist bent. Nevertheless, coming as it does before the events of the 1960s that gave birth to environmentalism, we must characterize Heidegger’s work more as proto-environmentalist. This means that Heidegger’s interest in the environment remains always rather circumspect, requiring the work of interpreters to bring it to the fore.

Interestingly, while Heidegger’s thought has been influential on a number of American interpreters, it has been less clearly influential in the European (and this means primarily French) tradition of environmental philosophy. Here we find an approach to environmental issues that is, in a sense, more radical than anything undertaken in English, whether influenced by the work of nonenvironmentalist continental thinkers or not. What characterizes contemporary French thought about the environment is that, unlike English-language environmental philosophy, it begins not with the assumption of a split between nature and culture, but with the view that nature and culture cannot be thought except in relationship to one another. The reasons for this difference in approach

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to his works cited here, Guattari authored *Psychanalyse et transversalité: Essais d’analyse institutionnelle, La Révolution moléculaire,* and *L’Inconscient machinique: Essais de schizo-analyse.*
are many, but have largely to do not with the history of European philosophy but with European land-use practices, and developments in fields such as psychoanalysis and anthropology.²

While some well-known continental thinkers have addressed environmental issues, either directly or circumspectly – Michel Serres, Bruno Latour, and Guattari – they have had their environmental work almost entirely ignored by the English-speaking world. Simultaneously, thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida, whose work by and large either pays no attention to environmental issues or does so only in passing, have been embraced by English-speaking philosophers. What is unfortunate about this oversight on the part of English-language environmental philosophers is that many of the issues addressed by Serres, Latour, and Guattari – primarily the importance of thinking nature and culture not in opposition but as codeterminants – are only now coming to be recognized as essential to environmental philosophy. However, even in this situation, the groundbreaking work of the French continues to be ignored, which means that English-language environmental philosophers must retread ground that, unbeknown to them, has already been covered.

The following treats the history sketched above in three sections. The first covers Germany (with passing consideration of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy); the second addresses English-language developments; the third concerns itself with France.

II. GERMANY AND ELSEWHERE

Much of Heidegger’s later work addresses questions having to do with nature, humanity’s place in the world, and how human practices allow or force nature to show itself one way rather than another. Such themes clearly have an environmental cast to them, even if Heidegger was writing before there was such a thing as environmentalism. For the later Heidegger, humanity’s technological relationship with the world became a central topic of concern. Corollary to this was his interest in what he termed a “new beginning” that would allow human beings to dwell upon the earth, that is, to allow the earth to show itself in a human world in a way shaped not by the terms of science and technology but by the freeing play of poetry. Although such themes in Heidegger’s thought now appear

². For an excellent treatment of this history see Kerry Whiteside, Divided Natures: French Contributions to Political Ecology (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004). Since Whiteside’s interest is in tracing French political ecology rather than ecological philosophy, he treats not only philosophers but also anthropologists, political theorists, and others.
to have an environmentalist cast to them, this is more due to a change in the times. That is, it is not at all clear that Heidegger conceived of himself as really being engaged in philosophy of nature, never mind environmental philosophy. I return to Heidegger below when I discuss English-language contributions to environmental philosophy.

Several members of the early Frankfurt School are also important here. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer focus, to a great degree, on enlightenment modernity’s relation to nature. While the project of enlightenment sought to free humanity from nature’s domination by, as it were, turning the tables on nature so that it would now be dominated by us, the end result turned out to be, at the same time, a new form of domination of humanity by itself. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that enlightenment was unable to establish any legitimate goals or purposes to which humanity’s newfound powers could be turned, and, in the absence of such purposes, the tools of domination that so effectively freed humanity from nature’s control were open to being turned to the domination of humanity as well. Enlightenment thus turns out to be a double-edged sword, whose end result is to obtain humanity’s freedom from nature only at the cost of the domination of both nature and humanity by the forces of instrumental reason. For Adorno and Horkheimer it is not only the loss of human freedom that indicts enlightenment but also, if we may put it thus, the loss of nature’s freedom as well. Missing from Adorno and Horkheimer’s work, however, is a response to the situation they analyze.

Unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, whose conclusions are clearly pessimistic, Herbert Marcuse saw in revolutionary politics the possibility to transform technology in such a way that not only humanity, but nature as well, could be freed from the repressive distortions of modernist technological mastery. For Marcuse, it is only through a nondominating technology (a new technology he remains vague in describing) that humanity can recover from the distortions of its nature and nature can become what it always could have been. While Marcuse is clearly optimistic, he does not fulfill his promise with detailed proposals and may, as critics such as Jürgen Habermas have argued, have fallen into an unjustifiable romanticism.

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*3. Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is discussed in the essay by Deborah Cook in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.*


*6. Habermas’s work is discussed in the essay by Christopher F. Zurn in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.*

One might have expected that Germany, with its comparatively powerful Green Party (until 2005 the second player in the governing coalition with the Social Democrats), would have continued to produce continental environmental philosophers. Such, however, has not generally been the case. Perhaps in part because of the revelations about Heidegger’s involvements with National Socialism or because of the turn away from Marxism and the embrace of a revivified Kantian humanism in the thought of Habermas, German philosophers have, by and large, focused their concerns elsewhere. To these speculations should also be added the not inconsiderable fact that philosophers in Germany today are as likely to be interested in Anglo-American analytic philosophy as they are in their homegrown philosophical traditions. Thus, when we look for contemporary German contributions to environmental philosophy (and this is true in the Netherlands and Italy as well), most of what we find are engagements with English-language environmental ethics. We find, for example, investigations of the suitability of utilitarianism as an environmental ethic, a turn to ecology to ground ethics, or various engagements with economic analysis.

That having been said, there have been several recent contributions to environmental philosophy from a continental perspective in Germany (I treat France separately below). Hans Jonas, in the context of his argument for responsibility as the central ethical concept in a technological age, discusses the importance of humanity’s taking responsibility for our use of technology not only for ourselves but for nature’s sake as well. After suggesting this idea, however, Jonas immediately retreats into the position that “responsibility for man” is sufficient, since his view of humanity includes our “worldly home”; that is, we need to care for where we live, broadly conceived, as part of our responsibility to ourselves and to each other. Jonas thus remains not so much an environmental philosopher as a philosopher of technology.

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More promising is the work of Hans-Martin Schönherr-Mann, who reinvigorates the tradition of Adorno and Horkheimer (now developing it in the direction of a “negative ecology”) by adding to it insights drawn from the work of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Gianni Vattimo. Writing in the late 1980s, Schönherr-Mann argued that ecological debates in Europe had reached a stalemate between the proponents of technical modernization and those who argued for a “return to nature.” For Schönherr-Mann, this situation requires a metaphysical analysis à la Nietzsche or Heidegger. In other words, what needs to be seen is that both positions are rooted in modernity’s will to master, the former as will to master nature, the latter as will to master that selfsame will to master, that is, a desire for mastery of mastery. Instead of these alternatives, Schönherr-Mann proposes what he calls, following Vattimo, “weak thinking” (often translated “weak theory”), in which thought attempts neither to master the world nor to master itself. Rather, the goal of philosophical engagement is to criticize the ways in which the will to mastery manifests itself so that it can be seen as what it is – a metaphysical position rooted in a particular historical moment with particular ramifications – thus at least opening the way to thinking, and perhaps being, otherwise. That is, weak thinking, rather than offering an alternative conceptualization of the world, endeavors to make evident the contingency of current modes of thought as well as the ways in which they instantiate a will to mastery. This weak thinking risks the same charge of quietism that is often leveled against Heidegger, but constitutes, argues Schönherr-Mann, the only way forward, since all other alternatives simply reinscribe modernity’s will to mastery which, as we saw with Adorno and Horkheimer, leads only to further repression of humanity and nature.

III. THE UNITED STATES

As we saw above, some of Heidegger’s work can be fairly characterized as proto-environmentalist. It was not, however, until recently that those strands in his thought were teased out by some English-language commentators. Early environmentalist commentators on Heidegger focused on Gelassenheit (letting be) as a way of relating to nature and natural beings that Heidegger contrasted with a technical enframing (Ge-stell) that forces the world to appear as what he terms standing reserve (Bestand), that is, as resources that wait to be used.

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13. Vattimo’s “weak thinking” is discussed in the essay on Italian philosophy by Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
and used up.\textsuperscript{14} What these commentators found in Heidegger was a thinker who took Kant's insight that how nature appeared to us is dependent on our own categories and Hegel's insight that those categories are historically variable, and combined it with Nietzsche's view that such categories could themselves be criticized as either affirming or destructive. For Heidegger, the categories of technical enframing, which force the world to appear as a set of resources—what he termed standing reserve—had pernicious consequences both for nature and for humanity since, as Heidegger saw, such a form of revealing could not but be applied to humanity as well. Thus, the very same set of practices—scientific, technical, philosophical, and so on—that prevent nature from appearing as free also prevent humanity from encountering itself as free. Finally, commentators have found in Heidegger's proposal of a new or other beginning the possibility that we might come to reveal the world (allow the world to reveal itself) not as forced into rigid categories with which it must conform, but as free.\textsuperscript{15} Such revealing for Heidegger will happen, as does technical revealing, primarily in and through linguistic practices. However, freeing revealing will (may) happen through poetizing, in which the poet gives voice to nature itself, so that nature, in a sense, is allowed to show itself to us in language.

Of late there has been a growing tide, led by Michael Zimmerman, one of the earliest proponents of Heidegger as an environmental philosopher, arguing that Heidegger may not be as fruitful a figure as was previously believed.\textsuperscript{16} Zimmerman now argues that Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism is deeply implicated in his philosophy and that, as a result, any Heideggerean environmental philosophy, even one presenting itself as having to do with freedom, runs the risk of finding itself endorsing fascism, which is a risk that Zimmerman is unwilling to take. (Part of this hesitation no doubt stems from the fact that it was under the National Socialists that Germany enacted the world's first far-reaching laws for the protection of nature at a time when they were showing precious little regard for the protection of human beings.\textsuperscript{17}) While

\textsuperscript{14} For example, Laura Westra, “Let It Be: Heidegger and Future Generations,” \textit{Environmental Ethics} 7 (1985).


\textsuperscript{17} For a recent discussion of German environmental policy in the 1930s and 1940s, see F.-J. Brüggemeier, M. Cioc, and T. Keller (eds), \textit{How Green were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich} (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005).
Zimmerman does not believe that there is any surefire antidote to fascism, the one most likely to succeed is a commitment to democracy. The privileged position Heidegger gives to poets, argues Zimmerman, is simply inconsistent with a view that holds that environmental decisions must be made democratically. Still, Heidegger’s insight that we cannot discuss nature without doing so in relation to humanity is one that we will see fruitfully developed later.

Merleau-Ponty’s detailed investigations of human experience, particularly those he developed in his later works, in which he argued that we can make sense of human experience of the world only under the conditions that the world and our bodies are made up of the same “flesh,” have been taken up by some commentators as a fruitful path to making sense of the human place in the environment. While it has long been the case that environmentalists have depended on accounts of our experience of nature, they have often done so in relation to the languages of science or religion (the two great traditional languages for discussing nature).18 Phenomenology, on the other hand, provides the resources for elaborating on experience from out of itself, which makes possible both descriptions and valorizations of that experience in a way that legitimizes them even when they have no grounding in either science or religion.19 Merleau-Ponty’s work thus helps validate the aesthetic component of everyday experience and helps make sense of environmentalist intuitions.

Although Foucault at first blush seems an unlikely candidate to be an environmental philosopher (he famously responded to natural beauty by turning his back on it), if we recall Heidegger’s insights – that nature and culture must be thought together and that human practices shape what nature can be for us – then Foucault seems more plausible. Beginning with Thomas Birch, who argued that wilderness areas are little more than prisons for nature, there has been a steady stream of environmental philosophy drawing on Foucault.20 Éric Darier has argued that three aspects of Foucault’s genealogical period “can be particularly helpful for an environmental critique: ‘governmentality,’ ‘biopower’ and ‘space.’”21 These three concepts, taken together, give the environmental philosopher powerful tools for making sense of government power and its tendencies,

18. This is true, for example, of Aldo Leopold (A Sand County Almanac) and Holmes Rolston III (Earth Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World and Philosophy Gone Wild: Essays in Environmental Ethics).
in particular as that power is deployed on living (for Foucault human) bodies arrayed in space. We can even see, despite Foucault’s protestations to the contrary, a certain sort of environmentalism in his work on biopower, in particular when he turned to issues having to do with public health. For it was here that Foucault showed how the state has sought to control the health of populations by controlling the movement of individuals, foods, substances, and so on; by instituting rules as to appropriate and inappropriate behavior; by setting standards for cleanliness of work places and concerning agriculture; and so on. While such regulations and laws did not concern themselves with nature, they certainly did concern themselves with the human environment, as do many contemporary environmental regulations, such as those addressing agriculture or clean air and water. Foucault’s analyses are useful for they show how the object of such measures is not always so much individual health as it is the health of the social body as disciplined body that must be ready to appear for work or warfare.

Deleuze too, although politically more sympathetic to “green” causes (perhaps because of his connection with Guattari) than was Foucault, was no more engaged with them in his philosophy. Nevertheless, commentators on his work have found rich resources there for thinking through environmental issues. As early as 1997, Patrick Hayden sought to apply Deleuze’s work to environmental issues, arguing that Deleuze’s emphasis on becoming provided resources for thinking about nature as flux rather than as static, a view that Hayden argues is fully compatible with the findings of contemporary ecology. More or less simultaneously with Hayden’s work, I argued that Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between smooth and striated space could profitably be applied to clarify what we mean by wilderness. In particular, I argued that the idea of wilderness as a place untouched by human activity is incoherent, and that we would be better off distinguishing between spaces that were smoother, that is, had seen less human activity, including even being mapped, and those that were more striated, that is, developed, paved, controlled, and so on. I also argued for a distinction between types of human activity, following Deleuze and Guattari in finding those activities associated with the modern, capitalist state as being of a different


order than those associated with other forms of social organization.24 At this
time, too, Verena A. Conley invoked Deleuze, although more for his interest in
radical democracy and as a coauthor with Guattari than anything else.25

One final development in North America needs to be accounted for: ecofemi-
nism, whose roots are in France. As Trish Glazebrook points out, “It was Simone
de Beauvoir who first saw that in the logic of patriarchy, both women and nature
appear as other. In 1974, Françoise d’Eaubonne coined the term l’éco-féminisme
to point to the necessity for women to bring about ecological revolution.”26
Despite these continental beginnings, most subsequent ecofeminism has been
explicitly hostile to the traditions of continental philosophy, in particular to the
idea of postmodernism. While most ecofeminists argue that there are impor-
tant links between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, they
do so in different ways, many of them stressing either women’s greater spiritual
affinity for nature or greater capacity for an environmental ethic. Still others
criticize modern, patriarchal, dualistic thinking for its role in the oppression
of women and nature. While such critiques might have developed using the
resources of continental philosophy, they have largely not done so (although
Glazebrook argues that Heidegger ought to be a resource drawn on by ecofemi-
nists, while D. Bruce Martin does the same for Adorno27). Indeed, many ecofem-
inists, while criticizing dualistic thinking and the androcentrism of Western
philosophy, dismiss what they term “postmodernism” or “deconstructive post-
modernism,” which they see as a dangerous form of social constructivism that
undercuts any attempt to find real differences between men and women, while
also making nature a social rather than a real category of analysis. Mary Mellor
makes this claim most forcefully, writing that “ecofeminism is … incompat-
ible with a radically social constructivist position, whether from a phenomeno-

24. See my “Something Wild? Deleuze and Guattari and the Impossibility of Wilderness,”
Philosophy & Geography 3 (1998). A revised version of this essay can be found as “Something
Wild? Deleuze and Guattari, Wilderness, and Purity,” in The Wilderness Debate Rages On:
Continuing the Great New Wilderness Debate, J. Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson (eds)
25. See Verena A. Conley, Ecopolitics: The Environment in Poststructuralist Thought (New Y
ork: Routledge, 1997). See also Mark Halsey, Deleuze and Environmental Damage: Violence of the
Text (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006) and Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology (New Y ork: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2009).
Heidegger, N. J. Holland and P. Huntington (eds) (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State
University Press, 2001), 222.
27. Ibid.; D. Bruce Martin, “Mimetic Moments: Adorno and Ecofeminism,” in Feminist
Interpretations of Theodor Adorno, Renée Heberle (ed.) (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania
State University Press, 2006).
That having been said, there are several other ecofeminists who are not only sympathetic to, but explicit advocates of, a continental approach (although not always of the same type) including Jim Cheney, Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, and Ariel Salleh. Mills argues that Adorno and Horkheimer can offer an important corrective to much of the ecofeminist literature linking the dominance of women and the domination of nature, since Adorno and Horkheimer do not romanticize nature (or women) the way many contemporary ecofeminists do. Salleh draws more on Marx than on later Marxists to argue that women constitute, if not the revolutionary class that Marx predicted the proletariat would be, at least the central agent for social and environmental change. Finally, Cheney embraces the sort of postmodern philosophical perspective most ecofeminists have eschewed, drawing on Heidegger, Richard Rorty, and Sandra Harding, as well as Biddy Martin and Chandra Mohanty to critique masculinist, totalizing discourse and open up a space for the development of what he terms "bioregional narratives" that are grounded in a place and the practices appropriate thereto.

IV. FRANCE

One way to characterize what we have seen so far is that all of those working in this area have treated nature and humanity as two distinct terms. The question has always been: How ought these two stand in relation to one another? With developments in France, we see the development of a line of thought that rejects the strict dichotomy between humanity and nature and thus paves the way for a philosophy that is far more thoroughgoing in its environmentalism. We might characterize the work of thinkers such as Serres, Guattari, and Latour as being committed to the idea of putting multiple variables in play at once. We will see this type of thinking repeatedly here, albeit in different ways. Before doing so, we should note that the general philosophical climate in France

(and French-speaking Belgium), at least as far as environmental philosophy is concerned, is little different from Germany. The single most visible book of environmental philosophy, Luc Ferry’s *New Ecological Order*, takes as its target not contemporary developments in France (of which Ferry seems largely unaware) but developments abroad, which Ferry characterizes as a threat to French society and democracy. Among French philosophers who have made their names exclusively as environmental thinkers, none has taken a continental approach. Even as recently as 1998, editors of books or special journal issues dedicated to environmental themes (there remains no philosophical journal dedicated to environmental philosophy in French or German; the English-speaking world now has six) have felt the need to include an introductory essay on the terrain of English-language environmental philosophy.

Part of what makes the thought of Serres, Latour, and Guattari stand out is that they begin by thinking of environmental problems not as ethical but as political. That is, they are problems to be addressed through collective rather than individual action. They thus do not engage in what we might term the meta-ethical investigation so common in English-language environmental ethics, where questions as to the moral standing of nature and whether our concern should be directed toward nature as a whole, ecosystems, species, or individual plants and animals, and so on have all been so central. Such investigations assume a fixed pole – that of human beings – who then must decide how they will act. Even those working from a continental perspective in Germany, the UK, Australia, and the US have tended to follow this model, although they have radicalized it to a degree, asking not how we should act toward nature but how we want nature to be. Part of what makes the work of these French thinkers different is that they begin with a very different conception of nature from that of English-language environmental philosophers. Following the tradition of John Muir, American environmental philosophers have historically shown a


great interest in wilderness. With the possible exceptions of the highest peaks of the Alps, there is no wilderness in France and has not been for many centuries. As Latour puts it, “in the ‘geopolitics’ of the philosophy of nature, France benefits from a comparative advantage because the notion of an a-human nature that ought to be protected has never taken root here.” This “advantage,” of course, only gets us so far, since it is certainly possible to conceive of nature as cultural without also taking on the counter-movement that sees culture as (at least partially) natural. That is, while someone such as Steve Vogel argues forcefully for nature as a social construction, he remains committed to humanity’s autonomy from nature. Serres, Latour, and Guattari all agree that such a position is untenable. To see how they arrive at their view, we need to look briefly at the social scientists who influenced their work. I focus here on only one, the social psychologist Serge Moscovici, although one could also mention Denis Duclos, René Dumont, and Edgar Morin, among others.

Moscovici’s 1968 Essai sur l’histoire humaine de la nature (Essay on the human history of nature) seeks to show how changes in science, technology, social organization, and so on have manifested themselves not in new understandings of the same nature, but in changes in nature itself. Such a view is not surprising, at least not from today’s standpoint, when we acknowledge that so much of what we take to be natural is at least as much, if not more, artifactual than natural. This view too is consistent, if not identical, with Heidegger’s view

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36. See, for example, Michael Nelson and J. Baird Callicott (eds), The Great New Wilderness Debates (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998), and Baird Callicott and Nelson (eds), The Wilderness Debate Rages On.


38. Serge Moscovici (1925– ; born in Braila, Romania, into a Jewish family) emigrated to France in 1948, where he began studying psychology at the Sorbonne. Cofounder, in 1975, of the Laboratoire Européen de Psychologie Sociale (European Laboratory of Social Psychology), Moscovici has taught in the US and UK in addition to his position at the École Pratique des Hautes Études.

that changes in human practice necessitate changes in the world.\textsuperscript{40} Moscovici’s view, however, is more radical, for it entails that humanity is both the “creator and subject of nature.”\textsuperscript{41} Thus, we see here already the key insight of French environmental philosophy: it is insufficient to hold one pole (humanity) stable while allowing the other (nature) to evolve. Instead, both poles must be allowed to codetermine each other, and this in a historically mediated fashion. Moscovici conceives of a series of “states of nature”: “organic nature,” the “universe of forces and movements,” and “cybernetic nature.”\textsuperscript{42} The first of these, from late Neolithic times to the dawn of the Renaissance, is characterized by artisans working on materials such as wood, stone, or metal solely with hand tools. Nature here is conceived as a fixed set of materials, each with its own “nature,” that can be complemented by the work of a skilled artisan.\textsuperscript{43} The artisan, then, is the one who follows nature’s lead and seeks not to impose on it, but to work with it. The mechanistic stage conceives of nature as a set of forces and materials that are, by and large, interchangeable. This nature is made up of quantifiable forces and substitutable materials. Moscovici thus finds the origin of Bacon’s and Descartes’s mechanized view of nature in the technology of their day. That is, it is the changes in human practice that lead the way for changes in our conceptualization of the world. But this new nature then makes possible a corresponding shift in humanity, whose skilled artisans are no longer needed, to be replaced by unskilled workers fulfilling tasks set them by engineers and others trained in the ways of the new nature. That is, and here Moscovici’s argument echoes Adorno and Horkheimer, the new mechanized nature gives birth to a new mechanized humanity. The age of cybernetic nature begins when, as Kerry Whiteside puts it, “we see nature as the combination of elements into self-sustaining systems. Knowledge of the properties of these systems allows us to create new forms of matter, not merely to shape or transform what is given.”\textsuperscript{44} The engineer is now displaced by the scientist while the distinction between the natural and the non-natural collapses. Nature’s processes are seen as alterable and, at least at times, in need of human intervention to keep them going.\textsuperscript{45} Here too the changes in


\textsuperscript{41} Moscovici, Essai sur l’histoire humaine de la nature, 21.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 76–119.

\textsuperscript{43} This is Aristotle’s nature.

\textsuperscript{44} Whiteside, Divided Natures, 52.

\textsuperscript{45} We thus find classes in “ecosystem management” and the like.
nature bring about changes in humanity, as those who are empowered to speak and to make decisions shift and as social structures evolve to accommodate the new nature.

While Moscovici’s account is compelling, it is descriptive rather than normative. That is, it describes how things have happened, without taking a stance on how we ought to move forward from here. We thus need to turn to the work of Serres, Latour, and Guattari, who will, each in his own way, seek to develop the thesis of the interrelatedness of nature and humanity into a compelling philosophico-political position. One of the difficulties all three face in crafting a normative position is that there is what we might term a cultural time-lag, so that even while our material practices, science, technology, and so on, have moved forward, thus bringing about transformations in nature and ourselves, we cling to older models of both humanity and nature. Our solutions thus are often inappropriate to the sort of people that we are and to the world in which we live.

If one accepts Moscovici’s thesis that humanity and nature must be conceived of as codeterminants, it follows from this that even if one is concerned only with humanity, one must, ipso facto, also concern oneself with nature. However, in The Natural Contract, Serres argues for a more forceful position: nature must become part of our political structure, not as a set of passive objects or even vibrant systems, but as a partner with humanity. For Serres, humanity has, for most of its history, not thought much about nature. We have been too concerned with our human projects, only noticing nature when it has made itself unavoidable. Today nature has made itself ubiquitous and has done so in response to human actions and conceptions.

Serres reminds us that humanity has a long juridical tradition of reshaping conflicts in order to make them less deadly. Even war has a set of laws and rules governing it; even when we are intent on killing each other, we must follow the rules. War, like other human institutions, is governed by a sort of contract. In the liberal tradition from Hobbes onward, the grandest of all contracts is the so-called social contract, in which we (tacitly) agree to give up some of our rights in exchange for others being bound to respect the remainder. Yet this contract, argues Serres, has always been predicated on our making common cause with our fellow human beings in the project of turning nature into property. The social contract thus brings into being a certain sort of nature. Yet, if this contractually created nature – a nature that can be seen to overlap to some degree Moscovici’s mechanized and cybernetic natures – will not stand passively by as it is turned into products and property, then we need to rethink the human–nature relationship. Such a rethinking, however, is insufficient if

*46. Serres’s work is the focus of the essay by David F. Bell in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
it is not accompanied by a reconceptualization of how we relate to our fellow human beings. As Serres puts it, “we must decide on peace among ourselves to protect the world, and peace with the world to protect ourselves.”\textsuperscript{47} For the idea of making peace with the world to make sense, it would seem that the world would have to be capable of “signing” a contract with us, that is, the world must be a subject. Serres writes,

What is nature? First, all the conditions of human nature itself, its global constraints of rebirth or extinction, the hostelry that gives us lodging, heat, and food. But nature also takes them away from us as soon as we abuse them. It influences human nature, which, in turn, influences nature. Nature behaves as a subject.\textsuperscript{48}

We can see here quite clearly Serres’s commitment to the heritage of Moscovici. Yet the idea that nature is a subject is not without its problems. However, Serres reminds us that the intrahuman social contract is already virtual, in that none of us has ever actually consented to it and expect reciprocity from others only in some sort of ideal way. The natural contract too, Serres insists, is also only virtual. That is, we must act as if nature is a party to this contract, even if our motivation for doing so might be purely selfish, which only makes his position more like that of classical contract theorists such as Locke or Hobbes. Just as in classical contract theory, in which my desire for security requires that I respect others in their persons and property, our desire for clean air and water demands that we respect the only “being” capable of furnishing us with those things. Our failure to abide by the natural contract will have negative consequences not only for nature but for us as well.

Latour’s view that in the sciences we need to account for the agency not only of human beings but also of the entities studied can clearly be applied to the domain of environmental thought.\textsuperscript{49} Latour, in works such as \textit{We Have Never Been Modern}, argues that modern thought has so strictly divided the domains of nature (the domain of scientific discovery) and humanity (the realm of politics) that it has blinded us to the various hybrids that have arisen in between the two domains.\textsuperscript{50} When Latour discusses hybrids, he means things such as the hole in

\textsuperscript{48} Serres, \textit{The Natural Contract}, 36; \textit{Le Contrat naturel}, 64.
\textsuperscript{49} Latour is also discussed in the essay by Olkowski in this volume.
the ozone layer over Australia (we might add the world’s climate), which can be described neither as purely natural nor as purely cultural phenomena. Rather, they occupy a middle ground. Politics and science have, since the sixteenth century, been so thoroughly separated from one another that we are either blind to hybrids or do not know what to do with them. Indeed, it is the habit of thought of modernity to insist that there could be no such thing, since the domains of the human and the nonhuman are thought to be distinct and incapable of mixing. Much of Latour’s work has been dedicated to showing how and why these domains cannot be kept distinct, either theoretically or practically.

We need to be careful here, for part of the value of Latour’s work is that it is not “merely” philosophy but also sociology. Thus, while philosophers now generally agree that the fact–value distinction is incoherent, it remains an important part of political and public discourse. Science (with a capital S) takes on the role in this discourse of determining what is true (what is a fact) and what is not. No matter that practitioners of any individual science do not recognize themselves as having such a role or their science(s) as having such a power. The problem for Latour is how to demythologize Science so that we will see that nonhuman things too are players on the political scene and that human beings shape what those things are. That is, just as we saw with Serres, the problem becomes one of conceptualizing how humanity and nature can be codeterminants of one other. Where Latour goes beyond Serres’s position is in his greater emphasis on the relationship between science and politics, thus making the relationship between humanity and nature one that plays itself out not in some abstract realm, but in the very concrete interactions we find in these domains, reconceived, of course, so that they no longer stand in stark opposition to one another.

The grand thrust of Latour’s work is to destabilize the opposition between humanity and nature. This move undercuts, on the one hand, appeals by environmentalists to what is best or right for nature and, on the other, appeals by industrialists or politicians that nature is inconsiderable. Latour, finally, argues that what is needed in order to overcome the modern nature–culture divide is a parliament of things in which human and natural actors and hybrids would all have a say. However, as Whiteside points out, it remains unclear just what deliberations in such a parliament are supposed to look like as well as how it is expected to come to a decision. Nevertheless, the idea that we must attempt to rethink nature and culture in relationship is an important one, as is Latour’s argument that there is neither apolitical science nor ascientific politics.

51. Whiteside, Divided Natures, 139.
Guattari adds a third element that is lacking in both Serres and Latour: human subjectivity. While both Serres and Latour argue for the importance of our reconceptualizing both nature and human society, Guattari argues also for the need to account for human subjectivity, in particular in relation to desire. We thus find in his work a sketch of three ecologies: of nature, of society, and of the subject. As with Serres and Latour, although now developed on three axes, these three ecologies are all seen by Guattari as interrelated. For Guattari, and this is partly due to his earlier involvement with communist politics as well as his later involvements with both green politics and alternative forms of psychiatric practice, modern forms of socioeconomic organization – what he terms “integrated world capitalism” – have had strongly deleterious effects for all three ecologies. Nature has become nothing but a set of resources and pollution sinks, society has become nothing but a guarantor of stability for purposes of assuring economic growth, and subjectivity has become a structure of desire in the service of material consumption.

Guattari’s insight that one must also address questions having to do with subjectivity is important (and remains, to this day, little discussed among environmental philosophers). Subjectivity, for Guattari (and here he is indebted to his work with Deleuze, particularly in the two volumes of Capitalism and Schizophrenia, is always structured out of desire. The problem as he sees it is that our current form of subjectivity is one where the structuration happens in and through the workings of social institutions that are not democratically controlled and whose end is the production of subjects who will be docile, productive, and, most importantly, good consumers. If such is the form of subjectivity with which we (mostly) find ourselves, how might we (i) think subjectivity otherwise and (ii) envision a transition from our current to the alternative form of subjectivity? The second task is no less important than the first since a reorganization of current societal structures without a concomitant reorganization of subjectivity is likely to constitute an unacceptable form of violence to human subjects as we now find them. That is, we Westerners find


53. See on this topic my “Subjectivity, Desire, and the Problem of Consumption,” in Deleuze/Guattari and Ecology, Herzogenrath (ed.).


55. Guattari and Deleuze’s account of desire is discussed in detail in the essay by Rosi Braidotti and Alan D. Schrift in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6.
ourselves with apparently insatiable desires for material things (desires that are—absurdly—presented in political and economic rhetoric as “natural”). These desires will not simply go away, even if we want them to. We must thus work to conceive of ourselves not as free of desire but as having alternatively structured desires. For example, rather than desiring corporate foodstuffs, we might desire knowing who raised our food, so that we could feel ourselves part of a community. To be only of necessity, rather than primarily, a consumer is to desire otherwise, that is, to be otherwise. We must also work to conceive how we can move from how we are now to that other form of subjectivity, lest proposed changes in societal structure be, as they are commonly thought, hardships imposed on individual subjects for the sake of some abstract “nature.”
Continental philosophy has never been reticent about engaging with contemporary political situations. From Kant’s and Hegel’s reflections on the French Revolution, through Sartre’s and Merleau-Ponty’s debates about communism, up to Badiou’s recent reflections on the character of the twentieth century⁴ and Rancière’s critique of antidemocratic currents in Europe,⁵ continental thinkers have addressed themselves to politics, not only in the abstract, but as it has unfolded around them. In contrast to their analytic counterparts, continental thinkers have held situated political reflection to be an intrinsic part of philosophical practice.⁶

Chief among the political parameters of our time that have held the interest of continental thinkers, particularly in recent years, has been the emergence of what might be called globalization. Of course, globalization is a term of common currency. It is a truism to say that we live in an increasingly globalized world. But truisms are where philosophers intervene, either to buttress, to question, or to overturn them. Globalization has been no different. What globalization is, and how to respond to it, have constituted the core of a number of political reflections.

Even the term itself can carry hidden, questionable assumptions. When we refer to globalization, we seem to be referring to the increasing interconnectedness

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of the world in some fashion or another. Whether it be through increased electronic communications, the spread of transnational capitalism, or the movement of peoples and the breakdown of national borders, the idea of globalization carries with it the decline of the integrity of national entities. But is this true? Is what we are witnessing today a decline of nationality in favor of a more fluid transnationality? Perhaps it is something else altogether. Perhaps, instead of globalization, what we have been witnessing over the past several decades is the rise of a particular national hegemony, that of the United States. From this point of view, our world is less one of globalization than of American imperialism. This imperialism, it is true, is far more economic than political, and in that way differs from the colonialisms of the past two centuries. The US infiltrates other countries with its economic and cultural exports rather than governing them politically (with current exceptions, such as Iraq). Although it might be argued that, at least over the past several years, US hegemony, inasmuch as it did exist, is now on the wane, some might nevertheless argue that it would misdescribe the current global political situation to see it as a new phenomenon of globalization rather than a continuity of the type of national dominations that have long been with us.

Of course, these two explanations are not exclusive. There may be an intertwining of the two. In order to address this issue, however, one must begin to get behind the terms globalization and hegemony and begin to reflect more rigorously on the situation we occupy. Such a reflection would have two related parts: an assessment of the current political character and suggestions for how to intervene in it. In what follows, there is sometimes an emphasis on one or the other of these parts. However, the assessment one provides is not divorced from the kind of responses one sees as appropriate or possible. Conversely, the suggestions one makes for action and intervention depend on what one sees as the salient aspects of the contemporary context.

There have been numerous reflections on what might be called globalization. I will divide these, somewhat arbitrarily, into four categories. My only defense of this division is that it offers a practical categorization. There are, to be sure, transversal lines of influence and similarity: elements of a particular thinker’s approach may be closer to elements of a thinker in another category. If some readers consider that another division better facilitates understanding, they should help themselves to it. The four categories are these:

I Critiques of media and the rise of electronic interaction. Here the primary thinkers are Jean Baudrillard, Paul Virilio, and, to a lesser extent, Slavoj Žižek.

II Conceptions of multitude. In this category fall the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, as well as Paulo Virno.
III Reconceptualizations of democracy. This would include the work of Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe, and part of the recent writings of Judith Butler.

IV Renewal of the anarchist tradition. This is the most recent of the responses, and includes the work primarily of myself and Saul Newman.

I

Reflections on and critiques of the media have a long standing. We might date the background for current approaches to Guy Debord’s classic book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). Debord argues, in an update of Marxist thought, that current social relations are no longer mediated by relations of production, but rather through what he calls “the spectacle.” The spectacle consists of the ubiquitous images – in advertising, on television, in the movies, and (postdating Debord’s work) on the internet – through which we relate to ourselves and one another. Debord, though, insists that the spectacle is not simply a matter of the images themselves: “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”

The idea that our relationships have been mediated by images is at the core of the thought of Jean Baudrillard. In his early work, Baudrillard, like Debord, shifts the frame of Marxist thought away from its focus on productive relations. For Baudrillard, the proper focus is, instead, on consumption. He argues that we must abandon the focus on productivism and begin to ask about consumption: how it occurs and what codes it follows. Over the course of his career, Baudrillard radicalizes this idea until he argues that, because of the role various media play in constituting our world, we no longer live in a world of reality. Instead, our world is one of hyperreality or simulation.

We might think of the emergence of simulation this way. Human relations have always been mediated to some extent, at least through primitive signs and signals. The rise of language constitutes an important moment in the mediatization of those relationships, as does the appearance of the printing press. However, with the explosion of media through which people interact with one another and their world – television, internet, email – social relationships have become dominated by the media through which they occur. In fact, as media

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5. Baudrillard’s work is also discussed in the essay on postmodernism by Simon Malpas in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7*.

begin to replace face-to-face interaction and engagement with the world, the
world as a referent of those relationships and engagement begins to drop out.
It no longer matters whether there is an outside world to which the images and
media refer. Reality shifts, from referent of images to the images themselves.
Images simulate rather than referring to reality. As Baudrillard puts the point,
“To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to
have what one hasn’t.”

Simulation is the co-optation of reality by media. Whether or not an event
occurs outside that co-optation is irrelevant. There is an impact on our experi-
ence only inasmuch as something arises within the ambit of the simulated world.
What we encounter is given to us solely through the images that are the ether
of our lives. This means that if an event takes place outside of that ether, it is
as though it did not take place. It will not register; it will not encrust itself into
reality, or at least that hyperreality in and through which we live. Alternatively,
there need be no event that takes place in order for it to be experienced as real. An
event could be entirely fabricated by the press, or arise as a rumor on the internet,
and be experienced with all the reality formerly accorded to the “real” world.

Baudrillard analyzes the attacks of 9/11 in terms of the images that were
disseminated. He does not deny, of course, the horror of the attacks. However,
he finds that the reality that persisted in them was through images as they
unfolded in the media. He argues that the goal of the attackers was to under-
mine the society of the spectacle through an excess of its own spectacularity.
In that sense, the terrorist attacks were played out entirely within hyperreality.

In Baudrillard’s view, then, globalization is the creation of simulation. He
rarely offers anything that could be considered a response to it, for two reasons.
First, Baudrillard is not a nostalgic thinker. He does not seem to miss the real
world that has been left behind. Second, it is not entirely clear he could coher-
ently offer a critique of our simulated world. If it is as encompassing as he claims,
then there seems no place from which critique could occur. All critical posi-
tions have already been absorbed into hyperreality. What might be read as his
only sustained response to simulation is offered in his 1979 book Seduction,
where he paints a picture of politics as an ongoing seduction. This seduction is
never consummated; rather, it is a game of symbolic feints where nothing is ever
captured because there is nothing to be captured. “The law of seduction takes the
form of an uninterrupted ritual exchange where seducer and seduced constantly

7. Jean Baudrillard, Simulations, Paul Foss et al. (trans.) (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 5.
raise the stakes in a game that never ends.”\textsuperscript{9} In a world without reality, it is difficult to conceive how else politics might occur.

If Baudrillard’s view of the rise of the media is playful and ironic, Paul Virilio\textsuperscript{10} sees a darker mechanism at work. Like Baudrillard, Virilio focuses his work on the way electronic media have reshaped our world. However, Virilio sees media not only as the creation of a new reality but also as an intervention into our own reality. On the one hand, the rise of electronic media has made us unrecognizably different. On the other hand, we have not entered a hyperreality in which the real world no longer matters. We have become subject to forces that are reshaping us for the worse.

In his early works, Virilio focuses on the emergence of what he calls \textit{speed}, and in particular the military uses of speed. We might think of speed as instantaneousity of communication and intervention, an instantaneity that replaces both space and time. Formerly, military intervention was a matter of controlling space: having more territory, fighting from higher ground, and so on. Then it became a matter of time: who could get where faster. This is signaled by the importance of faster weapons and the development of military airplanes. Now, military intervention is approaching the instantaneous. One no sooner sees the target than one can destroy it. Moreover, this instantaneity is not only a matter of advanced weaponry. It also concerns the control of societies. The rise of electronic communication has created a system in which we can conduct our lives away from public space, but in a space that can be continuously monitored: by cameras, by electronic surveillance, through the monitoring of the computers at which many of us work, by tracking our purchases, and so on.

What this creates is a militarization of society, but in a particular way. It is not that everyone in society is mobilized in a military effort. Rather, there emerges a new class division. No longer is the class rupture between Marx’s capitalists and proletariat. Now the divide runs between the military and the civilians. “The military class is turning into an internal super-police. Moreover, it’s logical. In the strategy of deterrence, military institutions, no longer fighting among themselves, tend to fight only civilian societies – with, of course, a few skirmishes in the Third World.”\textsuperscript{11} This military class should be understood not only as the uniformed military; it also includes political and business leaders and anyone

\textsuperscript{10} Paul Virilio (1932– ; born in Paris) grew up in Brittany, where he experienced and was marked by the German occupation and Allied bombings of Nantes. A cultural theorist and urbanist, he was trained in architecture at the École des Métiers d’Art and also studied philosophy with Vladimir Jankélévitch, Raymond Aron, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty at the Sorbonne. He served as Professor and Director at the École Spéciale d’Architecture in Paris from 1968 to 1998.
\textsuperscript{11} Paul Virilio, \textit{Pure War}, Sylvère Lotringer (trans.) (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 94.
else who is aligned with the controlling class, that is, who utilizes speed in order to control part or all of a population.

More recently, Virilio has turned his attention away from the military uses of speed and toward the encrustation of human beings into technology. This encrustation is largely corporeal: the body is monitored, plugged into various technologies, trained to become a relay in the digital infrastructure. Where once the idea of being merely a cog in a machine was a metaphor for alienation, Virilio sees this as becoming a literal truth. Moreover, given the instantaneity of networks of control, our corporeal attachment to technology ensures that we are constantly monitored and manipulated.

The generalized arrival of transmission has taken over from the restricted arrival of transport ... A “freeze frame” whereby the interactive experience of generalized teleaction will soon prolong the life sentence of the expanse of the space-world, to the exclusive advantage of the time-world of the real instant.12

Unlike Baudrillard, Virilio does not see our immersion in technology as benign. He is concerned about its environmental impact, but also about its alienating effects. Where for Baudrillard we are simply becoming something else, for Virilio we have lost what it is to be fully human, and this is to be lamented. Although he calls for resistance to this loss, Virilio does not offer a programmatic response. Rather, he seeks, through the starkness of his descriptions, to recall for us the dangerous technological drift of our current situation.

Although he does not fit neatly into the category of critiques of media and electronic interaction (or, for that matter, into any other category), Slavoj Žižek should at least be mentioned in this regard since his work intersects with the concerns of Baudrillard and Virilio. For Žižek, there is always a Hegelian irony in play, and it occurs in technology as it does elsewhere in the contemporary world. In “Cyberspace, Or, The Unbearable Closure of Being,”13 he argues that we use the internet in order to pretend to ourselves that the desires we fulfill through it or the online personalities we create are merely that: pretend. That is, we project our real desires onto electronic media the more effectively to deny that they are indeed our real desires. More recently, in Welcome to the Desert of the Real, a response to the events of 9/11, Žižek has claimed that the past century, which involved purported attempts to touch the Lacanian Real, has, in that very attempt, found itself more mediatized than ever. He points out the irony of the Islamic fundamentalists who destroyed the World Trade Center in an attempt

to strike at the heart of the modern, Western world, and whose success was had through the media impact of the attacks. This is, he argues, “the fundamental paradox of the ‘passion for the Real’: it culminates in its apparent opposite, in a \textit{theatrical spectacle} – from the Stalinist show trials to spectacular terrorist acts.”\textsuperscript{14} Alternatively, the US, which sees itself as the bastion of democracy, supports undemocratic regimes around the world in the name of the very democracy it forecloses.

II

Turning to the next analysis of and response to globalization, those involving conceptions of the multitude, we should note that there are themes these thinkers share with those we have just discussed. There is no denial of the importance of the role of the media or of electronic communication in the formation of the contemporary scene. However, the emphasis is elsewhere. The accent in this approach is placed on the political and economic rather than on the technological.

The most important and influential book oriented around the multitude is Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s \textit{Empire} (2000). The framework of the book is complex, and much of its philosophical background derives from the work of Gilles Deleuze (especially the idea of the multitude as a virtuality, a point we can only gloss here). Regarding globalization, Hardt and Negri argue that we have entered a period characterized not so much by colonialism or imperialism but by the imperial. The imperial is immanent. Instead of a colonial project of taking over another country, entering it from the outside, as it were, the globalized world is, in their view, all inside. There is a single global economic–political order rather than an order of nation-states transcendent to one another. This new order may be conceived as a pyramid in which, at the top or first tier, the US holds a dominant position among a set of nation-states that can engage in economic regulation through such instruments as the G7 and the World Bank. The second tier contains transnational corporations. The third tier consists in various groups, including nongovernmental organizations, which represent the \textit{multitude}, a term we will return to in a moment. In the end, then, the world is not divided simply into nation-states but more importantly into networks of flows of information, production, and so on. There is no transcendent power,

\textsuperscript{14} Slavoj Žižek, \textit{Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates} (London: Verso, 2002), 9. It should perhaps be noted that in \textit{The Century}, Badiou also argues that the twentieth century exhibited a passion for the real. However, Žižek’s Real and Badiou’s real are not exactly the same. For Žižek, the Real is the Lacanian unreachable Real; moreover, he believes that this passion for the Real is ambivalent. For Badiou, in contrast, the real is more diffuse than the Lacanian Real, and those whose passion was for it were not ambivalent.
as in modern sovereignty, but only the power of Empire in the immanence of the networks.

This view has elements in common with that of Baudrillard and Virilio, specifically in its emphasis on networks and on the important role of electronic media in those networks. However, Hardt and Negri’s analysis is more encompassing. The media are part of Empire, but they do not exhaust it. There is a decline of nation-states, but not their disappearance. There can be tensions and resistances, but these resistances are immanent to Empire rather than transcendent. Resistance does not arise from those who are left outside, because there is no outside. Rather, it arises from the creative power that exists within Empire. This is where Hardt and Negri invoke the multitude.

The multitude is not the proletariat, nor is it any other particular identity. In fact, one of the crucial characteristics of the multitude is precisely its lack of such an identity. Because of this, the multitude is not a specific group of people. The multitude is fluid, without strict borders. Essentially, the multitude consists in the creative power of everything that can resist the control of Empire, a virtuality within Empire that has not been caught in the net of its controlling practices and institutions. As they write in their follow-up to Empire, appropriately entitled Multitude (2004), the multitude, like Empire, “too might thus be conceived as a network: an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common.” Invoking the perspective of Deleuze, the multitude is a network of differences rather than a uniformity of identity.

This conception of the multitude allows for a variety of political alliances. Since those alliances are not predicated on particular identities, there is no question of who can or cannot participate in the struggle. The multitude is beyond identity politics, and is, in Hardt and Negri’s view, the only way to conceive resistance to Empire, that is, to the immanence of power and control in a globalized world.

At around the same time that Hardt and Negri published Empire, the Italian thinker and activist Paolo Virno gave a series of lectures (in 2001) that would eventually be collected in A Grammar of the Multitude. Virno and Negri come from the same background – the Italian autonomia movement – but their conception of the multitude is divergent. If for Hardt and Negri the multitude is a creative virtuality, for Virno it is an empirical product of what he calls “Post-Fordism”: a mode of production that involves not only manual but also intellectual labor. In Virno’s view, the multitude is, as it is for Hardt and Negri, a mass

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*16. For a discussion of Virno, Negri, and autonomia, see the essay on Italian Philosophy by Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
that is not exactly a class. But, in contrast to their view, for Virno the multitude is not only the basis for social production, but also the product of a particular productive context. The multitude can be revolutionary, but it is not revolutionary in its essence. In his introduction to A Grammar of the Multitude, Sylvère Lotringer sums up this distinction trenchantly when he writes, “Empire involves an original kind of class struggle: a struggle looking for a class. For Virno it would be just the reverse: a class looking for a struggle.”

As Hardt and Negri make clear in Multitude, their conception of the multitude is that of a new democracy. In the context of globalization, the question of democracy has assumed a new importance. There is, on the one hand, the official discourse of democracy, a discourse that arises from the corridors of power in developed countries, and especially in the US. This discourse emphasizes two elements as constitutive of democracy: elections and capitalism. The first ensures political representation; the second free economic activity. However, among many progressive thinkers, the combination of elections and democracy does not seem always to yield a political and economic order that merits the honorific democratic. This is because both elections and capitalism individually, and even more so in their combination, lend themselves to manipulation and control by elites. This point seems an obvious one, but its implications are often missed. Do we really want to label as democratic political and economic orders that work to the benefit of the few, and that, to one extent or another, leave those who are not well placed outside real political and economic participation? Moreover, do such orders not tend toward a stifling homogenization in which certain styles of living and interacting are privileged and anything alternative marginalized? A number of thinkers have argued, as we will see in the next section, that we need to reconceive democracy, particularly in an age where globalization can lend itself to exploitation, oppression, and marginalization on a much greater scale than we have seen previously.

III

Hardt and Negri’s Multitude can be seen as one approach to this reconceptualization. Recent political texts by Derrida, Laclau and Mouffe, and, to a lesser extent, Judith Butler, provide others. Turning first to Derrida, it is perhaps not surprising that he wants to reconceive democracy in terms of the other that is often excluded. Deconstruction has always been a project of thinking the outside, not as outside but as constitutive of the inside. Where the inside (however that

inside is defined) sees itself in contrast to the outside, deconstruction shows that the outside is never entirely outside. The outside is also inside, and the inside is also outside. For our purposes, the political importance of this has to do with Derrida’s project of thinking democracy deconstructively.

In one of his earlier attempts to do so, The Other Heading (1992), Derrida focuses his energies on Europe. This is not surprising, and not only because Derrida lived in France (although he was born in Algeria). For the past twenty years, Europe has been in the throes of integrating non-European populations into national entities that have traditionally seen themselves as culturally homogeneous. As the 2005 riots in France – as well as the increase of racism and xenophobia across Europe – have shown, this process is not going smoothly. Thinking about this situation deconstructively at the time of German reunification, Derrida reflects:

that there is another heading, the heading being not only ours but the other, not only that which we identify, calculate, and decide upon, but the heading of the other, before which we must respond, and which we must remember, of which we must remind ourselves, the heading of the other being perhaps the first condition of an identity or identification that is not an ego-centrism destructive of oneself and the other.

Europe has long seen itself as the exemplar of where the world is “heading.” However, Derrida argues, that exemplarity must itself come into question. Or better, in order for Europe to remain exemplary, its exemplarity must come into question. Europe can no longer think of itself as a unity (or a group of unities) characterized by particular identities. It must instead head in another direction, a direction characterized by the other that it has excluded from its sense of itself. “And what if Europe were this … [a]n opening and a non-exclusion for which Europe would in some way be responsible?” Thus the identity of Europe must be bound to its no longer thinking of itself as resting on particular identities.

This idea, which is carried forward in a series of works, among them The Politics of Friendship (1994), which seeks to undercut the friend–enemy distinction in Carl Schmitt, might be said to culminate in his reflections on democracy in his 2003 book Rogues. In this work, Derrida articulates most fully his concept of democracy-to-come. One way to approach this concept would be through his

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20. Ibid., 17.
reflections on the other heading. If Europe is to become an opening or a nonexclusion, to what is it supposed to open itself? If we try to categorize that *what*, then we have limited the opening. It becomes no longer an opening, but instead an enclosure for a defined other. And is there not something contradictory about a “defined other”? To be open, then, is to remain receptive to what is to come, without knowing exactly what that might be.

In *Rogues*, Derrida points out the aporia, the gap, necessarily associated with such a thinking of democracy. On the one hand, there must be an openness to an other that cannot be defined. On the other hand, for there to be democracy there must also be a kind of sovereignty, a self-rule, that is necessarily exclusive, since it involves the creation of a legal structure of specific rights that is protected by force. A democracy-to-come must bring together this paradox of sovereignty and openness. Because of this,

> [t]he “to-come” not only points to the promise but suggests that democracy will never exist, in the sense of a present existence: not because it will be deferred but because it will always remain aporetic in its structure (*force without force, incalculable singularity and calculable equality*) …

To endorse a democracy-to-come, however, is not a passive affair. It does not involve waiting. One must act toward a democracy-to-come, embracing both sides of the paradox. Otherwise, the force of sovereignty that is supposed to protect democracy threatens to undercut the very democracy it is designed to protect.

Reconceiving democracy from a different angle, Laclau and Mouffe have followed a thread that is similar to Derrida’s in avoiding closure, but that hews more closely to the radical tradition of Marx and especially the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In their groundbreaking book from 1985, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the problem with the socialist projects of the twentieth century was that they were, in some form or another, reductive. The differences that constitute different classes and segments of those classes were reduced to simple unities. When those simple unities did not appear in reality, steps were taken to force reality into the simplicity of the vision. In short, radical politics became totalitarian.

Since the publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe have followed distinct but related intellectual paths. For Laclau, the thinking of politics has never been far from radical politics. In his 2007 book *On Populist*

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Reason, Laclau turns to a rethinking of populism to sharpen his view of radical democracy. As he notes, populism, like the radical political projects discussed in Hegemony, often descends into a political reductionism. However, it is not necessary that this be so. Populism often appeals to people at a variety of levels, depending on their different positions within society. The question, then, is one of how to bring unity to these different levels, without forcing them into a narrowly conceived political program.

In order to do this, Laclau proposes the concept of the empty signifier, a signifier that is at once specific and universal. For instance, the central category of populism is the people. However, in populism, under the umbrella of the people is not a homogeneous class, but a variety of classes that are united by their exclusion from a political order or their experience of exploitation or oppression. Specific demands may be made or specific groups identified, but those demands or identities are expressions of a group defined not by its having a particular signification but rather by the “equivalential links” that are drawn from a variety of sources. In this sense, the empty signifier is at once a specific identity or series of demands or opposition that at the same time takes up other identities or demands or oppositions that become “equivalent” to it. So the signifier the people is two-sided: it may refer to specific people in one sense, but in another sense those people lose their specificity since they become representatives of a larger group of which they are not the only members.

In Laclau’s view, globalization requires the construction of a populism of the sort he analyzes, a politics of the empty signifier.

There has been a multiplication of dislocatory effects and a proliferation of new antagonisms, which is why the anti-globalization movement has to operate in an entirely new way: it must advocate the creation of equivalential links between deeply heterogeneous social demands while, at the same time, elaborating a common language.

Thus, while Derrida focuses on a deconstructive play between sovereignty and openness in order to keep a politics of the other alive and avoid political reductionism, Laclau works to a similar end through a particular reading of populist reason.

Mouffe’s more recent work has affinities with that of Laclau, but its theoretical references have more to with the German (and Nazi) theorist Carl Schmitt, who

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22. For a discussion of radical democracy, see the essay by Lasse Thomassen in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 7.
posits a sharp distinction between friend and enemy, us and them. Mouffe wants to introduce a third category, that of adversaries on a common ground, “adversaries being defined in a paradoxical way as ‘friendly enemies,’ that is, persons who are friends because they share a common symbolic space but also enemies because they want to organize this common symbolic space in a different way.” Rather than resolving this tension in terms of friends (as would a consensus model of the kind Habermas advocates) or enemies (which would require war and suppression, in accordance with Schmitt’s thought), Mouffe envisions keeping alive this adversarial space. She does not seek to eliminate further conflict about the character of that shared space. Instead, it must remain open for disagreement about its character and norms. For Mouffe, as for Derrida, democracy is not ever achieved in any final way: “the condition of possibility of a pluralist democracy is at the same time the condition of impossibility of its perfect implementation.”

In thinking about reconceptualizations of democracy, we should note in passing that a recent work by Butler orients such thought around the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Precarious Life, a response to the global situation particularly in the wake of 9/11, argues, as do Mouffe, Laclau, and Derrida, for a nonreductionist view of politics that takes the other into account. And this work, like Derrida’s, emphasizes a vulnerability to the other that must characterize any adequate politics. This is, in Butler’s view, a particularly urgent task in the wake of American belligerence after the attacks of September 2001.

“Precarious Life” approaches the question of a non-violent ethics, one that is based on an understanding of how easily human life is annulled. Emmanuel Levinas offers a conception of ethics that rests upon an apprehension of the precariousness of life … [H]is view is … useful for those cultural analyses that seek to understand how best to depict the human, human grief and suffering, and how best to admit the “faces” of those against whom war is waged into public representation.

What draws these views together as responses to globalization is their common project of thinking diversity without reducing it to a simple identity. This common project, although realized in different ways, might be said to

*25. For a discussion of Schmitt, see the essay by Christopher Thornhill in The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 5.
27. Ibid., 16.
address a “postnationalist” world, a world in which people are no longer isolated into distinct “nationalities,” be they cultural, linguistic, religious, or national in the traditional sense. The question faced by these thinkers is that of conceiving democracy in a world defined as much by its differences as by its similarities. Although each has its own orientation, all these projects of reconceptualization are characterized by a concern for the integrity of the other in the democratic process.

IV

The final category of response to globalization has been more marginal theoretically than the previous three. However, it has intersected with a growing trend among progressive political activists. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Marxism as a framing doctrine for the political Left has been in steady decline. It is not that Marx’s writings are considered irrelevant; rather, they no longer command the power of framing political action. After a century during which the Left could not escape the terms of Marxism in defining itself and its goals, Marx has finally lost his grip on the political framework of the Left. If we can consider another framework to have taken its place, particularly since the World Trade Organization protests in 1999, it would be that of anarchism. With its rejection of the avant-gardism and hierarchical character of Leninism, anarchism emphasizes inclusion, equality, and, to the extent possible, consensus. It has recently made a return to the political scene. This does not mean that anarchism now plays the dominant role that Marxism played during the twentieth century. Far from it. Instead, in the theoretical void of the activist Left that emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union, anarchism has come to be one of the major contenders, perhaps the major contender, for conceiving leftist politics.

However, the world is much changed from the time of the writings of the classical anarchists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin. In particular, the development of French theory in the post-May ‘68 period has offered tools for a rethinking of anarchism that offers a more contemporary approach to anarchist theory and practice. Where classical anarchism was often marked by the

29. This is not to claim that no interesting anarchist theory has occurred for the past hundred years. Although the theoretical tradition has been thin, it has not been utterly bereft. Among those who identify themselves as anarchists, the British thinker Colin Ward (1924–) is particularly noteworthy, especially since his approach anticipates much of the poststructuralist approach discussed here. See, for instance, Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1982).

30. For a discussion of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the context of French utopian socialism, see the essay by Diane Morgan in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 1*. 

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humanist optimism and utopianism of the nineteenth century, an incorporation of some of the more sober political viewpoints characteristic of recent continental thinkers opens vistas for a less anachronistic development of anarchist themes. Although work in this area has been as yet sporadic, interest in it, particularly among progressive political activists, continues to grow.

The earliest attempt in this area is my *The Political Philosophy of Post-structuralist Anarchism* (1994). I argue that classical anarchism is characterized by two theoretical commitments: that human nature is inherently good and that power works solely by suppression. These two commitments combine to give rise to the idea that if one eliminates all relations of power, then a utopian society will naturally arise. However, recent thought has abandoned the idea of a benign human nature in favor of the idea that human nature is more plastic. In addition, under the influence of Michel Foucault, the idea that power is creative rather than simply suppressive has gained traction. Therefore, if we combine the egalitarian impulse of anarchism with a recognition of the multiple and irreducible character of power struggles, we arrive at a poststructuralist anarchism, an anarchism that is at once radical and politically supple.

Another project of intersecting recent continental thought with anarchism is Saul Newman’s Lacanian postanarchism. Whereas May orients his thought around Foucault, for Newman, Lacan is the major touchstone. In ways that are similar to the work of Laclau, Newman seeks to avoid the essentialism of traditional political categories by appealing to an emptiness rather than an identity at the center of political resistance. “Lacan’s notion of the lack as a gap, a radical emptiness produced by signification, was used here to theorize a non-essentialist outside to power.”31 Lacan, then, provides a way to combine the anti-authoritarianism characteristic of anarchism with the nonreductive views of the subject of resistance envisioned by recent French thought.

Anarchist thought has been embraced by the Left during the period of globalization in part because its radical egalitarianism provides a way to conceive solidarity across national borders. For those involved in what was called the “anti-globalization” movement, which is really a globalized anti-authoritarian and anti-transnational capitalist movement, the idea of equality allows one to link the struggles of the Malaysian sweatshop worker, the indigenous farmer in Chiapas, and the illegal immigrant in California. The introduction of recent continental thought into anarchist theory furthers this project, allowing it to abandon the anachronistic commitments of its nineteenth-century founders.

We have canvassed a number of analyses of and responses to globalization. Although they diverge in important ways, they share the belief that the globalized

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world has introduced fundamental changes into both our collective and individual lives, and that these changes require a new conception of where we find ourselves today. Moreover, none of these proposals endorses the idea that what appears to be globalization is really another form of imperialist hegemony, this time under the direction of the US economy. While Hardt and Negri allot the US a place on the first tier of Empire, and while the reconceptualizations of democracy and poststructuralist anarchism do not deny the importance of the US role in the world, the emphasis in all these analyses is on the global character of political, economic, and media change rather than on the domination of a particular national entity. This is perhaps in keeping with the more theoretical character of these approaches. If our world is nothing more than a twenty-first-century repeat of colonialism, with an economic accent rather than a political one and a new country at its center, there is not much to theorize about. However, to the extent that these approaches have theoretical merit, it is because, even if the US does have a dominant role to play in the current geopolitical arena, there are other changes – more important or more lasting – that require our reflection.

Little has been said in this essay about criticisms of these analyses and responses. There are those who might accuse Baudrillard and Virilio of a technological reductionism; others who would likely find the idea of the multitude to be empty or unhelpful; some who may see the reconceptualizations of democracy offered here as too abstract for practical politics; and finally some who may accuse a poststructuralist approach to anarchism of retaining too much utopianism. Moreover, regardless of the criticisms one could make, there remain questions of how to combine elements among the various projects there. What, if any, relation could be drawn between the multitude and anarchist equality? How might Mouffé’s adversarial space fare in the face of the simulated society sketched by Baudrillard? Can one combine Laclau’s politics of the empty signifier with Derrida’s democracy-to-come, or undercut the technological/military dominance that concerns Virilio with a politics of vulnerability of the type Butler endorses?

Much of the work of these thinkers has been coextensive with the rise of globalization itself. They are attempting to understand and to respond to changes through which they – and we – are living. It remains the task of the rest of us, or at least those among us who are concerned with the shape of our world, to think alongside them. We must comprehend and act within and on an increasingly globalized world, in order that we may be subjects of that world and not merely its objects.
## CHRONOLOGY

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<td>English Civil War begins</td>
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<td>1651</td>
<td>Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em></td>
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<td><em>Logique du Port-Royal</em></td>
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<td>1665</td>
<td></td>
<td>Newton discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1667</td>
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<td>John Milton, <em>Paradise Lost</em></td>
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<td>1667</td>
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<td><em>Les Pensées</em> (posthumous)</td>
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<td>1670</td>
<td>Spinoza, <em>Tractatus theologico-politicus</em></td>
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<td>1675</td>
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<td>Leibniz discovers calculus</td>
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<td>1677</td>
<td>Spinoza, <em>Ethics</em></td>
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<td>1687</td>
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<td>Newton, <em>Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica</em></td>
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<td>1689</td>
<td>Locke, <em>A Letter Concerning Toleration</em></td>
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<td>(–1690) Locke, <em>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</em> and <em>Two Treatises of Civil Government</em></td>
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<td>1695</td>
<td>Bayle, <em>Dictionnaire historique et critique</em>, vol. I</td>
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<td>1714</td>
<td>Leibniz, <em>Monadologie</em></td>
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<td>1739</td>
<td>Hume, <em>A Treatise of Human Nature</em></td>
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<td>1742</td>
<td>Handel, <em>Messiah</em></td>
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<td>1748</td>
<td>Hume, <em>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</em></td>
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<td>Diderot and D’Alembert, <em>Encyclopédie</em>, vols 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>1755</td>
<td>Rousseau, <em>Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes</em></td>
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<td>1759</td>
<td>Voltaire, <em>Candide</em></td>
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<td>1762</td>
<td>Rousseau, <em>Du contrat social and Émile ou de l’éducation</em></td>
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<td>1774</td>
<td>Goethe, <em>Sorrows of Young Werther</em></td>
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<td>1776</td>
<td>Death of Hume</td>
<td>Adam Smith, <em>Wealth of Nations</em></td>
<td>American Declaration of Independence</td>
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<td>1781</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1783</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik</em></td>
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<td>1784</td>
<td>Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”</td>
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<td>1785</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten</em></td>
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<td>1787</td>
<td>Birth of Arthur Schopenhauer</td>
<td>Gibbon, <em>The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</em></td>
<td>US Constitution</td>
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<td>1789</td>
<td>Death of d’Holbach</td>
<td>Adoption of <em>La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen</em></td>
<td>French Revolution and the establishment of the First Republic</td>
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<td>1790</td>
<td>Kant, <em>Kritik der Urteilskraft</em></td>
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<td>1792</td>
<td>Mary Wollstonecraft, <em>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</em></td>
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<td>1794</td>
<td>Creation of the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Robespierre</td>
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<td>1795</td>
<td>Schiller, <em>Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen</em></td>
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<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<td>1798</td>
<td>Birth of Auguste Comte</td>
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<td>Napoleon Bonaparte proclaims the First Empire</td>
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<td>1800</td>
<td>Fichte, <em>Die Bestimmung des Menschen</em> Schelling, <em>System des transcendentalen Idealismus</em></td>
<td>Beethoven’s First Symphony</td>
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<td>1804</td>
<td>Death of Kant</td>
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<td>1805</td>
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<td>Diderot, <em>Le Neveu de Rameau</em></td>
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<td>1806</td>
<td>Birth of John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Reinstatement of the Sorbonne by Napoleon as a secular university</td>
<td>Napoleon brings the Holy Roman Empire to an end</td>
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<td>1807</td>
<td>Hegel, <em>Die Phänomenologie des Geistes</em></td>
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<td>1812</td>
<td>(–1816) Hegel, <em>Wissenschaft der Logik</em></td>
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<td>1815</td>
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<td>Jane Austen, <em>Emma</em></td>
<td>Battle of Waterloo; final defeat of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1818</td>
<td>Birth of Karl Marx</td>
<td>Mary Shelley, <em>Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus</em></td>
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<td>1819</td>
<td>Schleiermacher, <em>Hermeneutik</em> Schopenhauer, <em>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</em></td>
<td>Byron, <em>Don Juan</em></td>
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<td>1821</td>
<td>Hegel, <em>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts</em></td>
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<td>Death of Napoleon</td>
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<td>1823</td>
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<td>Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>(–1842) Auguste Comte, <em>Cours de philosophie positive in six volumes</em></td>
<td>Stendhal, <em>The Red and the Black</em></td>
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<td>1831</td>
<td>Death of Hegel</td>
<td>Victor Hugo, <em>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</em></td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Death of Bentham</td>
<td>Clausewitz, <em>Vom Kriege</em></td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>Birth of Wilhelm Dilthey</td>
<td>Pushkin, <em>Eugene Onegin</em></td>
<td>Abolition of slavery in the British Empire</td>
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<td>1835</td>
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<td>The first volume of Alexis de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em> is published in French</td>
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<td>1837</td>
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<td>Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype, the first successful photographic process</td>
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<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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<td>1841</td>
<td>Feuerbach, <em>Das Wesen des Christentums</em></td>
<td>R. W. Emerson, <em>Essays: First Series</em></td>
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<td>Kierkegaard, <em>On the Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates</em></td>
<td>Death of Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle)</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Kierkegaard, <em>Either/Or and Fear and Trembling</em></td>
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<td>Mill, <em>A System of Logic</em></td>
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<td>1843</td>
<td>Marx writes <em>Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts</em></td>
<td>Alexandre Dumas, <em>The Count of Monte Cristo</em></td>
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<td>1844</td>
<td>Kierkegaard, <em>Either/Or and Fear and Trembling</em></td>
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<td>1845</td>
<td>Marx writes <em>Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts</em></td>
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<td>Mill, <em>A System of Logic</em></td>
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<td>1847</td>
<td>Boole, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
<td>Helmholtz, <em>On the Conservation of Force</em></td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Einstein, <em>The Mathematical Analysis of Logic</em></td>
<td>Publication of the <em>Communist Manifesto</em></td>
<td>Beginning of the Second Republic</td>
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<td>1851</td>
<td>Herman Melville, <em>Moby Dick</em></td>
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<td>Herbert Spencer, <em>Social Statics</em></td>
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<td>The Great Exhibition is staged at the Crystal Palace, London</td>
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<td>1852</td>
<td>Napoleon III declares the Second Empire</td>
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<td>1853</td>
<td>(1853–1856) Crimean War</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>H. D. Thoreau, <em>Walden</em></td>
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<td>1855</td>
<td>Walt Whitman, <em>Leaves of Grass</em></td>
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<td>1856</td>
<td>Birth of Sigmund Freud</td>
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<td>1857</td>
<td>Birth of Ferdinand de Saussure</td>
<td>Charles Baudelaire, <em>The Flowers of Evil</em></td>
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<td>Death of Comte</td>
<td>Gustav Flaubert, <em>Madame Bovary</em></td>
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<td>Mill, <em>On Liberty</em></td>
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<td>1861</td>
<td>Johann Jakob Barchofen, <em>Das Mutterrecht</em></td>
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<td>Tsar Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia</td>
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<td>1863</td>
<td>Mill, <em>Utilitarianism</em></td>
<td>Édouard Manet, <em>Olympia</em></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln issues the <em>Emancipation Proclamation</em></td>
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<td>1865</td>
<td>Premiere of Richard Wagner’s <em>Tristan und Isolde</em></td>
<td>The surrender of General Robert E. Lee signals the conclusion of the American Civil War</td>
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<td>(1859–1869) Leo Tolstoy, <em>War and Peace</em></td>
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<td>1866</td>
<td>Fyodor Dostoevsky, <em>Crime and Punishment</em></td>
<td>The Peace of Prague ends the Austro-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1867</td>
<td>Marx, <em>Das Kapital, vol. I</em></td>
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<td><strong>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</strong></td>
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<td>1868 Birth of Émile Chartier (&quot;Alain&quot;)</td>
<td>Birth of W. E. B. Du Bois</td>
<td>Completion of the Suez Canal</td>
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<td>Creation of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)</td>
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<td>1869 Mill, The Subjection of Women</td>
<td>Jules Verne, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</td>
<td>(–1871) Franco-Prussian War Establishment of the Third Republic</td>
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<td>(–1976) Wagner, Der Ring des Nibelungen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1870</td>
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<td>(–1871) Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1871 Lachelier, Du fondement de l'induction</td>
<td>Darwin, The Descent of Man</td>
<td>Unification of Germany: Prussian King William I becomes Emperor (Kaiser) of Germany and Otto von Bismarck becomes Chancellor</td>
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<td>Eliot, Middlemarch</td>
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<td>1872 Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie</td>
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<td>End of German Occupation following France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War</td>
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<td>1873 Death of Mill</td>
<td>(–1877) Tolstoy, Anna Karenina</td>
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<td>1874 Birth of Max Scheler</td>
<td>First Impressionist Exhibition staged by the Société anonyme des peintres, sculpteurs et graveurs (Cézanne, Degas, Guillaumin, Monet, Berthe Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley)</td>
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<td>Émile Boutroux, La Contingence des lois de la nature</td>
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<td>Brentano, Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Henry Morton Stanley completes his navigation of the Congo River</td>
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<td>1878</td>
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<td>King Leopold II of Belgium engages explorer Henry Morton Stanley to establish a colony in the Congo</td>
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<td>1879 Frege, Begriffsschrift</td>
<td>Henrik Ibsen, A Doll’s House</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Georg Cantor (1845–1918) becomes Professor of Mathematics at Halle Thomas Edison exhibits his incandescent light bulb</td>
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<td>Death of Marx</td>
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<td>(–1885) Nietzsche, Also Sprach Zarathustra</td>
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<td>Dilthey, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften</td>
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## CHRONOLOGY

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<tr>
<td>1884 Birth of Gaston Bachelard Frege, <em>Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik</em></td>
<td>Mark Twain, <em>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</em></td>
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<td>1886 Nietzsche, <em>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</em></td>
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<td>1887 Nietzsche, <em>Über der Genealogie der Moral</em></td>
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<td>1888 Birth of Jean Wahl</td>
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<td>1889 Birth of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, and Ludwig Wittgenstein Bergson, <em>Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience</em></td>
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<td>1890 William James, <em>Principles of Psychology</em></td>
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<td>1892 Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung”</td>
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<td>1893 Xavier Léon and Élie Halévy cofound the <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
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<td>1894 Birth of Max Horkheimer</td>
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<td>Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish-French army officer, is arrested and charged with spying for Germany</td>
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<td>1895 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1896 Birth of Herbert Marcuse</td>
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<td>1897 Birth of Georges Bataille</td>
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<td>1900 Birth of Jacques Lacan</td>
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<td>1903 Birth of Theodor W. Adorno and Jean Cavaillès</td>
<td>Du Bois, <em>The Souls of Black Folk</em></td>
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<td>1904 (–1905) Weber, <em>Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus</em></td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Birth of Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre</td>
<td>Einstein formulates the special theory of relativity</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Birth of Hannah Arendt and Emmanuel Levinas</td>
<td>Birth of Léopold Sédar Senghor</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Birth of Jean Hyppolite Bergson, <em>L’Évolution créatrice</em></td>
<td>Pablo Picasso completes <em>Les Demoiselles d’Avignon</em></td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Birth of Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and W. V. Quine</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Victor Delbos publishes the first French journal article on Husserl: “Husserl: Sa critique du psychologisme et sa conception d’une Logique pure” in <em>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</em></td>
<td>The Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) group of avant-garde artists is founded in Munich</td>
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<td>1914</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Birth of Roland Barthes</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>Metamorphosis</em></td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Publication of Saussure’s <em>Cours de linguistique générale</em></td>
<td>James Joyce, <em>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Death of Durkheim</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Birth of Louis Althusser Death of Georg Cantor and Lachelier</td>
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<td>1919</td>
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<td>German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) founds the Bauhaus School</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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<td>1923</td>
<td>Institut für Sozialforschung (Frankfurt School) is founded</td>
<td>Kahil Gibran, <em>The Prophet</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Birth of Jean-François Lyotard</td>
<td>André Breton, <em>Le Manifeste du surrééalisme</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Raymond Aron, Georges Canguilhem, Daniel Lagache, Paul Nizan, and Sartre enter the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Thomas Mann, <em>The Magic Mountain</em></td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Birth of Gilles Deleuze</td>
<td>Franz Kafka, <em>The Trial</em></td>
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<td>First Surrealist Exhibition at the Galerie Pierre, Paris</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Birth of Michel Foucault</td>
<td>The film <em>Metropolis</em> by German director Fritz Lang (1890–1976) premieres in Berlin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jean Hering publishes the first French text to address Husserl's phenomenology: <em>Phénoménologie et philosophie religieuse</em></td>
<td>The Bauhaus school building, designed by Walter Gropius (1883–1969), is completed in Dessau, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Sein und Zeit</em></td>
<td>Virginia Woolf, <em>To the Lighthouse</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marcel, <em>Journal métaphysique</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Birth of Noam Chomsky</td>
<td>Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) writes <em>The Threepenny Opera</em> with composer Kurt Weill (1900–1950)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The first work of German phenomenology appears in French translation: <em>Scheler's Nature et formes de la sympathie: Contribution à l'étude des lois de la vie émotionnelle</em></td>
<td>The first television station begins broadcasting in Schenectady, New York</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Birth of Jürgen Habermas</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway, <em>A Farewell to Arms</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik and Was ist Metaphysik?</em></td>
<td>Erich Maria Remarque, <em>All Quiet on the Western Front</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Husserl, <em>Formale und transzendentale Logik</em> and “Phenomenology” in <em>Encyclopedia Britannica</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wahl, <em>La malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Husserl lectures at the Sorbonne</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Levinas, <em>La Théorie de l’intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl</em></td>
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<td>1931</td>
<td>Husserl’s <em>Ideas</em> is translated into English</td>
<td>Pearl Buck, <em>The Good Earth</em></td>
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<td>Gödel publishes his two incompleteness theorems</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CULTURAL EVENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>POLITICAL EVENTS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Levinas and Gabrielle Peiffer publish a French translation of Husserl’s <em>Cartesian Meditations</em></td>
<td>BBC starts a regular public television broadcasting service in the UK</td>
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<td>1932 Birth of Stuart Hall</td>
<td>André Malraux, <em>Man’s Fate</em></td>
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<td>1933 (–1939) Alexandre Kojève lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études University in Exile is founded as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research</td>
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<td>(–1939) Spanish Civil War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Penguin publishes its first paperback</td>
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<td>Sartre, “La Transcendance de l’égo” in <em>Recherches philosophiques</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1937 Birth of Alain Badiou and Hélène Cixous</td>
<td>Picasso, <em>Guernica</em></td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland (September 1) and France and Britain declare war on Germany (September 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938 Death of Husserl</td>
<td>Sartre, <em>La Nausée</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1939 Establishment of Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium</td>
<td>Joyce, <em>Finnegans Wake</em></td>
<td>Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, and the US enters the Second World War</td>
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<tr>
<td>(–1941) Hyppolite publishes his translation into French of Hegel’s <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em></td>
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<td>Germany invades the Soviet Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940 Death of Benjamin</td>
<td>Richard Wright, <em>Native Son</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
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</tbody>
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| 1942 | Lévi-Strauss meets Roman Jakobson at the École Libre des Hautes Études in New York | Herman Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*  
Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* | |
| 1943 | Death of Simone Weil  
Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology*  
Sartre, *L’Être et le néant* | Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*  
Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers* | Paris is liberated by the US Army (August 25)  
Bretton Woods Conference and establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) |
| 1944 | | | |
| 1945 | Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* | George Orwell, *Animal Farm*  
Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty begin as founding editors of *Les Temps modernes* | End of the Second World War in Germany (May); atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; end of the war in Japan (September)  
Establishment of the United Nations |
| 1946 | Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la “Phénoménologie de l’esprit” de Hegel*  
Bataille founds the journal *Critique* | Beginning of the French Indochina War  
Establishment of the Fourth Republic |
| 1947 | Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*  
Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l’ambiguïté*  
Heidegger, “Brief über den Humanismus” | Camus, *The Plague*  
Anne Frank, *The Diary of Anne Frank*  
Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus* | (~1951) Marshall Plan |
| 1948 | (~1951) Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*  
Althusser is appointed agrégé-répétiteur (“caïman”) at the École Normale Supérieure, a position he holds until 1980 | Nathalie Sarraute, *Portrait of a Man Unknown*  
Debut of *The Ed Sullivan Show* | The United Nations adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| 1949 | Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe*  
Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*  
Heidegger’s *Existence and Being* is translated | Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*  
Orwell, 1984  
Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort found the revolutionary group and journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* | Foundation of NATO |
<p>| 1950 | Ricoeur publishes his translation into French of Husserl’s <em>Ideas I</em> | | Beginning of the Korean War |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</th>
<th>CULTURAL EVENTS</th>
<th>POLITICO EVENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Death of Alain and Wittgenstein</td>
<td>J. D. Salinger, <em>The Catcher in the Rye</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty is elected to the Chair in Philosophy at the Collège de France</td>
<td>Ralph Ellison, <em>Invisible Man</em></td>
<td>Ceasefire agreement (July 27) ends the Korean War</td>
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<td>Lacan begins his public seminars</td>
<td>Crick and Watson construct the first model of DNA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Lyotard, <em>La Phénoménologie</em></td>
<td>Huxley, <em>The Doors of Perception</em></td>
<td>Following the fall of Dien Bien Phu (May 7), France pledges to withdraw from Indochina (July 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scheler, <em>The Nature of Sympathy</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning of the Algerian revolt against French rule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cerisy Colloquium <em>Qu’est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger</em>, organized by Jean Beaufret</td>
<td></td>
<td>The French colonies of Morocco and Tunisia gain independence</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Sartre’s <em>Being and Nothingness</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rome Treaty signed by France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg establishes the European Economic Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Chomsky, <em>Syntactic Structures</em></td>
<td>Jack Kerouac, <em>On the Road</em></td>
<td>The Soviet Union launches <em>Sputnik 1</em>, the first man-made object to orbit the Earth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Founding of <em>Philosophy Today</em></td>
<td>Camus receives the Nobel Prize for Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss, <em>Anthropologie structurale</em></td>
<td>Chinua Achebe, <em>Things Fall Apart</em></td>
<td>Charles de Gaulle is elected president after a new constitution establishes the Fifth Republic</td>
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<td>William S. Burroughs, <em>Naked Lunch</em></td>
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<td>Elie Wiesel, <em>Night</em></td>
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<td>The Sorbonne’s “Faculté des Lettres” is officially renamed the “Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines”</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosopher/Event</td>
<td>Cultural Event</td>
<td>Political Event</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Lévi-Strauss is elected to the Chair in Social Anthropology at the Collège de France</td>
<td>(–1960) The first feature films by directors associated with the French &quot;New Wave&quot; cinema, including, in 1959, <em>Les Quatre Cent Coups</em> (<em>The 400 Blows</em>) by François Truffaut (1932–84) and, in 1960, <em>A bout de souffle</em> (<em>Breathless</em>) by Jean-Luc Godard (1930–)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Death of Bachelard</td>
<td>Alain Robbe-Grillet and Alain Resnais, <em>Last Year at Marienbad</em> Joseph Heller, <em>Catch 22</em></td>
<td>France grants independence to Algeria Cuban Missile Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Death of Bachelard</td>
<td>Rachel Carson, <em>Silent Spring</em> Ken Kesey, <em>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
<td>Political Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
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<td>Alain Robbe-Grillet, <em>For a New Novel</em>&lt;br&gt;The first artificial heart is implanted</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Derrida, <em>De la grammaletologie, La Voix et le phénomène, and L'Écriture et la différence</em></td>
<td>Gabriel Garcia Marquez, <em>One Hundred Years of Solitude</em>&lt;br&gt;William Styron, <em>Confessions of Nat Turner</em></td>
<td>Confirmation of Thurgood Marshall to the US Supreme Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Deleuze, <em>Différence et répétition, Spinoza et le problème de l’expression</em>&lt;br&gt;Habermas, <em>Erkenntnis und Interesse</em></td>
<td>Carlos Castaneda, <em>The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge</em>&lt;br&gt;Stanley Kubrick, <em>2001: A Space Odyssey</em>&lt;br&gt;The Beatles release the White Album</td>
<td>Events of May ’68, including closure of the University of Nanterre (May 2), police invasion of the Sorbonne (May 3), student demonstrations and strikes, and workers’ occupation of factories and general strike&lt;br&gt;Prague Spring&lt;br&gt;Assassination of Martin Luther King&lt;br&gt;Tet Offensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foucault, <em>L’Archéologie du savoir</em></td>
<td>Neil Armstrong is the first person to set foot on the moon</td>
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<td>Paulo Freire, <em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em></td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of Carnap</td>
<td>Millet, <em>Sexual Politics</em></td>
<td>Shootings at Kent State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adorno, <em>Ästhetische Theorie</em></td>
<td>Founding of <em>Diacritics</em></td>
<td>Salvador Allende becomes the first Marxist head of state to be freely elected in a Western nation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foucault, <em>The Order of Things</em></td>
<td>First Earth Day</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>appears in English translation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Husserl, <em>The Crisis of European Philosophy</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>appears in English translation</td>
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<td>Founding of the <em>Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology</em></td>
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<td>Foucault is elected to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France</td>
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<td>Ricoeur begins teaching at the University of Chicago</td>
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<td>1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyotard, <em>Discours, figure</em></td>
<td>Reorganization of the University of Paris</td>
<td>End of the gold standard for US dollar</td>
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<td>Founding of <em>Research in Phenomenology</em></td>
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<td>1972</td>
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<td>Death of John Wild</td>
<td>Italo Calvino, <em>Invisible Cities</em></td>
<td>Watergate break-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bourdieu, <em>Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique</em></td>
<td>Hunter Thompson, <em>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</em></td>
<td>President Richard Nixon visits China, beginning the normalization of relations between the US and PRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 1. L’Anti-Oedipe</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Derrida, <em>La Dissémination, Margs de la philosophie, and Positions</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Radical Philosophy begins publication</td>
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<td>Colloquium on Nietzsche at Cerisy</td>
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<td>1973</td>
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<td>Death of Horkheimer</td>
<td>Thomas Pynchon, <em>Gravity’s Rainbow</em></td>
<td>Chilean military coup ousts and kills President Salvador Allende</td>
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<tr>
<td>Derrida, <em>Speech and Phenomena</em> appears in English translation</td>
<td>Roe v. Wade legalizes abortion</td>
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<td>1974</td>
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<td>Irigaray, <em>Speculum: De l’autre femme</em></td>
<td>Founding of <em>Critical Inquiry</em></td>
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<td>Kristeva, <em>La Révolution du langage poétique</em></td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Philosophical Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Levinas, <em>Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Death of Arendt</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>Death of Bultmann and Heidegger</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>Death of Ernst Bloch</td>
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<td>1978</td>
<td>Death of Gödel</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>Death of Marcuse</td>
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<th>Cultural Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Creation of the first doctoral program in women's studies in Europe, the Centre de Recherches en Études Féminines, at the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes, directed by Hélène Cixous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cixous and Clément, <em>La Jeune née</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs begins publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sixth Section of the EPHE is renamed the École des Hautes Études in Sciences Sociales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex Haley, <em>Roots: The Saga of an American Family</em></td>
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<td>Foundation of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature</td>
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<td>240 Czech intellectuals sign Charter 77</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Centre Georges Pompidou, designed by architects Renzo Piano (1937–) and Richard Rogers (1933–), opens in Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward Said, <em>Orientalism</em></td>
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<td>Birmingham School, Centre for Contemporary Culture releases <em>Policing the Crisis</em></td>
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<td>Louise Brown becomes the first test-tube baby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calvino, <em>If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Francis Ford Coppola, <em>Apocalypse Now</em></td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Political Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death of Francisco Franco</td>
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<td>Andrei Sakharov wins Nobel Peace Prize</td>
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<td>Fall of Saigon, ending the Vietnam War</td>
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<td>First US–USSR joint space mission</td>
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<td>Death of Mao Zedong</td>
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<td>Uprising in Soweto</td>
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<td>Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat becomes the first Arab head of state to visit Israel</td>
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<td>Camp David Accords</td>
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<td>Iranian Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaraguan Revolution</td>
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<td>Iran Hostage Crisis begins</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL EVENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979 Lyotard, <em>La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir</em></td>
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<td>Rorty, <em>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</em></td>
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<td>Prigogine and Stengers, <em>La Nouvelle alliance</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1980 Death of Barthes and Sartre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davidson, <em>Essays on Actions and Events</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deleuze and Guattari, <em>Capitalisme et schizophrénie. 2. Mille plateaux</em></td>
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<td>Kristeva, <em>Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection</em></td>
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<td>Foucault, <em>The History of Sexuality, vol. 1</em> appears in English translation</td>
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<td>Sloterdijk, <em>Kritik der zynischen Vernunft</em></td>
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<td>1985 Habermas, <em>Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne</em></td>
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<td>1985 Irigaray’s <em>Speculum of the Other Woman</em> and <em>This Sex Which is Not One</em> appear in English translation</td>
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<td>Maastricht Treaty is signed, creating the European Union</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>Gilroy, <em>Black Atlantic</em></td>
<td>Vaclav Havel is named the first president of the Czech Republic</td>
<td>Pablo Escobar, Colombian drug lord, is killed</td>
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<td>Publication of Foucault’s <em>Dits et écrits</em></td>
<td>The Channel Tunnel opens, connecting England and France</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>Mignolo, <em>The Darker Side of the Renaissance</em></td>
<td>End of Bosnian War</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Cloning of Dolly the sheep (died 2003)</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization (WTO) comes into being, replacing GATT</td>
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<td>Death of Lyotard, Dussel, <em>Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión</em></td>
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<td>Socialist–Green Coalition under Helmut Schmidt in Germany</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Spivak, <em>A Critique of Postcolonial Reason</em> Badiou leaves Vincennes to become Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the École Normale Supérieure</td>
<td>Death of Iris Murdoch</td>
<td>Introduction of the Euro</td>
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